



Reflection questions

Self –

How have you as an individual changed over the past three years? (This question is for self-reflection only, submission not necessary.)

Most people skipped this question. The few answers varied: some have become more aware of the need to be supportive of those who are trying to keep the church going; others have become more cynical about how the hierarchy of the church handled Ian's situation. Some have become less tolerant and some more tolerant. Many of the answers were about a personal situation.

Church

How has St. Michael's changed over the past three years? What is different about this family of faith now as opposed to 2022?

When our full-time priest was suspended by the diocese, we changed to supply clergy, the primary one being Ellen who is much loved by many in the parish. We have gone from having three Eucharists a week to having two on Sunday and Evensong on Wednesday.

The attendance at Sunday services has dropped dramatically. Parishioners have left the church because of the Diocesan's disciplinary process, which appeared to be unfair and unreasonably secretive. Those who remain have become more dedicated, wiser, and more tolerant.

The glacial pace of resolving issues allowed the church to lose momentum in starting new programs and implementing ideas that Ian set in motion.

We have gone three more years without any kind of faith formation for adults or children

Community –

How has Litchfield and the surrounding area changed over the past three years? What is different now as opposed to 2022?

The population and the average age have increased since Covid.

Litchfield has gained two high-end hotels, and all prices have risen.

Litchfield schools have merged with Goshen, Warren, and Morris to become Lakeview High School.

There is more traffic.

Cores –

What are the core strengths of this faith community. What are you best at?

St. Michael's has been described as being about people, those within and outside our walls. Some words used to describe us: traditional, playful, flexible, open, caring, welcoming, strong, faithful, sincerely spiritual and loving. We believe we want to adapt to our rapidly changing world with tenacity and perseverance.

We have parishioners who care for each other, the wider community, and our 100+-year old neo-Gothic stone building with its stained-glass windows. It is a gift from our past and we endeavor to maintain its presence in Litchfield as a source of solace, energy, renewal, and service to the needs of the world.

We have been told that our music brings people together, provides spiritual sustenance, is amazing and splendid.

We value the dedication of the many parishioners who serve in varied ways: liturgical assistant, general building maintenance, memorial garden and labyrinth care, offering tours and hosting concerts in the nave, and whatever it takes to continue to be a strong and serving presence.

Our church is open every day from 7am-7pm for anyone as a place of rest and prayer.

These features of our common life were mentioned consistently;

- our beautiful, uplifting, liturgy;
- our care of our property, both building and grounds;
- our traditional, high church music, choir, and organ;
- our loving, supportive, sincerely spiritual community;
- our outreach with the Food Pantry and Always Open Shelf;

- our openness to visitors and newcomers, students, year-round and seasonal visitors.

Also mentioned were:

- our being an older congregation with wise elders;
- our strong lay leadership and its many dedicated, hardworking members;
- the open-mindedness and inclusiveness of the Episcopal tradition.

Edges

What are the growing edges of this faith community? What do you need to get better at?

There were several comments about:

- Wanting to attract families and young people;
- Having more aging members;
- Reaching out with our message of faith to the community;
- Offering volunteer opportunities to both young people and adults;
- Seeking more outreach projects;
- Needing more volunteers to visit the shut in members of our congregation
- Needing to keep in touch with the peripheral members of our congregation;
- Needing more volunteers generally, and reaching out to ask people to serve;
- Needing to get to know each other, be nicer to each other, and welcome new ideas;
- Valuing and serving the needs of older members who join us as retirees;
- Needing to continue to pledge even when we are unhappy with parish affairs.

Future

How can your gifts, passion, and energy best find expression in St Michael's future?

Our congregation expressed lots of energy, enthusiasm and spirituality!

- Eager to volunteer on site (office, choir, altar guild, flower guild, gardens, lector, food pantry, finance, liturgical assistant);
- Eager to volunteer from home for those who are older and have less energy
- Willing to help with children's programming or church school if we get children;
- Interested in offering skills as lay leader (warden, vestry), worship leader, lay preacher, Stephen's ministry leader, yoga and meditation classes, welcoming visitors and strangers and developing and deepening those skills and encouraging volunteers.

Priest

How do you see the next priest helping St. Michael's to live more fully into the future?

We are looking for a priest with these strengths –

- full time pastoral leader
- energy and humility
- dynamic
- Reliance on Book of Common Prayer
- forward thinking
- community minded
- ability to offer direction
- open to change and progress to put St Michael's on a stronger footing
- sense of humor.

Many people thought the priest should live in town if not in the rectory.

Nearly everyone thought the priest should be a visible part of the Litchfield community collaborating with other clergy, businesses, schools and civic groups.

The priest should present thoughtful, inspiring, reverent liturgies and appreciate our music.

The priest should be able to initiate change, working with the status quo in a positive manner, bring us together as a community and provide opportunities for learning and growing spiritually.

Not mentioned in the survey, but the search committee adds that it would be a real asset if the priest were extremely computer literate.