

St. Mark's, North Tonawanda

What are some significant moments in the history of your church that have shaped its identity today?

A Listening Session, hosted by Craig Dressler, Diocesan Transitional Canon, created a renewed sense of community, positive sense of future and inspired faith in our congregation after we had suffered through a couple of disastrous and expensive administrations. This Listening Session was a great turning point bringing the congregation closer and with more determination.

What makes your church unique in the region and the diocese?

Back in our better days, we were known for our great fish fries and fabulous choir. We are now slowly rebuilding what was previously destroyed.

Our well attended Basket Raffle is well known in our community for its high-quality baskets, high value items and great organization.

Four years ago, we had 11 confirmation candidates at our church. The evening event was well attended with a grand reception that followed.

Most of the candidates have left for further education or jobs. Recently, we have restarted our Sunday childrens program with 6 students.



What are the most vibrant ministries or strengths of your parish today?

A couple of years ago we installed a couple of Blessing Boxes on our high traffic corner. Our members contribute non-persishable food and toiletries to fill them for those in need in our community. We see that our neighbors have joined in the ""giving spirit"" and fill the box too!

Our Music Director has conducted multiple free recitals with another instrumentalist that has brought many people outside our church to experience and enjoy sacred and spiritual music.

The Vestry has held together the finances, consistent engagement of supply priests and any and all other activities to keep this church a vibrant place of worship.

Describe a moment in your community's life when you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit moving among you. What made that moment possible?

Several years ago, in the middle of a 10am Sunday service after our previous Music Director conducted the choir on a difficult sacred piece, the whole congregation were so moved by the Holy Spirit, stood up and exploded to applause.

Recently, a long-time active parishioner (currently shut-in) returned for his wife's funeral. There was a palpable outpouring of welcome and empathy for him. Anytime someone returns, this congregation sincerely welcomes them.

How does your church engage with the local neighborhood, the civic life of your community, or diocesan and/or Episcopal Church-wide initiatives?

Our Eucharistic Visitors provide updates, prayers and communion to our shut-ins and parishioners with illness or disability. One of our Eucharistic Visitors provides communion to 6 non-members who are patients in the same nursing home as her mother.

We have actively participated in supporting The Little Roses ministry by going to their events, hosting their speakers and contributing to their charity events. Recently, one of our Vestry members has joined the travel event to The Little Roses Campus in the Honduras. She expects to return because it was so inspiring.

We host 2 Alcohol Anonymous (AA) groups, who have become welcomed helpers with our maintenance. We also supply turkeys for the larger group at Thanksgiving because we are grateful that they are with us.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) utilizes our facilities several times a year for their meetings and outreach.

What are the hopes and dreams of your congregation for its next chapter?

We are hoping to be financially able to call a 1/2 time priest sometime next year.

