St. Luke’s Parish Profile 2022

St. Luke’s is seeking a part-time rector.

- Can you **compassionately** shepherd a small rural parish whose members are eager to share their genuine love and diverse gifts?
  - Are you an energetic **visionary** who can inspire others to action?
- Are you an **articulate** preacher who can bring the church’s teachings to a modern audience?
  - Do you understand and appreciate **traditional** liturgy and music?

If you answered “yes” to these questions, we’d love to hear from you. To express interest, please contact the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago

*(See diocese’s contact information at the end of this document)*
Our Faith Community

The faith community at St. Luke’s maintains a fairly high-church liturgical tradition while embracing the progressive theological views of the Episcopal Church. This unique balance between liturgical tradition and theological progressiveness differentiates St. Luke’s from many other churches in the Dixon area. Within this framework, our parishioners enjoy a sense of peace and genuine caring for one another. During the small group discussions that were part of our search discernment process, participants repeatedly expressed their sense of St. Luke's being a community which is warm and welcoming to all, whatever their life circumstances might be. The parishioners of St. Luke's live out their value of diversity: To quote our Baptismal Covenant, they strive, with God's help, to “respect the dignity of every human being.”

Our congregation consists of approximately 50 households. In the era of COVID-19, Sunday in-person attendance averages about 25. Pre-pandemic, attendance ranged between 30 and 45. Many of our parishioners are older than 50, and few are younger than the age of 16. The parish consists of a mixture of professionals and non-professionals. The varied occupational backgrounds of our congregants include the arts, business entrepreneurship, education, engineering, farming, healthcare, industry, mental health services, law, and science.

We are blessed to have a strong lay leadership whose members are committed to their support of the worship and mission of our church, as well as to its administrative and maintenance needs. That leadership is supported by the loving service of our dedicated supply priest, who has gone far above and beyond simply celebrating Eucharist on Sundays. An additional blessing is our resident deacon emeritus, who weekly reads the Gospel and assists at Eucharist. There is a strong spirit of volunteerism in our parish.

Consistent with the demographics of our congregation, programs at St. Luke's are primarily adult-oriented. While we value these programs, we also recognize the need for continuing to seek new ways to reach out to new families and youth in our community. However, our discernment process has revealed that our parishioners believe that it is not enough for St. Luke’s to grow in numbers alone: They believe also that our parish must continue to grow in spirit, as well.

Spiritual growth comes, in part, from reaching out to and helping others, and our members have cited rejuvenating outreach as an important parish goal. While our monthly Red Bowl monetary outreach has continued during the pandemic, other more “hands-on” endeavors have been paused due to COVID-19 precautions and concerns. Our parishioners’ involvement with Buddy Bags, the PADS Women’s and Children’s Shelter, and St. Luke’s own “Hallow-Way Station” are just a few examples of outreach endeavors that we have missed and are eager to return to. In light of our parish’s small size, none of these outreaches have been on a large scale, but they nonetheless have been an essential part of life at St. Luke’s.
Our Worship

Amidst the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, parishioners at St. Luke’s are deeply grateful that in-person worship has been able to resume. Celebrating the Eucharist together (and the fellowship that follows at coffee hour) is an essential part of our spiritual life.

Our 10:30 a.m. Sunday Eucharist generally follows the Book of Common Prayer. However, our desire to maintain viable Sunday worship during the pandemic has necessitated some flexibility. For example, although parishioners at St. Luke’s traditionally have enjoyed having a sung Sunday Eucharist, those elements of the service customarily sung have been spoken when our diocese’s COVID-19 precautions have prohibited singing.

Our small choir also has been affected by COVID-19, with its numbers having dropped during the periods of remote-only worship and prohibited vocal music, and during an interim period when we had no music director. We are thankful to once again have a talented music director, who arrived at St. Luke’s in November, 2020. He is working to rebuild our choir, in addition to providing an extremely high caliber of organ accompaniment to our worship.

