



# ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL PARISH

*Since 1759, Celebrating 250 Years of Ministry*

## **Introduction**

It is surprisingly difficult to sum up in one readably brief document what makes a parish - even one as small as ours - unique.

We must talk about its people, of course; how they see themselves, why they come to *this* church, why they stay - or in some cases, why they do not. But we must also try to set our parish as it exists today in some kind of social, spiritual and historical context. In other words, how did we get here, who are we today, what is God calling us to become and most importantly at this moment of transition, who will lead us there?

This Profile, the result of many months of large-scale parish meetings, confidential surveys, one-on-one interviews and countless prayers, will attempt to condense those findings to concisely but accurately portray our congregation, the community in which we live, our opportunities for improvement and the qualities we seek in our new pastor.

*Note: this Profile provides a brief overview of our parish's life. Please explore other areas of this website for a more detailed picture.*

## **Who We Are**

### **A Legacy of Love**

Although we are a parish that can trace its roots more than 250 years into the past, it is the most recent two decades that are of the greatest relevance when we talk about who we are now and how we got that way. This is because we were blessed for the past twenty-three years by the presence of our recently-retired rector, Mother Lynn Harrington, who quite literally brought us back to life.

Liturgical and social divisions during the late 1970's and mid-80's had again and again reduced our numbers, finally leaving the handful of survivors broke, rectorless and near mission status. As a senior warden at the time recalls, "We stayed for each other. If any one of us had left, all of us would have left. We had to put our trust in God, because along with each other, that was all we had."

That, and Mother Lynn. The spiritually and financially healthy community we are today, composed of two vibrant congregations in two beautiful churches, would simply not exist had she not, in 1988, seen what she called that "holy remnant" of barely a dozen souls holding on in a parish on the brink, and accepted the challenge of their call.

Because of her hard work and that of the hundreds of parishioners she attracted during her tenure, we have the luxury today of standing on a firm foundation; our focus is not on issues of survival or the need for urgent change, but rather on how we can harness the strong currents of family, fellowship and faith that flow within our congregation to make our parish an even better place.

### **Family Matters**

Given our recent history, it should come as no surprise that in all our search-related surveys and sitdowns, one theme stood out above all: we feel that when we come to worship at St. John's and St. Paul's, and when we gather for parish activities throughout the year, we are doing so *as a family gathers*, in a spirit of unity, fellowship and mutual support. We are there for Christ - and we are there for each other.

Furthermore, we see our pastor - the spiritual and temporal head of our family - as absolutely central to why we come here and why we so willingly dedicate our time, treasure and talent to this parish. And while our new rector will come here knowing that he or she inherits the legacy of an extraordinary person who is greatly missed, they should also be energized to know that a fired-up community of doers - one that has been taught to show faith through action - stands ready and willing to follow them and to help chart a course into the future.

And like the extended family we strive to emulate, we embrace and celebrate the diversity found in our congregation - the youthful enthusiasm of our children and teens and the wisdom of our senior members, our respect for Episcopal tradition and our openness to new liturgical experiences, the wide range of economic, cultural and religious backgrounds of our members.

### **Everyone Into the Pool**

Perhaps because of our relatively small size, nearly every member of the congregation gets involved in some aspect of parish life. Whether it's the enormous dedication of serving on vestry, lending a hand or voice during services, reaching out to neighbors in need or flipping burgers at a parish barbecue, a host of ministries await those who wish to volunteer their time and energy.

Many of our parishioners report that when they first came to St. John's or St. Paul's, they were warmly welcomed and made to feel at home. This is no accident. While privacy is respected and no one is pressured to make connections within the congregation, it is the rare newcomer who does not find themselves comfortable and involved in short order. Many lasting friendships have begun within the walls of our churches.

Can we do more to encourage even greater involvement and to be sure that everyone feels welcome? Absolutely, as we will discuss later in this Profile.

