



PARISH PROFILE

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, ACTON, MASS

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*“Good Shepherd is at its best when hearts are open, the walls between us come down,
and the love of Christ unites us.”*



WELCOME LETTER AND INVITATION

Dear Sister or Brother in Christ:

Thank you for your interest in the Church of the Good Shepherd in Acton, Massachusetts. We are excited to embark on a search for our next Rector, and we welcome your interest!

This profile serves as a short introduction to what we hope will become a long relationship. We are so looking forward to learning what God has in store for our community of faith, and to meeting the Christian leader with whom we will make the journey!

As described in the pages that follow, The Church of the Good Shepherd is a close-knit community of believers. We are innovative in worship, caring in our relationships with one another, and committed to bringing the light of Christ to the broader community in practical and tangible ways.

We hope that as you read this profile, you experience the same sense of expectancy and excitement that we feel. We pray that you sense the potential for our Church and see the opportunities for worship, for community, and for service to which we feel called. Finally, we will pray for you as you start to discern whether God is calling you to this place at this time.

Thanks once again for your interest in our church. We look forward to meeting and getting to know you.

“Good Shepherd is at its best when enabling people in Scripture, Prayer, and Resources so they can go out into the world.”

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE BELIEVE

The Church of the Good Shepherd is a welcoming and inclusive faith community. We hail from Acton and the surrounding towns (see map below), reflecting varying socio-economic and commercial backgrounds. We come from different denominations as well as those taking a first step on their spiritual journey. The congregation includes newcomers and longtime members, young families and retirees, those who are single, divorced, married or widowed, and members of the LGBTQ community. Our welcome is generous and warm, inviting all to share Eucharist at the sacramental table, as well as coffee after the service.

Our Good Shepherd family gives generously of its talents to enrich our worship and common life. Members contribute from an abundance of gifts and

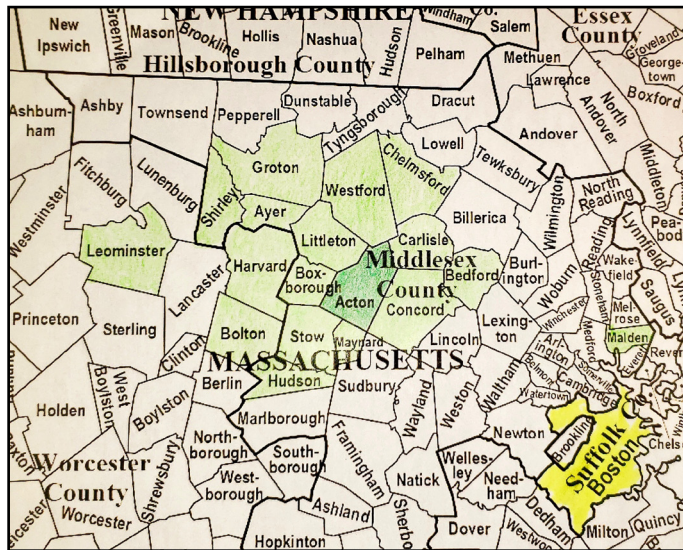
talents, including those in the artistic, organizational, scientific, managerial, medical, and educational fields. The diverse professions of our parishioners represent many of the companies and institutions for which the Boston area is known.

Our new rector will find a community that genuinely cares for each other, and comes together to support those in need. They will appreciate the strong lay leadership that has fostered self-sustaining ministries described later in this document. And they will value the desire of the congregation to grow in our faith and in our service to our community and the world.

To be intentional about how we grow and what we prioritize, the church recently completed a strategic visioning exercise that defined our three core values. These core values, described below, form the structure of this profile; Caring Community of Faith, Engaging Outreach, and Compelling Worship illustrate how our common life reflects each core value.

Diocese of Massachusetts as a Safe Haven

In August, 2019, the Vestry of Good Shepherd wrote and approved *A Resolution on Becoming a Safe Haven Diocese for Marginalized Persons*. Based on a resolution originally written by a parishioner, this resolution requests that “the 234th Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts declare(s) this diocese to be a Safe Haven.” The resolution condemns racism, decries hateful speech and identifies a number of specific and concrete actions to take, including submission of a formal resolution at the 2021 General Convention “to establish the Episcopal Church officially as a safe haven for immigrants and all persons vilified because of their immigration status, the color of their skin, their gender, their national origin, their religion, their age, their disability, their language or whom they love.”



“Good Shepherd is at its best with the regular sharing of faith journeys.”



Caring Community of Faith

We are a caring and inclusive faith community that welcomes, celebrates, and supports all people in worship, fellowship, and the various ministries we offer.

Compelling Worship

We offer compelling worship that celebrates the Holy Eucharist, immerses us in the sacred mystery of God, and brings the healing touch of Jesus Christ to bear in our lives and, through us, into the world.



Engaging Outreach

We are called to be the change we want to see in the world by honoring human dignity and seeking to improve the rights and conditions of people locally, nationally, and globally.



“Good Shepherd is at its best when people are “leaning-in to their spirituality and their vision of God — living into God’s call for mission.”



WHERE WE'VE BEEN: PARISH HISTORY

In 1958, a group of Acton parishioners worshipping at St. George's Episcopal church in Maynard, petitioned the Diocese to found a new mission in their own town. After humble beginnings with services held in the Acton town hall, a new church building was dedicated in 1964 at the present location on Newtown Road. Since then Good Shepherd's story has been marked by a commitment to generous stewardship; an ability to embrace varied forms of worship along with a deep appreciation for the role of music in the liturgy; a dedication to the faith journey of children through education and formation; and an ability to persevere through the inevitable cycles of change and the great challenges that accompany them.

Arguably, the ultimate test came in 1985 after fire destroyed the offices and parish hall, and badly damaged the sanctuary. The congregation rallied immediately and supported the rebuilding effort in every possible way. From the ashes soon arose a beautiful new church. This tradition of financial generosity has been accompanied by countless individual and communal offerings of time and talent. Strong lay leadership, supported by

our clergy, has become a hallmark of the parish and a strength to this day. And despite the often-great needs within the church, our stewardship has consistently supported outreach and service for local, state, national, and even international causes.

A key aspect of Good Shepherd's identity has been the broad breadth of liturgies and worship opportunities through which the faith of our parishioners has grown at different times and contexts over the years. After primarily celebrating traditional services in the 60's, a vibrant and spirit-filled folk mass was added to the regular Sunday morning services in the 1970's. This continued for over 25 years and was complemented by Faith Alive and Cursillo weekends, which were attended by many parishioners as part of the parish-based charismatic renewal movement of the time. During this period, Good Shepherd also readily embraced the ordination of women by calling three female assistant priests. Beginning in 1998, Rector Gale Davis Morris further broadened our liturgies with a series of historical services highlighting milestones of Episcopal worship and an international series from across the Anglican Communion. To this day, we continue to have an

“Good Shepherd is our Spiritual Oasis in the woods.”