Since the departure of our most recent rector in late July, 2020, St. Luke’s has been blessed by the presence of a dedicated supply priest who has been with us for all Sunday services. Aside from the welcome continuity this brings, his gifted use of language and relevant, scripture-based sermons have been prized by our congregation, which places a high value on relatable, quality preaching. We also are blessed by the presence of our resident deacon emeritus, who weekly participates in the Eucharist.

Ironically, the pandemic has had one positive effect in that it has spurred St. Luke’s to look for ways to make our Sunday services as accessible as possible to those who are hesitant or unable to attend in person. When in-person worship first was suspended by our diocese, we began with a socially-distanced parishioner recording a simple prayer service and homily presented by our then-rector. This recorded service was then posted on YouTube and linked to the parish Facebook page. Follow this link to view an example: www.youtube.com/watch?v=klEnV8H4zYk&t=29s.

With the arrival of our organist / music director, who has multi-media experience, we moved to a recorded full Eucharist, with limited personnel but no congregation, when this became permissible. View a sample here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlpv9asiFU&t=157s Later, when congregational in-person worship resumed, we began live-streaming our Eucharist via YouTube and Facebook, again thanks largely to the efforts of our organist / music director. Based on the favorable reactions of viewers, we hope to continue this outreach of on-line worship. Our Facebook page containing links to services (as well as to other content) can be viewed here: www.facebook.com/St-Lukes-Church-Dixon-IL-192706913803.
Special services throughout the church calendar year have been integral to worship life at St. Luke’s. Regrettably, most of these were prevented by pandemic restrictions. We will welcome their return.

Our Music

The richness of the Anglican Communion’s musical heritage is reflected at St. Luke’s. Cathedral evensong, polyphony by Byrd and Gibbons, anthems by Tallis, oratorios by Handel, the hymns of Wesley and Vaughan Williams, and the stately music of Elgar are just some of the highlights of that tradition. At St. Luke’s, this music and the spoken word combine to enrich one another and to provide a focused and meaningful worship experience as part of our weekly liturgy. Our Sunday service features favorite hymns of the church season led by a talented organist and a small but dedicated choir. Because St. Luke’s is unique in our local area in providing such musical forms as part of our worship, many of our parishioners have come to view this as a form of outreach.

Our Community Outreach

Despite its small size, our parish strives to find ways to reach out to our wider community. Unfortunately, some of this activity has recently been curtailed by the pandemic. Parishioners are generous in their financial support of our monthly “Red Bowl” outreach, in which donors place specially earmarked contributions in red bowls which are passed during the Offertory. These contributions are forwarded to a local charity chosen at the beginning of each year by our vestry. The Dixon Community Food Pantry, the YWCA’s programming for victims of domestic violence, and Sinissippi Centers (a provider of behavioral health services) are among past beneficiaries of this outreach.

An outreach which was just gaining a foothold as the pandemic began is that of collecting personal care items for donation to the PADS Women’s and Children’s Shelter.

Our deacon emeritus has been a leader in our outreach, and has set a fine example for our parish. In addition to her work as a volunteer chaplain at Dixon’s KSB Hospital, she has taken an active role in Buddy Bags (a local feeding program for children from low-income families). Her involvement has inspired our parish to form a team to participate in a rotation of volunteers who meet weekly to pack meals for this program. Additionally, she is active in the Dixon Area Clergy Ministerial Association. She also has been available for home and hospital visits and for bringing Communion when needed.

It is our hope to rejuvenate these outreaches – and to explore new outreach opportunities – as COVID-19 precautions are relaxed and wider-spread vaccinations ensure increased safety.
Our Future

Despite the generous support of our parishioners, we realize we cannot support a full-time priest. Happily, although our recent rector did not hold a full-time position, we found, thanks largely to his inspiring and innovative leadership, that St. Luke’s can not only survive with a part time priest, but it actually can thrive. A spirit of volunteerism and support is alive and well here. Although the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic have taxed our collective energy, we look forward with excitement to moving into a future in which that spirit can, through the grace of God, be renewed and continue to flourish.