## **Who We Were**

### **Bent but Never Broken**

The second "F" of our parish's unofficial motto, "250 Years of Faith, Fortitude and Fellowship," hints at the turbulent history of a church that has peered into the abyss of elimination more times than the New York Mets.

Fortunately for us, safely looking back a quarter-millennium up the road, our forebears distant and not-so-distant always found a way to walk us back from the brink.

We will not attempt to condense those 250 years into a few paragraphs here (those with a little time to spare and an interest in cliffhangers and colorful characters can click [here](#) to browse through *Trial & Triumph*, the parish history written in 2009 to celebrate our 250th anniversary).

Suffice to say that a Church of England parish, founded in 1759 by an itinerant Anglican preacher among the "scattered poor people of the lower district of Salem" and which built its first humble church just five years before the American Revolution swept away all things British, was in for a challenging ride, to say the least. Indeed that first little church soon found itself forcibly repurposed as a field hospital for colonial soldiers and later, a tavern; its first full-time rector, the Rev. Epenetus Townsend, died with his young family in a shipwreck while fleeing imprisonment by the Rebels.

Subsequent slow recoveries and miraculous "golden ages" saw the triumphal building in 1855 of the beautiful St. John's stone church we inhabit today and the creation in 1899 of the glorious Victorian sanctuary that is St. Paul's Chapel. Along the way, an unlikely assortment of key players from the celebrated historian Robert Bolton to the infamous "Boss" Tweed left their marks.

Through good times and bad, whether buffeted by political strife in the 1770's or social upheaval two hundred years later, we demonstrated time and again that our parish is clearly meant to be here - first, by simply surviving, then by growing into the flourishing community of faith and fellowship that we are today.

We stand now at another pivotal moment in our parish's history, looking back 250 years in celebration and not a little amazement, but more importantly, looking ahead as we shape a vision of where we go from here.

## **Who We Want To Be**

Self-examination, if done properly, should be thorough, unblinking and rigorous; if no discomfort is involved, chances are one is merely admiring one's reflection.

Judging by the respectable number of conditions we identified that merit serious remedial work, as well as the occasional unexpected wake-up calls we received, our self-study appears to have been conducted properly. It's never easy to talk about the things that need to be improved, but patting oneself on the back is rarely constructive and often downright destructive.

Those aspiring to be our new rector will be pleased to know that a healthy list of challenges await; there is little risk of boredom.

Our primary administrative issues are financial. While the church is generally healthy, our yearly budgets are very tight. Our membership and yearly financial pledges have room for growth. In addition, we have no endowment to insure the future financial health of the parish. This is a matter of concern.

One of our longstanding challenges is the existence of two physically separate congregations within one parish. While on one hand this offers us our most obvious opportunity for growth and enrichment, it is clear that there is a need for greater continuity and fellowship between the congregations. The St. John's parishioners are larger in number and include many families with children; St. Paul's, though very active in its own right, consists of a much smaller group, almost entirely adult. The need to actively recruit and retain new members there, including families, is clear.

Perhaps part of the challenge with congregation size and continuity lies in what emerged as a surprisingly polarizing topic during our self-study: the way we greet and welcome newcomers and the general strength of fellowship in our parish. What might be termed our *congregational charisma* is viewed by many as a great strength. However, there are a number of people in the congregation who view our church's closely-knit culture as a barrier and have challenged us to do a better job of attracting, welcoming, and retaining new parishioners. We must carefully examine why our communal spirit is perceived by some as a negative, and work to make all new members feel comfortable, supported and spiritually enriched.

Currently, we have a fairly constant group of doers who tend to repeatedly take on leadership roles, creating an ongoing risk of "volunteer burn-out," as well as a certain complacency that more help may not be needed. Some parishioners have even expressed a feeling that leadership is not sufficiently inclusive, and that there is neither room nor welcome for new people. We need to diagnose this problem accurately and find effective ways to encourage a broader base of parishioners to get involved, stay involved and be willing to lead.