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open, creative and lively approach to liturgy, within an Anglican-Episcopal framework. Throughout this evolution, the contributions of our choirs and musicians have been integral to worship as has the work of a liturgical environment committee focusing on inspirational art and decoration.

Since the late 1950's, Acton has been an attractive community for young families. Children were welcomed and nurtured at Good Shepherd from our founding. Sunday school was such a priority, that even before there was a church building, classes were held at a variety of locations including the town hall, the firehouse, and parishioner's homes. Many generations of young people have completed both first communion and confirmation classes. Over the past 10 years, the *Journey to Adulthood* program has enriched the experience of our youth.

Throughout challenging periods in our history, we have been a resilient people open to God's spirit, seeking to overcome difficulties and divisions. While the fire of 1985 was the most tangible example of our congregation's perseverance, we have certainly faced many other trials and overcome them. In the 90's, the question of the ordination of gay and lesbian priests became a divisive issue nationally. Parishioners participated in extensive processes to reflect prayerfully on the issues and made a clear choice for openness and inclusivity. Similar faithfulness and perseverance helped us through the very painful breakdown of the relationship with our rector almost 10 years ago. Our late bishop, Tom Shaw, gave us a gifted Priest-in-charge, Gareth Evans. After 3 years, Gareth accepted the call to be our rector. Working diligently with devoted lay leaders, Gareth's tenure at Good Shepherd was one of congregational healing and restoration of financial stability. We now stand again at a point in our history filled with potential and enthusiasm as we continue to serve Christ in our community.



"This church has long history of pulling together to deal with unexpected events."

CARING COMMUNITY OF FAITH

We at Good Shepherd strive to see in each other the Holy Spirit that connects us. We believe that as part of our call from God we need to nurture one another, both in our church and beyond. In living out this call, we are blessed to have many members serving in leadership roles. These lay leaders are essential to the worship and outreach ministries described in *Engaging Outreach* and *Compelling Worship*. Together, lay leaders and members create and sustain the parish as a caring community.

Pastoral Care

The Pastoral Care Team reaches out to people in need of support at difficult or stressful times in their lives. They provide meals, visit homebound parishioners, distribute prayer shawls, organize rides, and send notes of encouragement. They also help organize receptions after memorial or funeral services.



Prayer Chain

The Prayer Chain is a large, faithful group of members and former members who offer intercessory prayers confidentially for all who ask for them. Requests are communicated to the group via email.

Christian Formation

Good Shepherd gatherings provide many opportunities to explore our Christian Faith together and share how we live it out each day:

Sunday Morning Adult Education: The group is currently reading and discussing the book *10 Ways to Pray* by Dawn Harrell and meets at 11:45.

Parenting Potluck: Meets monthly and is a casual meal where parents with children can make new friends and catch up at the end of the week. After supper, the children enjoy supervised play while the adults gather for a discussion that helps them reflect on the joys and challenges of parenting today. It is a wonderful source for mutual support.



Men's Group: The Men's Group provides support, camaraderie, and spiritual reflection using the African Bible Study method. They meet the first and third Saturday mornings of each month,

“Good Shepherd is at its best when fellowship and mutual caring for one another is evident.”

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Hop, Skip and a Jump Through the Bible: A monthly Bible study provides another opportunity to explore our Christian Faith together.

Cursillo: Some parish members have also found spiritual meaning in Cursillo, a renewal movement within the church. Those who attend a Cursillo are encouraged to become more involved in parish life.

Church School and Youth Programs

We constantly seek new ways to attract families to Good Shepherd in the face of growing demands from work, school and sports activities. We seek to provide age-appropriate activities that are fun, relevant and effective in building a foundation for a life of faith.

Our Church School encourages children to explore their spiritual paths through storytelling, reading, discussion and creative work with peers. In Grades K-2, the Godly Play curriculum is a fun and loving way to introduce children to our spiritual community. Grades 3-5 explore their faith through a curriculum that uses Lego, “Building Faith Brick by Brick: An Imaginative Way to Explore the Bible with Children,” by Emily Slichter Given.

For preteens and teens, we use the “Journey to Adulthood” course. Beginning with Rite13, the preteens and teens focus on recognizing God’s gifts to them,



celebrating their creative potential, and building a strong community of faith. Students then progress to J2A, where the curriculum addresses modern concerns and cares of young teens as they relate to the life of faith. The culmination of their two years together is a spiritual pilgrimage for which they help raise funds.



The oldest group, our Young Adults at Church (YAC) uses the Teen Compass Faith and Wellness Notebook by Living Compass. This resource helps teens explore the impact of their life decisions on their wellness and happiness.

Each month during the schoolyear, Church School focuses on a different



“Our church has nurtured our family as they grew into young women. So much goodness has come into our lives through Good Shepherd.”

mission activity of the church; this focus is reflected as well in our worship on Mission Sunday and in other activities. For the Rite 13 students, there is also a more sustained focus on our relationship with Esperanza Academy, and the J2A students concentrate on our relationship with El Ocatillo in El Salvador.

Finally, clergy led special classes are held for young people who wish to prepare to receive Holy Eucharist or to be confirmed or received.

Sustainability Committee



Environmental concerns led some parishioners to form a Sustainability Committee to reduce the church's carbon footprint and to run environmental programs to raise awareness of climate change in the community.

Fellowship Events

Good Shepherd is a vibrant, intergenerational community that connects through a shared faith in the Holy Spirit. Fellowship opportunities include:

Coffee hour—the eighth sacrament—after the 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Sunday services, gives us an opportunity to socialize and greet newcomers. Every week we have a **Potluck Breakfast** after the Wednesday morning Eucharist.

Bread and Banter held the first Wednesday of the month for retirees of all ages, features a simple lunch and dessert with a monthly theme. An **Annual Dinner to Support Esperanza Academy** of Lawrence is prepared and served by the academy's chef and students. It is usually bid on at their Annual Auctions by a group at Good Shepherd. A multigenerational **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper** is a very long time tradition, often served by our youth and include Mardi Gras mask making and beads. A **Parish Cookout**, held after the 10:00 service marks the start of summer. Occasional events include fundraiser auctions, a karaoke and chili evening, spring garden party, and a murder mystery dinner. Planning and attending of these events fosters deep friendships among parishioners.



“We are at our best when we pull together for a cause, inspired by worship and caring for each other.”