Through our small group discussions, our parishioners have expressed the desire for St. Luke’s to grow not only in numbers, but also in spirit. They are eager to rejuvenate familiar forms of community outreach which have been dormant during the pandemic. Further, development of new kinds of outreach is an identified priority, along with increasing our youth membership. Parishioners also want to further build our church’s on-line presence. We were thrilled to learn in mid-December, 2021 that the Diocese of Chicago has awarded our parish a $5,000 technology grant, which will be used to work toward this goal.

Our New Rector

Not surprisingly, the small group discussions that were part of our search discernment included much discussion of the traits we want our new rector to possess. Participants in these discussions expressed a number of heartfelt values as they spoke of their hopes about our rector-to-be.

Parishioners agree that he or she must be a good communicator whose leadership is energetic visionary, and inspires action in others. A deep spirituality, along with skill in preaching intelligent sermons which are relevant to the real world are also important to our parishioners. Given our congregation’s value of the traditional Episcopal worship style, an understanding and appreciation of traditional liturgy and music also are thought to be essential.

Small group participants also strongly value the importance of the rector’s being proactive in visiting parishioners, especially the shut-ins, elderly and sick. They also emphasize that he or she must be comfortable in a rural setting, and be welcoming of the many gifts that our congregants have to offer – particularly those of their time and talent.

We recognize that our future will not be without challenges. We understand that, as a small congregation, we run the risk of our leadership becoming overburdened. A particular challenge is that of attracting new members in an increasingly secular society whose norms compete with church attendance. Also, we struggle with the realization that the very tradition and continuity valued by our parishioners may conflict with the evolution which may be necessary to attract new members. And, as is true in many small parishes, finances also are an ongoing challenge.
Our Church Building and Physical Plant

The Episcopal Church in Dixon was organized in 1838. The first church building was erected in 1856. That structure later was extensively remodeled to serve as the parsonage for the neighboring First Methodist Church. Construction of the present Victorian Gothic-style church building began in 1871, and the new church was consecrated on St. Luke's Day, October 18, 1872. The rectory was built in part with stone left over from the construction of the Dixon Public Library in 1901. During the late 1950s and early 1960, the Eells Memorial Building and an underground passageway connecting the Eells Building, church, and rectory were constructed.

The passageway ("The Tunnel," as it’s affectionately called) goes under the alley which separates the church and the rectory, connecting both with the Eells Building. Several rooms are located in the passageway. While it also has its own exterior entry door, the parish office also can be accessed via The Tunnel.

Thanks to major renovations in 2014-15, the sanctuary and undercroft are fully accessible, with an ADA-compliant wheelchair lift connecting the two.

A Hank & Hastings organ was installed in the church in 1885 and was replaced during the 1960s with the "Memorial Organ" (made possible by many memorial gifts). In 1993, the organ underwent a major restoration, essentially resulting in a new organ. The process of renovation and improvement continues to this day, making it one of the best organs in western Illinois, rivaling many throughout the state.

Our Physical Projects

Our parish is proud of our church building. We have invested significant funds to maintain the beauty, functionality and safety of our physical complex so we can utilize it to carry out the ministries we are called to do. To view a comprehensive list of renovation and maintenance projects, click here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TtHiwrw9uo2UNVm3FT92eQsILLjrWtk/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=107477657608956971816&rtpof=true&sd=true.

Our Finances

St. Luke's is well supported by its parishioners and is financially healthy, considering the size of congregation, the mean income of the community, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following is a snapshot of our finances:
St. Luke’s Financials

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Operating Budget</th>
<th>Pledge/Plate Contributions</th>
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<tr>
<td>*2019</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>***2021</td>
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* Included a $57,000 church plaster and painting project.

**Included a $16,400 bell tower roof replacement project.

***As of December 17, 2021. Includes $12,000 in rectory repair projects.

Please note: St. Luke’s receives additional grants, designated contributions, and utilizes resources from investments to further assist our operating budget each year.