In addition, our self-study showed these opportunities for growth:

- We need an expanded presence in the Lewisboro community in order to grow. We need to make greater efforts to reach out locally and become a more visible presence in the community by example and through service in community activities.
- We seek greater racial, cultural and social diversity in our congregations, so that all will feel welcome.
- We have a rich resource in our youth, but we need to do a better job of preparing them for leadership within the church by involving them in a wide range of internal and outreach projects, not solely in Youth Group activities.
- We desire an increase in parish activities such as book groups, Bible study and adult forums, with guest speakers that will strengthen us internally as a parish and draw people from the larger community.
- We note that we need greater transparency in church financial matters, including more frequent financial reports, as well as educating the congregation about the critical importance of pledges and the need to create an endowment.

## **What We Seek In Our Rector**

A key element of our parish's search process has been the attempt to identify the qualities that are most important to us in a pastor and to reach consensus on exactly what those qualities look like; in other words, how will we know when we've found *the* person?

Many parish meetings, surveys and group discussions were devoted to this issue, and when the dust settled, several things were quite clear: first, there was nearly unanimous agreement regarding the attributes we value most; and second, it wouldn't hurt if our new rector were superhuman - we had in fact designed the Perfect Pastor.

We trust that those interested in this position will understand that this idealization is a natural outgrowth of the search process and that they should not be discouraged if their strengths are not an exact match nor reluctant to admit it if they do not actually walk on water.

We are seeking vibrant and versatile leadership for our parish, its two churches and the Early Learning Center. Our ideal candidate will be a gifted preacher who inspires and challenges us, a loving pastor who guides us toward spiritual and personal growth, an effective teacher who helps us understand the relevance of Scripture and the liturgy in our daily lives, a forceful administrator who knows how to prioritize, motivate and delegate, and a trusted spiritual guide who understands that this is holy work, not just a job.

The following areas of pastoral responsibility were consistently noted as most important to our parishioners:

*Weekly Sermons:*

- Interpreting lessons and gospels to make them relevant to current times
- Constructing a focused and concise sermon that is appropriate to the audience and engaging
- Creating sermons that deliver content to parishioners of all ages and make people think and feel differently
- Injecting humor, warmth and humility in their own personal outlook and preaching

*Liturgical Planning and Preparation:*

- Consulting with Choir Director and lay leaders to create a service that resonates with the congregation.
- Developing special services and overseeing preparation for church holidays and special occasions.
- Creating and implementing new ministries that can be integrated creatively into our worship.

*Pastoral Care, Crisis Counseling and Spiritual Direction:*

- Enriching the faith journey of parishioners as they search for their own Christian path
- Inspiring others to follow Christ in spiritual growth in times of crisis and transition.

*Christian Education:*

- Consulting with Church School and Youth Group Director to develop meaningful, age-appropriate instruction and activities.
- Providing spiritual guidance and preparation for sacraments that will impact the participants.
- Developing and leading spiritual programs for Confirmands and adults that educate and inspire.

*Administration:*

- Motivating vestry, ministry leaders, support staff and congregation to work together toward common parish goals
- Identifying individual talents of parishioners to create energetic and effective lay leadership.
- Directing vestry, Building and Grounds, Inreach/Outreach, etc. and maintaining systems for reporting and follow up.

- Overseeing parish finances and actively participating in fundraising, stewardship, budgeting, and disbursement of funds in consultation with bookkeeper, treasurer, and vestry to maximize funds.
- Utilizing all available means of communications to unite and inform parish internally and to spread programs and ministries to wider community.
- Overseeing Early Learning Center and collaborating with director to plan staffing, curriculum, calendar and summer camp program.