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Clockwise from top left: Wednesday morning breakfast, Garden Party, Bread & Banter, Murder Mystery Dinner, Summer Cookout



**Murder
Mystery
Dinner**



*“People care for each other, on every level — emotionally, physically and spiritually.
It’s a rich spiritual place.”*

ENGAGING OUTREACH

Good Shepherd supports a number of outreach ministries that provide immediate relief and ongoing support to those in need, some but not all of which are described below. Through these ministries, we nourish the body with food, water, clothing, and shelter; we nourish the mind through scholarships, educational programming and professional development; and we nourish the spirit as we connect with others in the body of Christ in service of the world.

Our commitment to engaging outreach is reflected in our worship, our Christian Education and our social times together. Each month:

- On “Mission Sunday,” our worship celebrates a mission supported by members of the congregation.
- Our Christian Education activities during the month focus on that mission as relevant to our youth.
- Our social activities often reflect the ministries that we support, allowing us to celebrate as do our sisters and brothers around the world.

Inspired by parishioners who passionately promote and develop these ministries, we come together to support these missions. We invite the world to join us.

Global Outreach

El Salvador

The parish has been in a mutual relationship with the village of El Ocotillo, a small community in the mountains of El Salvador, for nearly 20 years. We pray for each other, correspond regularly, send a delegation of adults and youth to the village every other year, and welcome visits from village members to Good Shepherd.

Our Mission: “We are called to be the change we want to see in the world by honoring human dignity and seeking to improve the rights and conditions of people locally, nationally, and globally.”



We describe the nature of the relationship as “walking the journey together,” emphasizing ongoing friendship and accompaniment rather than a donation of time and money. The highest priority for the families of El Ocotillo is the education of their children in order to break the cycle of poverty. Accordingly, our financial support provides life-changing scholarships that enable the children and young adults to attend high school and university. Eleven gifted and hard-working scholarship recipients have realized their dream of a university degree and are now employed in professional jobs. They are passionate about both helping future students and their responsibility to give back to their community.

Over the years, of course, our own lives have been immeasurably enriched. We have come to appreciate the richness and beauty in each other’s worlds. We have been blessed in unexpected ways through life-long friendships and shared

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experiences, and we have seen God's love and grace at work in each other and in ourselves. This ministry continues to be a primary focus, and we're excited to see what God has in store.

CROP Walk: "Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty"

Parishioners have participated in the local CROP Hunger Walk for 32 years; walking alongside neighbors to overcome poverty and combat hunger in our area and in our world. Donations support Church World Service work for worldwide emergency relief of disasters, refugee aid, and fighting hunger through community development programs in underdeveloped countries. Locally, funds make substantial contributions to our Acton Community Supper and Food Pantry, providing basic nourishment for neighbors in need.



Local Outreach

Esperanza Academy

Esperanza Academy In Lawrence, MA is a tuition-free school in the Episcopal tradition educating underserved girls of diverse faiths, races and cultures in Lawrence, MA. Our relationship with the school has evolved over 12 years and includes volunteering, working with students, judging at science fairs, donating school supplies, and offering support to the faculty and administration.

Each year, the school's leadership and students join us in worship. This year, we were inspired by both the sermon delivered by the Head of School and the students' witness to the transforming power of education in their lives. Another highlight from 2019 was Bishop Curry's visit to the school during his recent visit to the Diocese. His visit publicized the outstanding work being done by Esperanza Academy, and inspired the staff and students as only Bishop Curry can.



"We are at our best when the entire community is engaged in a mission with groups outside the church, such as Esperanza and El Ocotillo."

Lowell Transitional Living Center

Lowell Transitional Living Center (LTLC) meets the basic needs of the homeless and assists them as they reenter living on their own. Our support started twenty years ago when we began volunteering at the shelter. We started “Undies Sundays”, a parish-based collection of underwear for men

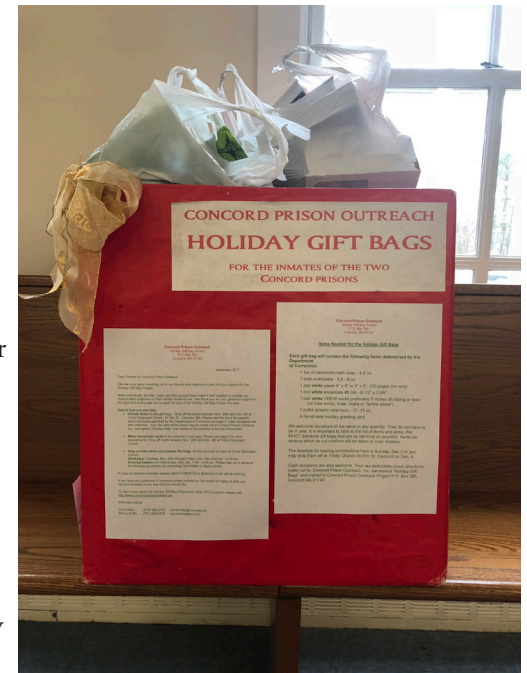


and women, and then expanded our contributions to include bedding and clothing necessities. Over the years, Good Shepherd has purchased 60 cots for the emergency winter program, and donated 100 pillows, 100 blankets, and money for special programs.

LTLC staff members join us in worship each year to explain the mission of supporting the homeless and raise awareness of opportunities to assist their work. Although only 15 minutes away, LTLC is a different world than Acton. We need to be aware of, and take part in, that world.

Concord Prison Outreach

The incarcerated are forgotten and invisible to most of society. Prison Ministry seeks to reach out to those in prison to help them build better lives for themselves and their families. Good Shepherd volunteers teach courses to inmates locally through Concord Prison Outreach, meet with inmates for Bible study and Holy Eucharist twice a month, and assemble holiday gift bags. Each action reinforces the fact that there is someone on the “outside” who cares, providing hope for the future and increasing the likelihood of a successful reentry into society.



“We are at our best when mission is a pivotal part of the budget allowing flexibility to respond to immediate and new concerns.”

Acton Food Pantry

The Acton Food Pantry supports the local community supper and provides food supplies to local town residents in need.. Food for the pantry is gathered from the parish monthly, presented at the altar by our youth to be blessed, and transported to the pantry by parish volunteers.