Our Hometown: Dixon, Illinois


Dixon’s vibrant downtown, centered on First Street one block south of the Rock River, features a wide variety of shops, services, and activities. Access from St. Luke’s, just two blocks to the south, is quick and convenient. For more information about downtown, visit [www.discoverdixon.com/](http://www.discoverdixon.com/).
The downtown features several excellent restaurants with a variety of menus, including Italian, epicurean, Thai, and Mexican. There also are a coffee bistro, a tea bistro, a wine shop, and a juice and exercise bar. There are also several barbershops, salons, and clothing boutiques.

Our region has a long history of artistic and musical endeavors, and several entertainment venues also are convenient to the center of town.

The city has a lively arts and musical scene. For more information, visit the following links: https://dixonstageleft.org/, www.facebook.com/canterburyconcerts/.

Dixon has a variety of healthcare facilities. Katherine Shaw Bethea (KSB) Hospital (www.ksbhospital.com/) and its clinics offer a wide range of physicians and specialties. Florissa (https://florissacenter.org/), a pediatric development center, provides developmental, behavioral, and social / emotional services for children from birth to age 18. Sinnissippi Centers (https://sinnissippi.org/) and the Northern Illinois Cancer Treatment Center (www.nicancer.com/) are located four miles west of town.

Dixon features several sites of historic interest, including the Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home (www.reaganhome.org/), the Northwest Territory Historic Center, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution) (https://nthc.org/), the Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society, and the Loveland Community Building Museum.

For information about educational institutions in and near Dixon, visit the following links: www.dps170.org/ , www.svcc.edu/ , www.niu.edu/index.shtml

The Dixon Public Library, just around the corner from the St. Luke's rectory, houses over 70,000 books, more than 1,000 DVDs and nearly 1,000 compact discs and audio books. The library also offers various information resources and services. (www.dixongov.com/library.html)

The Dixon Park District (www.dixonparkdistrict.com/) has a wide range of recreational facilities. Lowell Park, four miles north of Dixon along the Rock River, features 240 acres of woodland trails and recreational facilities. An additional nine parks are located within the city limits. Just a few miles north of Dixon is White Pines State Park, which offers 38S acres for camping, hiking and recreation.

Dixon offers the advantages of small-town living combined with easy access to Chicagoland to the east and the Quad Cities to the west. Amidst the corn and soybeans of farm country, we are a vital community. We open our doors and hearts to visitors and to those who want to make Dixon their home. With the continuing expansion of Chicagoland and the Quad Cities, Dixon’s growth as a city is expected and welcomed.
Our Diocese

The Episcopal Diocese of Chicago has 122 member congregations, spreading from Lake Michigan on the east, to the Wisconsin border on the north, and the Iowa border on the west. The Diocese is known for its leadership initiatives designed to support congregational vitality. The diocese focuses its energies on two key programs: The College for Congregational Development and Fierce Conversations. The Nicholas Center, located on the fifth floor of the Diocesan office building in downtown Chicago, provides classroom space and accommodations for these programs as well as other leadership events for clergy and lay leaders.

At a special convention in December, 2020 the Rev. Paula E. Clark, then canon to the ordinary in the Diocese of Washington, D.C., was elected to serve as bishop. While the diocese awaits bishop-elect Clark’s consecration, the diocese is well served by our Assisting Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Chilton Knudsen, and the Standing Committee, which is functioning as ecclesiastical authority.

How to Apply

To apply for this position please complete the Clergy Information Form for Transitions found on the diocesan website: https://episcopalchicago.wufoo.com/forms/m1poxgz40cwsj2w/

For more information about this position, please contact Andrea Mysen, Director of Ministries, at amysen@episcopalchicago.org

For more photographs of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, please visit: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18-EinBBJ8klaD3p2sWMnxSPmzYG4s2_A?usp=sharing.