

St. Paul's, Lewiston

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

A few years ago, our warden ignited a bold plan...one that would transform our church space and its role in the community. The idea? Remove the pews, modernize our facility, and open the Nave for broader use...welcoming private and non-profit organizations while allowing for diverse forms of worship. With the vestry's consent, the warden began a series of town-hall meetings to engage the full congregation. These gatherings sparked deep, heartfelt conversations about the essence of our church and our responsibility as stewards of its sacred space. Some feared that altering the Nave's traditional use would strip it of its holiness, diminishing our identity as a church. At each meeting, the warden faced every question head-on...laying out the financial realities, the opportunities for growth, and the profound impact this change could bring. Every concern was heard, every doubt addressed. In the end, the congregation decided the plan could move forward, provided outside funding could be secured. Those funds never materialized, but through open dialogue, honesty, and mutual respect; a divisive decision instead became a testament to our unity and shared purpose.



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

We have been part of the Village of Lewiston community since 1832. Our original location near the Niagara River played a key role in our commitment to social justice, as we aided escaped slaves on their journey to freedom via the Underground Railroad. Church records from that time include notes such as “a friend stayed overnight,” among other similar entries. Our original church building now serves as the home of the Village Historical Society, following our move to a larger church building just one block from Center Street—the heart of Lewiston.

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

We are proud to be at the center of a regional collaboration with our neighboring Episcopal parishes. While our Deanery includes 10 parishes, our closest connections lie with five congregations along Lake Ontario. Together, we hope to build a strong, united community of faith...one that thrives through shared worship, joint events, and the pooling of our resources. Our commitment to regional partnership is more than just words...we live it through annual picnics, special worship gatherings, collaborative fundraising efforts, and mutual support. We hope to develop a regional network that strengthens our churches, shares clergy, and fosters growth among our congregation, all within 25 miles of each other. Right now, our collaboration with St. Andrew's, Burt, is stronger than ever as we share clergy and resources. We hope to expand collaboration to our neighboring parishes.

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?

For years, we've had an exciting Palm Sunday tradition where we perform a dramatic reading of the Gospel, complete with props that are brought to the altar...creating a truly immersive experience. Lately, we decided to shake things up a bit by moving the celebration to the day before Palm Sunday and inviting other parishes (Episcopalian and beyond) as well as the entire community to join in. The energy was incredible! After the play, we hosted a free pasta dinner for everyone who came, offering a warm welcome to all. Many of our community dinners had faded over the years, so this event was a perfect opportunity to bring our congregation together and show our neighbors just how much we care. By changing the time and opening our doors to new faces, we brought fresh energy into the church, even outside of our usual Sunday services. This experience has sparked a new sense of excitement and creativity, and we're now more inspired than ever to find new ways to share the Gospel with others!

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

Our commitment to the community reaches far beyond our walls...Through the dedication and coordination of our Mission Committee, we bring joy and support to those in need in meaningful ways. We support the children of the nearby Tuscarora Native American Reservation school, providing essential supplies and birthday gifts to brighten their special days. Each year, our Giving Tree overflows with hats, gloves, and scarves, warming not only the Tuscarora students but also veterans, homeless shelters, and survivors of domestic violence. Our support extends across the nation and beyond through Episcopal Relief and Development, and collecting donations for those affected by natural disasters throughout our country. Closer to home, we spread cheer at a local nursing home and provide a monthly worship service by our Deacon, leading games and activities that bring smiles to residents' faces. We've made Christmas magical for disadvantaged children in our public schools and have proudly contributed to the WNY Breast Cancer Foundation through our fundraising efforts.

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

We've strategically aligned our expenses with our income, creating balanced budgets that keep us strong and sustainable. But we don't stop there...we're passionate about fostering regional collaboration with neighboring Episcopal congregations. By partnering on fundraising, worship services, and community events, we're not just sharing our time, talent, & treasure, but creating a united front for our faith. Our history of sharing clergy and working together both financially and in "the Holy Spirit" is something we're proud of. With five Episcopal parishes within just 25 miles of each other, along the beautiful shores of Lake Ontario, it's only natural that we come together to spread the Gospel and make a bigger impact!