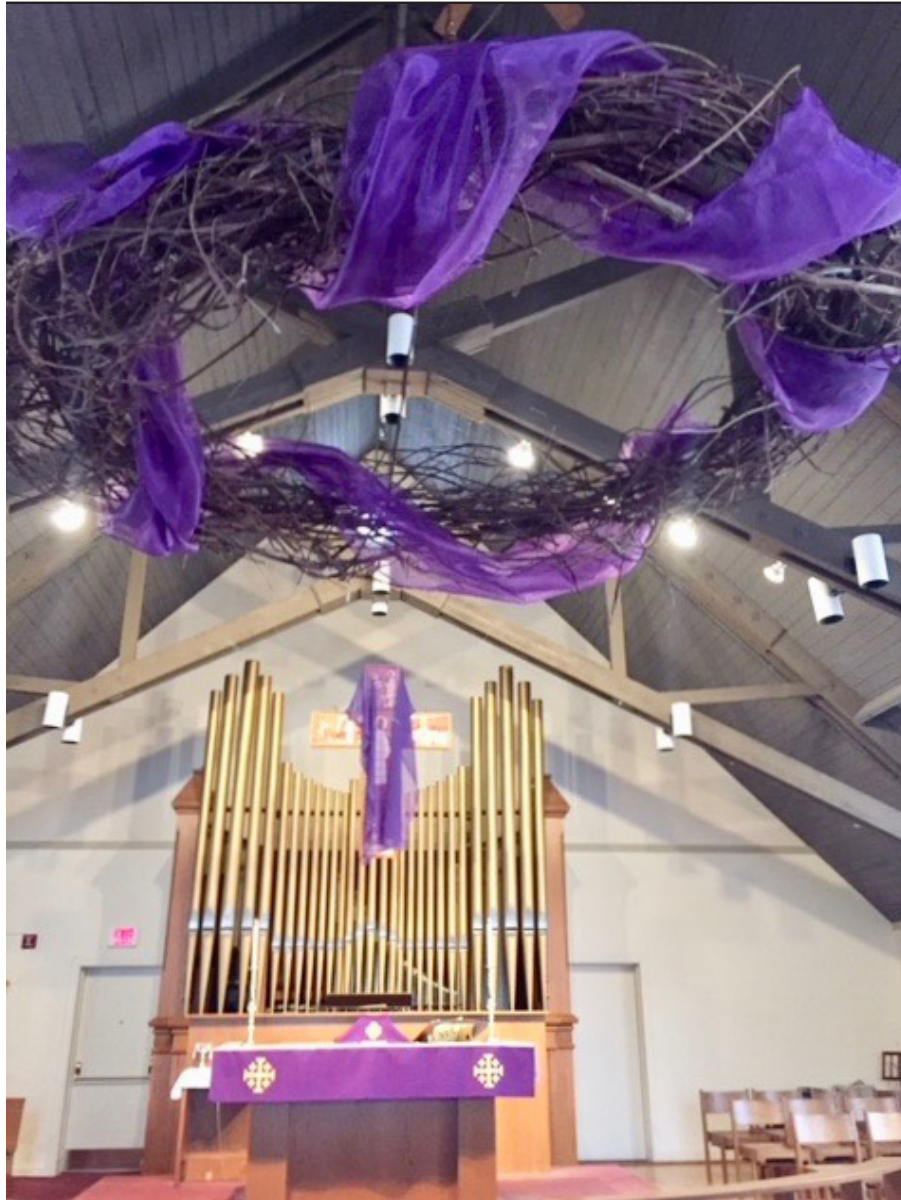
Prayer Shawl Ministry

The Prayer Shawl Ministry provides shawls for anyone who is in need of comfort, healing, experiencing grief or in any need of support. Since 2006, knitters /crocheters have created 403 prayer shawls, 41 lap robes, 10 afghans, 12 newborn hats and 2 scarves! The shawls, which are many colors, patterns and sizes, are blessed at our meetings and then by the clergy at the monthly healing service. For 13 years of the ministry, prayer shawls have been distributed locally, across the country and the world to those who need or would enjoy the warmth, comfort and love that a prayer shawl brings.



“We are at our best when our members are each uniquely gifted to do God’s work.”

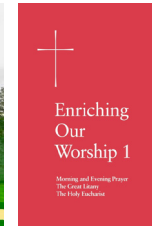
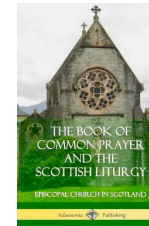
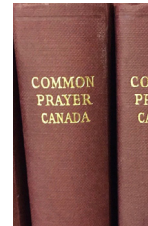
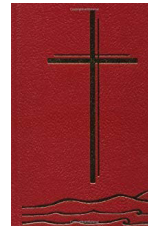
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COMPELLING WORSHIP

We gather together each Sunday and at other times to seek a holy place to experience God, to find a spiritually vibrant community, and to encounter Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. We try to make our liturgies relevant, exciting, and inviting through innovative worship. We rejoice that our Eucharistic table is open to all. We believe that God meets us in the Breaking of Bread in community.

The primary service uses liturgies from the *Book of Common Prayer*, *Enriching Our Worship*, or from prayer books around the Anglican Communion — the Church of England, The Church of Canada, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church of South India, and the Church of New Zealand. We do this to keep the liturgy fresh, and also to acknowledge our part in the larger Christian community.



In addition to the liturgies above, we once used historical liturgies from the 1549, 1664, and 1928 prayer books on successive Sundays, ending on the last Sunday with a vision of a future service.

Sunday

Holy Eucharist - Rite II 8 a.m.

We celebrate “in the round” at the back of the sanctuary, which fosters intimacy and spiritual connection. The service, including the sermon, lasts about 45 minutes, and is followed by a lively and welcoming coffee hour. Average attendance is 15-25 people.

“We are at our best when our liturgy and sermon are responsive to immediate crises in the world.”

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Holy Eucharist—Rite II 10:00 a.m. (9:30 a.m. in summer)

Our worship is supported by a full complement of music. Lay readers, acolytes, and Lay Eucharistic Ministers also participate. One LEM serves the function of a master of ceremonies. The service lasts just over an hour and is followed by coffee hour in the Parish Hall.

On the first Sunday of each month, **Healing Prayers** at the altar rail follow the Eucharist.



Once a month, the children join their families for a multigenerational worship service that focuses on the ways we serve in our local and global communities through our outreach programs.

Wednesday

Holy Eucharist—Rite II 7:30 a.m.

This small service celebrated in the round, partially led by lay members, includes a reflection on the life of a saint in place of a sermon. Average attendance is about a dozen people, most of whom bring dishes and stay for a shared potluck breakfast in the parish hall after the service.

Music

Music is a very important part of our worship and this congregation loves to sing! A small but dedicated anthem choir, and occasionally a children's choir, support worship. We use traditional hymns from the *1982 Hymnal* and contemporary music from "*Wonder, Love and Praise*." Individual parishioners also share their musical gifts during the year. The organ is a rescued tracker pipe organ over a hundred years old that miraculously survived the fire. On occasion, the handbell choir offers a prelude or accompaniment. We have a four-octave set of Shulmerich handbells.



"We are at our best when our worship sends us out into the world uplifted with a spirit to do God's work."