*Community:*

- Participating in various town ceremonies and celebrations as the embodiment of the parish within the community.
- Creating new ways to generate interest and energy within the community, e.g. festive events

## **Where We Live**

We are a parish of people who exist quite comfortably with their feet in different worlds. From our base here in northern Westchester County, we move within the orbit of the New York City metropolis, one of the most dynamic - and demanding - places to live on the planet. Many of us trek to Manhattan daily by train or car to earn our livelihoods; most of us partake of the city's many attractions as often as possible. We marvel that, on a good day, we can be in midtown in less than an hour.

And yet, we are a small-town parish in many ways. With barely 160 families in our combined churches, we rank among the smaller Episcopal parishes in the country.

Why does this matter? Simply because we are people of both worlds - appreciating and enjoying the social, cultural and economic benefits of living so close to New York City, while at the same time cherishing the exurban pleasures of open spaces, clean air, quiet nights and friendly neighbors.

## **Our Town**

St. John's Church and St. Paul's Chapel are located within the Town of Lewisboro, which in turn consists of six hamlets: Goldens Bridge, Cross River, Waccabuc, South Salem, Lewisboro and Vista. St. John's is in South Salem and St. Paul's is in Vista.

Each hamlet in Lewisboro has its own distinctive character. South Salem and Waccabuc surround natural lakes and consist of beautiful homes, a private golf course and much natural beauty.

South Salem is a quaint village of antique shops, an inn that dates back to 1749 and our neighbor, the South Salem Presbyterian Church, which serves as the site for the annual Memorial Day Fair that brings out virtually all the townspeople.

Lewisboro hamlet and Vista are located on the eastern edge of town and border Ridgefield and New Canaan, Connecticut. These areas once consisted of farms and open fields from which one could see all the way to Long Island Sound. Today, they retain much of their semi-rural flavor.

Goldens Bridge, the westernmost hamlet, is located on the Harlem Line of the Metro North Railroad, an economic driver ever since its inception. Today, commuters ply the route to White Plains and to Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan. In the late 60's, Interstate 684 was built, cementing Goldens Bridge as the "connection" to Manhattan and the world beyond.

Cross River, the hamlet located approximately five miles east of Goldens Bridge, was impacted by the construction of the Cross River Reservoir in 1905 as part of the New York City water system, requiring the relocation of numerous homesteads; their ghostly foundations are still visible on the infrequent occasions that the city drains the reservoir for repair work.

A full range of services, community activities and pastimes are available in Lewisboro. Much of town government - the zoning board of appeals, the planning board, the conservation board, the parks and recreation board - consists of volunteer members. The Katonah-Lewisboro School Board consists of volunteer members voted into office by town residents. These volunteers make up the heart of Lewisboro, giving their time and talent to the town in appreciation for its many benefits.

### ***Government***

[Town of Lewisboro](#)

[Westchester County](#)

### ***Schools:***

[Katonah Lewisboro School District](#),

Preschool/Afterschool: [St. John's ELC](#), [South Salem Nursery School](#), [Country Children's Center](#), [Thistlewaithe Learning Center](#), [Ridgefield Montessori School](#)

Independent schools: [Harvey School](#), [Ridgefield Academy](#), [The Montfort Academy](#), [Saint Mary School](#), [St. Patricks School of Bedford](#), [Kennedy Catholic High School](#)

### ***Sports and Recreation:***

Town recreation facilities include ball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, a swimming pool and cabana. Local recreational groups consist of horseback riding fans and organized teams for tennis, softball and basketball. There are multiple golf courses in northern Westchester and in neighboring Connecticut. The County of Westchester operates six municipal golf courses for county residents at very modest greens fees. County parks, hiking and biking trails, numerous lakes, Long Island Sound, the Hudson River and nearby mountains with fine skiing round out the sports and recreational opportunities.

[Department of Parks and Recreation](#)

[Lewisboro Soccer Club](#)

[Lewisboro Baseball Assoc.](#)

[Westchester County Parks](#)

[Waccabuc County Club](#)

[Thunder Ridge Ski Area](#)

### ***Community organizations:***

Lewisboro is proud of its many civic organizations, welcoming participation by people of all ages and interests. Scouts, Lions Club, Volunteer Ambulance Corp and Fire Departments are some of the most active. The town sponsors a Memorial Day parade, Fourth of July fireworks, and seasonal children's activities and lessons.

