

**The Ministry Portfolio  
of  
St. Thomas Episcopal Church  
Greenville, Alabama  
in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast**

***Describe a moment in your worship community's recent ministry which you recognize and one of success and fulfillment.***

In 2016 we conducted a capital campaign to address our aging buildings. The results were overwhelming...we surpassed our stated goal. Our consultant from ECF was amazed at our level of participation. It brought unity, vision, and cooperation to our parish and energized us for the future. Our website was enhanced, communication and transparency flourished, and excitement over the restoration of our beautiful church and plans for future programs was evident.



***How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?***

We desire to attract young families, talk about Jesus in a way that people can relate, and continue to have meaningful Sunday services. Recently we have been looking at and discussing our church's identity; what it is and what we want it to be.



***Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leader of your worshipping community.***

Pastor/Preacher                      Spiritual Guide/Leader

Youth Work/Christian Ed      Teacher/Counselor



***Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.***

Our main worship service is our Sunday morning Rite II Eucharistic service. Occasionally Lay Readers lead Morning Prayer. This has allowed us to continue our weekly corporate worship while the rector is away on vacation or participating in a diocesan event and no supply priest is available. Rite I is used seasonally and on special occasions. We have enjoyed different variations of the service introduced by our priests over the years. Service music is traditional with contemporary music led by the choir during Holy Communion. Architecturally, our altar was placed against the wall during construction of the church in 1896. Our current interim, while trained and experienced at a freestanding altar, has respectfully found our sacred space to be quite intimate and worshipful as she leads worship. The repositioning of the altar continues to be a welcome and ongoing discussion.



***How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?***

All who attend St. Thomas are welcomed and encouraged to discover and participate in their area of interest/ministry. Sign up sheets are available annually for our ongoing ministries. Throughout the year, announcements, newsletters, and calls are made to inform the parish of immediate ministry needs. We have an active Lay Eucharistic Ministry and Visitor team who visit the sick and homebound weekly. Our men's group is active in involving others in the parish and community to participate in their fellowship events.



***As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional, and physical well being?***

Spiritually our weekly worship service, Sunday School programs for all ages, Lay Eucharistic Ministry and Visitor team, and Centering Prayer/Lectio Divina nourish us. Emotionally, we support each other in times of need by furnishing food and comfort. We care for the physical well being of each other through prayers for healing.



***How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?***

Our parish runs a Food Pantry that distributes food on a monthly basis and as needed in an emergency. The committee works closely with Department of Human Resources (DHR) and other community churches in determining the needs of the community. We are involved annually in the Community Thanksgiving Service where the offering is given to the Ecumenical Ministerial Association to help serve those in need. The Women of the Church are involved year round in raising funds to help support our diocesan children's home and other diocesan and community ministries and programs. Other areas we participate in are the annual Community Prayer Walk through all schools in the county and weekly prayers for the sick in our community.



***Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographic region.***

Our parish is/has been involved in the following: Various committees and boards of the diocese, Deputies to General Convention 7 times, Standing Committee, Cursillo staff, Happening staff, Camp Beckwith summer staff, Bishop Search/Transition, hospitality following the annual Jonathan Myrick Daniels Pilgrimage in Hayneville, community wide Lenten ecumenical services followed by lunch provided by ECW, Shrove Tuesday Community Pancake Supper hosted by the men of the church and held at St. Thomas, and Food for the Poor.



***Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted about this?***

In the last five years our parish, particularly the ECW, has initiated several ministry programs (Empty Bowls, Game Day, etc). While the programs themselves were successful events, they did not lead to an ongoing ministry. Even though it was started more than 5 years ago, the Food Pantry continues to flourish and incorporate many of our members. Parishioner Cemira Powell may be contacted about this ministry through the St. Thomas Office, 334.382.8914. Recently we reinstated our Lay Eucharistic Ministry and Visitor program. Communion is served every Sunday except the 5th Sunday to our homebound and sick members. The Rev. Dr. Mary Jayne Ledgerwood may be contacted, also through the Church Office, 334.382.8914.

***What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?***

Our Stewardship Committee has initiated a campaign that focuses on our giving back in response to all that God has given us. Dinners are held in homes where displays and videos, which illustrate our ministries and needs, are presented. This has created a closer relationship among members and a feeling of working toward a common goal. The results have been an increase in giving and involvement in parish ministry.



***What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?***

As far as we know, in the history of St. Thomas we have been blessed with minimal congregational conflict. Our most recent experience with major conflict occurred during the tenure of a priest whose call 20+ years ago caused dissention among the congregation. Feelings were hurt and tension was high. After the priest departed, we received inadequately supervised diocesan counsel that left us with a feeling of a breach of confidentiality and unresolved feelings. Time and our care and concern for one another regardless of personal feelings have helped to heal our congregation. While the issue remains in our memory, we have moved beyond it and concentrated on our worship, ministries, and community life together.



***What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?***

Years ago, the rood screen was secretly removed from our worship space by the rector. This change did not go well. The lesson learned was that teaching, communication, and transparency are key to positive reaction to change. As a result of this experience, our parish has moved through changes in the Prayer Book, liturgical styles of worship, congregational diversity, introduction of Taize and more contemporary music, as well as architectural changes without incident.