Seasonal services bring special liturgies and innovative events

For each liturgical season, the liturgical arts committee designs appropriate, tasteful, and stimulating art to enhance the spiritual experience of the parish. For example, a crown of thorns hangs from the ceiling during Lent and Holy Week, or banners with flames hang during Pentecost.

Special events and services mark holidays:

A service of **Lessons and Carols** is presented each Advent by the Choir, who work to make this a highlight of the year. Lay readers participate as well, and the service is followed by a wonderful reception. We used to offer a **Blue Christmas** service one evening during Advent, designed to offer healing to those grieving during the season. It was a contemplative service loosely based on a Taizé service. The **Children's Christmas pageant**, usually the Sunday before Christmas, is the cooperative work of the Sunday school teachers and the children. For **Epiphany**, we often share a candlelit Agape dinner of second century finger foods. On **Ash Wednesday** over the last few years, our priest and one or two parishioners have provided **Ashes to Go**, offering the imposition of ashes to commuters leaving trains. Our **Pentecost** service includes lively concurrent scripture readings in various languages We

honor St. Francis on or near his feast day by a **Blessing of the Animals** at both services. For several years, a **New Eucharist** multigenerational worship service incorporating parts of the liturgy in contemporary language was held in which the children attended worship with their families. Good Shepherd also celebrated a monthly **Taizé Healing Service** on the fourth Sunday evening for a few years.

The Altar Guild supports all services, working quietly and steadily to prepare the Altar table for each Sunday, for special services, and on Holy Days.



“We are at our best when our service is joyful, more participatory – corporate experience should be celebratory.”

LIFE IN ACTON

Good Shepherd is in the town of Acton, Massachusetts, about 25 miles northwest of Boston. While Acton has nearly 25,000 residents, the church also draws parishioners from surrounding communities.

The names of local roads and ponds reflect the area's Native American heritage. Acton also has a particularly proud colonial history. Acton Minutemen were in the front line at the battle of the Old North Bridge, in adjacent Concord, which marked the start of the Revolutionary War. Acton remained primarily agricultural until the mid-19th century when it became an industrial center for the production of barrels. There were also three gristmills, four sawmills and a powder mill in town. After WWII it gradually grew into a bedroom community for Boston due to its convenient highway and commuter rail connections.

Ninety-five percent of working residents are white-collar professionals, such as managers, sales, and administrative workers. The per capita income in Acton is approximately \$60,000, above average for Massachusetts and nearly twice the national average. In the last two decades, Acton has become ethnically diverse, with growing foreign-born populations. For example, in 2010, Acton had the ninth largest Chinese population in Massachusetts. Recent years have also included well-planned retail and entertainment development in Acton and nearby communities.

Acton is a great town for families with children. Acton's five elementary schools participate in a special school choice system that allows parents to choose the teaching philosophy that best suits their children. The high school consistently ranks among the best in metro Boston. The theater and sports programs are enthusiastically supported. The large population of college-edu-

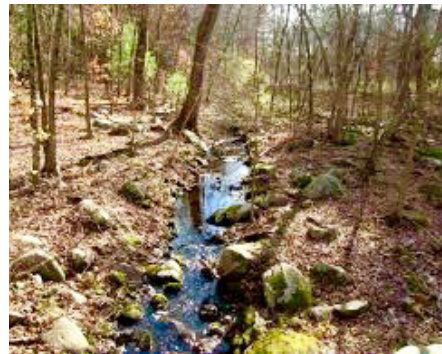


"We are at our best when we are more visible in our community."

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cated adults (>75%) further provides an environment conducive to academic success. Acton also has a popular children's science museum, many large areas of conservation land for hiking, a major rail trail, and a large town park with athletic fields and a pond.

In addition, Acton is ideally situated to take advantage of all that Massachusetts and New England offer. The cities of Boston, Cambridge, and Worcester, less than an hour away, offer world-class hospitals, universities, museums, theaters, symphonies, and championship sports teams. Historic attractions abound, including Plimoth Plantation, Minuteman National Park, Boston's Freedom Trail, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, and the Adams National Historical Park. Day trippers may sample Cape Cod and the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, the mountains and lakes of New Hampshire, the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, and the dramatic coast of southern Maine. Each season brings its own delights: gorgeous gardens in spring, warm beaches in summer, glorious fall foliage, and winter snows for downhill and cross-country skiing, sledding, and snowshoeing.



“We are at our best when our children’s programs teach them to serve within the church and the community.”

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LAND & BUILDINGS

Good Shepherd is indeed “A Spiritual Oasis in the Woods,” as we referred to ourselves for many years. Located at a quiet corner of Acton at the intersection of Newtown Road, Lincoln Drive and Arlington Streets, the church is surrounded by homes, conservation land, and lovely walking paths. The land holdings also include a vacant parcel at the corner of Newtown Road and Lincoln Drive. As currently configured, it is unbuildable. This parcel includes approximately three quarters of an acre and an informal rear driveway from the rectory to Lincoln Drive.

The church itself sits on a wooded lot of more than 4.5 acres. Originally built in 1964 (and rebuilt in 1986 after a devastating fire), the church building includes over 9,400 square feet of interior space, and an entry canopy of more than 670 square feet.

Good Shepherd has used a combination of green grants and diocesan loans to make large-scale building improvements, such as a new boiler, and improvements to the church’s plumbing and hot water system. In addition, we have

recently installed energy-efficient LED lighting in the church parking lot. The grounds and building are maintained by a dedicated crew of parishioners, paid grounds maintenance, and contracted janitorial services.

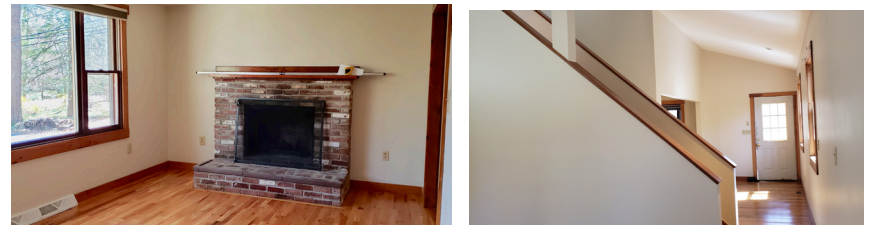
The sanctuary is accessed via a small flight of stairs, or a small elevator. It features high, arched ceilings and tall windows, admitting a lot of natural light. The organ was purchased and dedicated in 1969. Seating is wooden pews, with overflow padded chairs in the rear of the church. Beneath the sanctuary is the Sunday School, including 4 classrooms (equipped with Safe Church windowed doors), as well as an informal meeting space for the teenagers.