[Town of Lewisboro Program Brochure](#)

[Civic organizations - Lewisboro](#)

[BSA](#) , [GSA](#), [Lewisboro Seniors](#),

### ***Business and Shops:***

Nearby towns of Katonah and Mount Kisco, as well as Ridgefield and New Canaan in Connecticut, boast a wide variety of shops and small businesses. Katonah consists of multiple Victorian residences, including its central business district which was established at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ridgefield is an archetypical New England village with white colonial homes and churches, a village green and quaint shops. Ridgefield is noted particularly for its antique shops and fine restaurants. Within 30 miles, the choices are abundant, including White Plains as well as Danbury, Stamford and Norwalk in Connecticut - all offer large indoor shopping malls and mega stores.

[Katonah](#), [Ridgefield, CT](#), [New Canaan, CT](#), [Danbury Fair Mall](#), [The Westchester \(please add Stamford Town Center link\)](#)

### ***Dining and entertainment:***

There are many restaurants and inns to choose from in Lewisboro and the surrounding towns. The most local restaurants are listed here by name, but there is a wide range of dining experiences to be found in the immediate area.

[Bacio](#), [Haiku](#), [The Horse and Hound](#), [Nino's](#), [Portofino Pizzeria](#), [Le Chateau](#), [123 Restaurant and Bar](#); [Hudson Valley restaurants](#), [Westchester County restaurants](#), [Fairfield County, Ct. restaurants](#)

Caramoor, a world famous center for classical music and summer music festivals is located in Katonah, as is the highly regarded Katonah Museum of Art. Ridgefield boasts the Ridgefield Playhouse and The Aldrich Museum as well as historic Keeler Tavern. Nearby in Somers is Muscoot Farm, the only working farm in Westchester County, which is open year round. White Plains is home to the White Plains Performing Arts Center.

[Caramoor](#), [Katonah Museum](#), [Ridgefield Playhouse](#), [The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum](#), [Keeler Tavern](#), [Muscoot Farm](#), [White Plains Performing Arts Center](#)

### ***Transportation:***

Lewisboro is conveniently accessed by car, train and air. Interstate 684, a north-south limited access highway links I-84 in the north with I-287 and the Hutchinson River Parkway in the south. The Harlem Division of Metro North Railroad links Katonah, Goldens Bridge and other northern points with Grand Central Terminal in New York City. Westchester County Airport serves White Plains, northern and southern Westchester County and Fairfield County, while Westchester County bus service connects the various towns and villages of northern Westchester with White Plains and point south.

[Westchester County map](#)

[Metro-North Railroad](#)

[Westchester County Airport](#)

## **In Conclusion**

The people of St. John's and St. Paul's have created this Profile in the belief that it is an accurate portrayal of a loving community of faith and fellowship - one with a rich history, a dynamic present and a desire to become even more - and in the hope that, with the help of God, the individual who is destined to be our leader far into the future is reading it now.

**St. John's Parish**  
**South Salem, NY 10590**  
**2011 Pro Forma Budget**

	<u>2011</u>
<b>Income:</b>	
Pledge	\$ 171,000
Plate / Non Pledge	\$ 15,400
Events	\$ 28,500
Early Learning Center / Camp	\$ 21,668
Other Income	\$ 43,550
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 280,118</b>
<b>Operating Expense:</b>	
Events	\$ 10,000
Liturgical Ministry	\$ 33,000
Pastoral Ministry	\$ 119,210
Buildings, Grounds, Administration	\$ 97,817
Christian Education / Hosp / Mission	\$ 34,645
<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>\$ 294,672</b>
<b>Operating Income/Deficit</b>	<b>\$ (14,554)</b>