Church meetings, social events, community meetings and Sunday Coffee Hour are held in our fellowship hall, which is equipped with a full industrial kitchen. The space is rented out and/or made available to community groups for events or weekly meetings, such as the Acton Cub Scouts. Last year, the local Muslim Community used the space for meetings during Ramadan, which strengthened the ties between that community and our church. The main building also includes the church offices, storage areas and meeting rooms.

“We are at our best when we offer many expressions of grace... beautiful music, a singing congregation, creative and informing sanctuary environment, the liturgy – and of course the people.”

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Good Shepherd owns a rectory property, which includes a house that dates from the 1960's, which has been improved and expanded in 2003. It received hardwood floors in 2010 and a new kitchen and other improvements in 2019. The rectory has 2,200 square feet of finished living area and a 1,500 square foot cellar. It sits on just under an acre of land. There's also conservation land on the other side of Newtown Road; the entry pathway begins near the rectory.



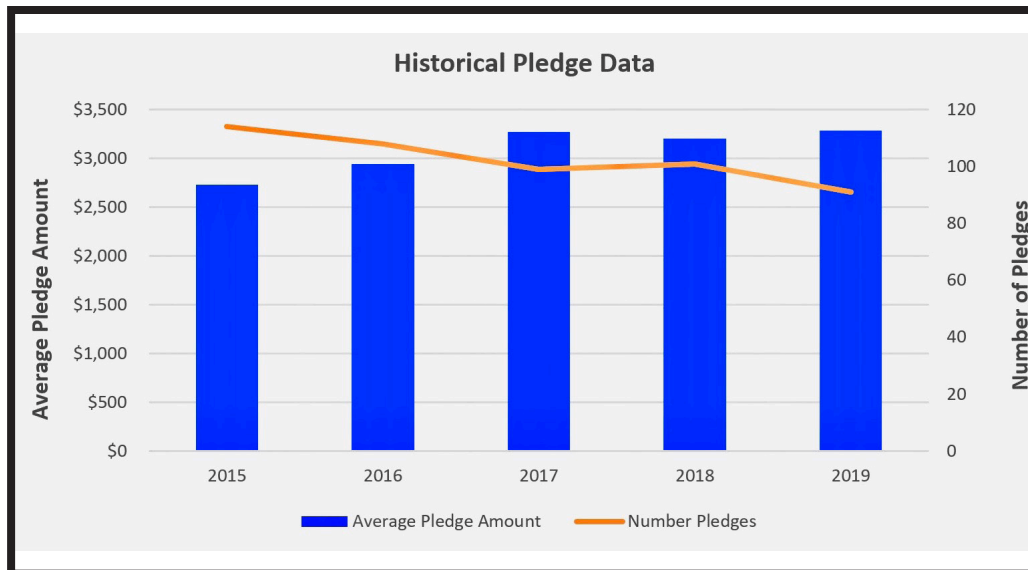
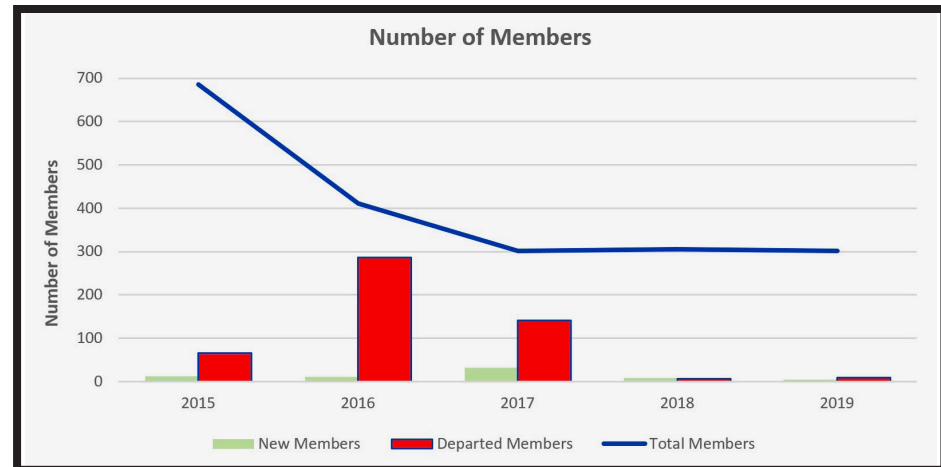
“We are at our best when we are called to support our Clergy and be good stewards of our property.”

2019 PARISH PROFILE

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

The number of active members has stabilized over the last few years. In 2016 and 2017, we reviewed the church membership rolls to remove inactive members, which is reflected in the declines shown in 2016 and 2017.

Since that correction, the church membership has been stable at about 300 members. We look forward to being the kind of community that invites, attracts, and welcomes new members in the future.

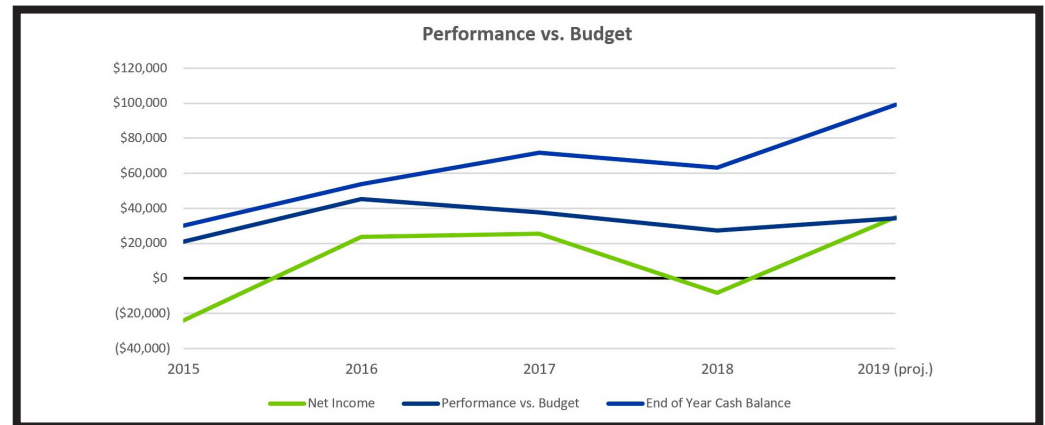


Good Shepherd seeks to have a base of financial stability that corresponds to the strength of the congregation. Over the course of the last 5 years, the average pledge amount has increased from \$2,733 in 2015 to \$3,285 in 2019, while the number of pledging units dropped from 114 to 91.

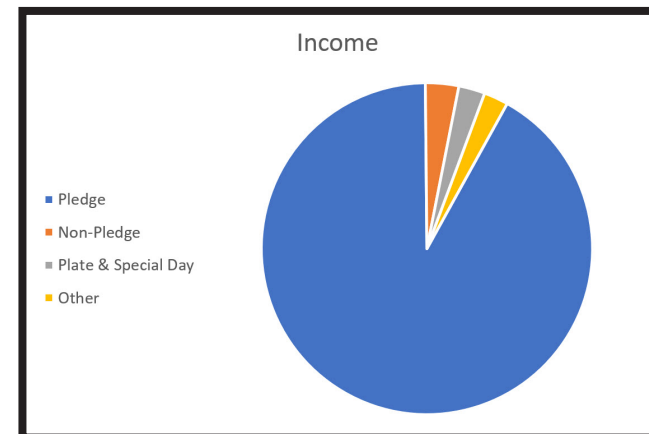
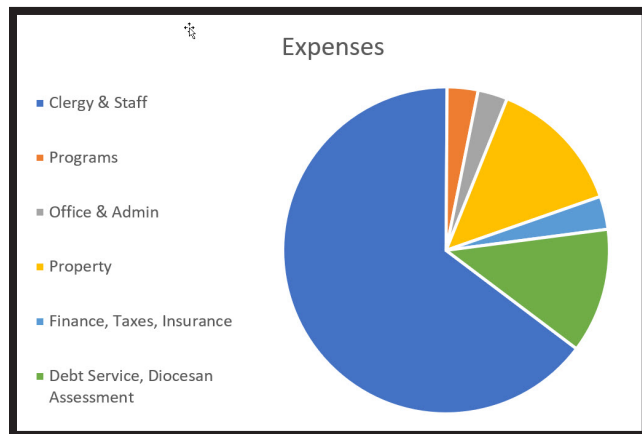
“The future of Good Shepherd lies with deeper understanding of grateful Stewardship and fully appreciating with gratitude of God’s blessings given to us.”

2019 PARISH PROFILE

Including the projections for this year, Good Shepherd has ended the past five years performing favorably to the budget approved by the congregation at the annual meeting. Our cash balance has improved steadily over this period; we currently project a cash balance near \$100,000 at year's end.



The charts below show the composition of expenses and income for the 2019 budget. Predictably, expenses for our staff constitute the single largest line item in our budget, followed by property-related expenses and our Diocesan Assessment. In terms of income, pledges constitute over 90% of budgeted income, with smaller contributions from non-pledge income, plate and holiday collections and rental income from the parish hall.



“Our future lies in being Christian Stewards, empowered by the Holy Spirit, committed to conscious, purposeful giving.”

OUR ASPIRATION

Where do we see ourselves in five years?

In five years, Good Shepherd will continue to be a congregation invested in the church, as well as invested in fellowship and getting to know one another beyond the Sunday coffee hour chats. Our outreach programs will remain strong and steadfast. As a congregation, we will be more comfortable “spreading the word” about Good Shepherd and will invite our neighbors into our special spiritual community. We will establish a robust children’s educational program that extends from our littlest members in nursery to our teenagers who are about to embark on life after high school. Our music program will be well-established and will include both a children’s and an adult choir.

In five years, Good Shepherd will be more than just financially secure; our budget will reflect our ability to afford our necessary expenses, as well as make enhancements to our program and our physical space. Our congregation will be engaged and rooted in our mission. A by-product of that engagement will be strong lay leadership within the church. Parishioners will feel inspired to support the church and to lead other members of the church to connect with one another and to participate in our many outreach ministries.

What challenges do we need to overcome?

We have strong lay leaders, but in recent years their energy has been consumed within the church, keeping programs going and the building in reasonable repair. We need to take our ministries beyond the walls of our church to connect with the wider community so that the fruits of our Christian faith are visible to Acton and the other towns represented in our congregation. We must also communicate a more radical Christian vision of love in these troubled times. We need to reach out in particular to families and engage them in ways that will lighten their burdens rather than adding to them. We also need to evaluate our presence in minority communities and the welcome we give them at Good Shepherd.

As a community, we love our church and its programs but are not necessarily prepared to pay for them or for our staff. We need to be educated regularly about the budget and our responsibility for it. The building has been well maintained, but it also needs some ongoing attention.

We have creative and varied liturgies and a sacramental focus in our worship, yet we strive to find a balance between outer busyness and inner peace. We need help to find the balance between doing God’s work in the church and world, and deepening our own relationships with God. We need encouragement and guidance to follow our faith journeys and to lay a foundation for our lives and for our church in the Holy Spirit.

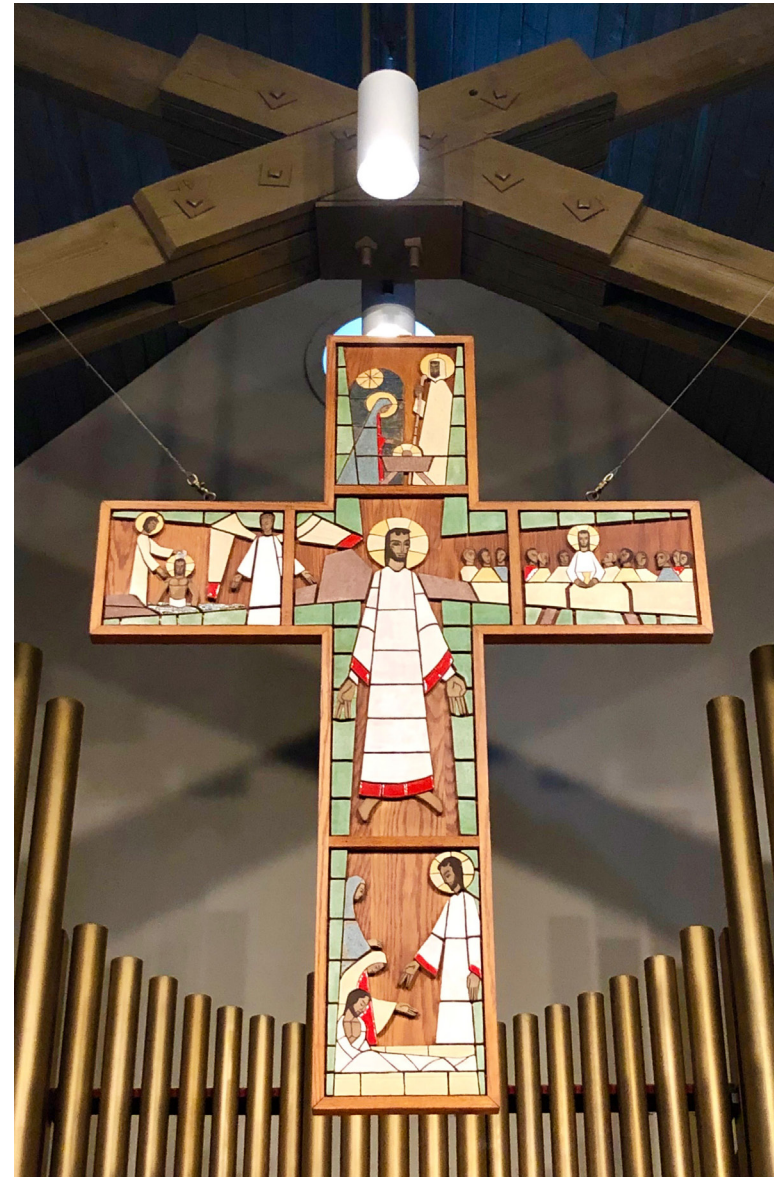
Our community has in the past been divided over some of the challenges we faced. Yet, through congregational commitment and effort, we found resolution to our differences. As we move forward and renew our life as a church, we need to stay unified and work together to achieve our goals for the common good.

“ We are at our best when in the presence of healing graces, the fellowship of the worship community, the joy of special festivals.”

What are we looking for in a rector?

The Church of the Good Shepherd is seeking a new full-time rector to follow in the tradition of strong previous rectors and move us to the next step of development as a church. We seek a rector who will continue our history of robust worship and service, rooting us in our faith, while leading us to further growth, following Christ.

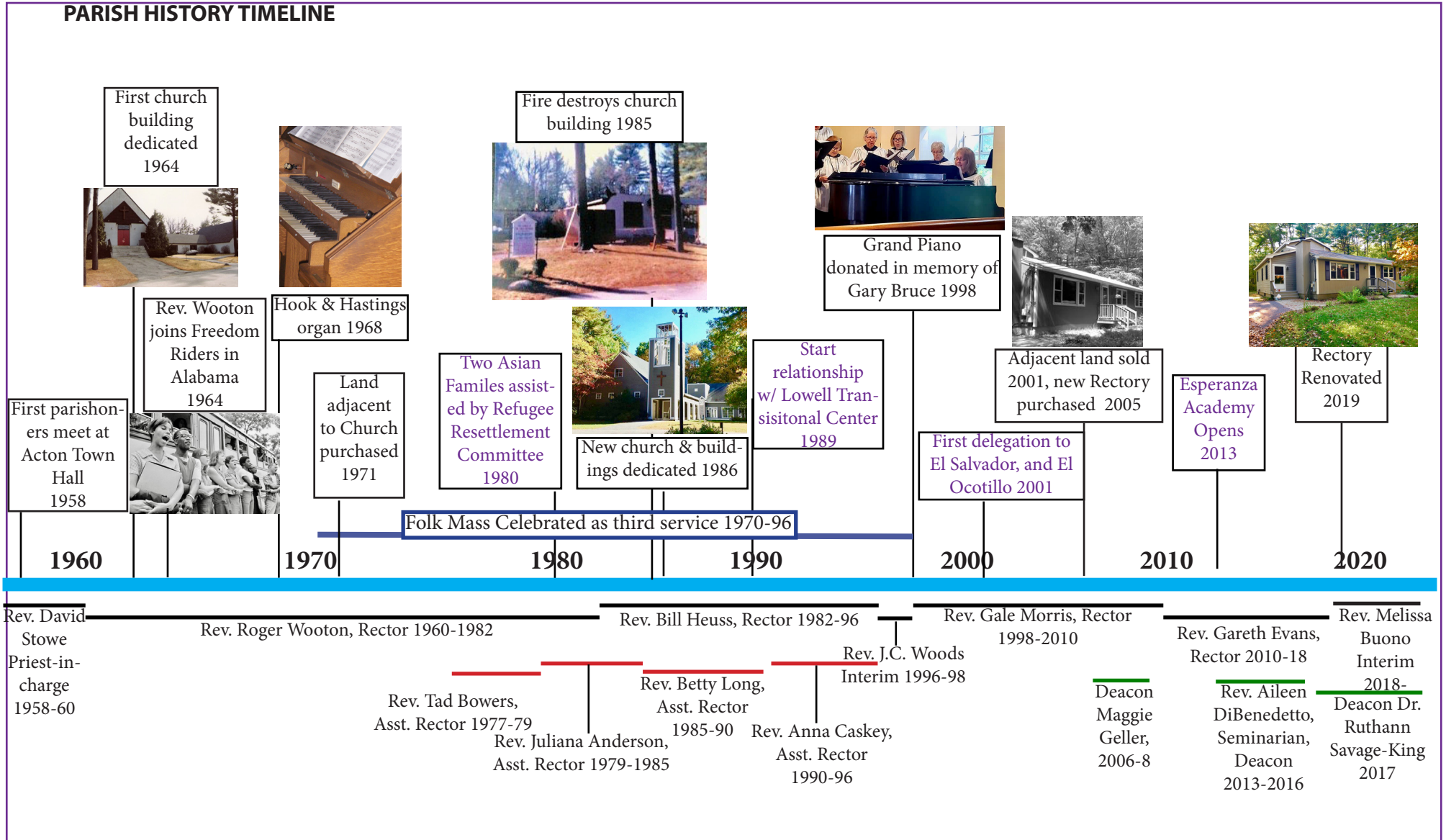
The next rector will lead us in inviting individuals, families, and the under-represented to join our faith community. While the ideal candidate would offer challenging preaching, compassionate pastoral care, and inspiring spiritual leadership, we recognize that no one excels in every arena. We are looking for someone with the self-knowledge to recognize his or her challenges and the wisdom to know when to draw upon our committed lay leadership. A sense of humor would be an asset. Above all, the next rector should be committed to our vision of serving Christ in each other and the greater community, by offering compelling worship and building a caring community of faith, engaged in mission.



“We give thanks for the abundance made manifest in who we are and what we have as a church.”

2019 PARISH PROFILE

PARISH HISTORY TIMELINE



“We have been here over 50 years – raised our kids here with our friends. I can’t imagine our lives without Good Shepherd.”

LINKS & OUR CROSS

Christopher O'Leary, Chair, Search Committee
ccoleary@post.harvard.edu

To whom inquiries should be sent: Please include

- Letter of interest
- Resume
- OTM Profile
- Links to 2 audio or video sermons

Applications are being received through January 31, 2020.

Church of the Good Shepherd Website
www.goodshepherdacton.org

FaceBook
[Church of the Good Shepherd, Acton \(Epsicopal\)](#)

Epsicopal Diocese of Massachusetts
<https://www.diomass.org/>

Town of Acton
<http://www.acton-ma.gov>



OUR CROSS

This charred cross used to hang outside the entrance to our Parish Hall before the fire. Its remains were found, and kept as a reminder of the church's resurrection from the ashes of the fire. It is brought out and displayed every Good Friday. On Easter morning it is adorned with flowers to celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday. We are an Easter church.



"We are at our best when we live into our legacy of being Easter people."