



Office for  
Transition  
Ministry

# Ministry Portfolio

*Full Portfolio (last updated Dec 13, 2022)*

## St. John's Plymouth Episcopal Church, Michigan

574 S. Sheldon Rd, Plymouth, MI 48170, United States

Contact:

Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | Receiving Names until 03/01/23.

eekevag@edomi.org

Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA)	Number of Weekend Worship Services	Number of Weekday Worship Services	Number of Other per Month Worship Services
109	2	1	1
Current Annual Compensation	Cash Stipend	Housing / Rectory Detail	Utilities
\$78000	\$78000		
SECA reimbursement	Compensation Available for New Position	Housing Available for	Pension Plan
	\$78000		<b>We're in compliance with CPF requirements.</b>
Healthcare Options	Dental	Housing Equity Allowance in budget	Annual Equity Amount
Full family	Yes	No	
Vacation Weeks	Vacation Weeks Details	Continuing Education Weeks	Continuing Education Weeks Details
4		2 (standard)	1500
Continuing Education Funding in budget	Sabbatical Provision	Travel/Auto Account	Other Professional Account
	Yes	Yes	Yes

See diocesan compensation policies here: <https://www.edomi.org/church-admin/hr/>

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

The fact that our church family has stayed together and supported one another during COVID is the most recent example of our parish family ministering to one another and keeping a core of our congregation intact. This "moment" was made possible by virtual engagement with Zoom worshipping and outdoor service as we navigated through the past year and a half of the pandemic—which came on the heels of high clergy turnover. Additionally, fulfilling our promise to provide three meals to people in need at Crossroads Ministries in Detroit along with our annual Christmas Dinner at Crossroads, which fed over 800 people during the pandemic was a success—and a very positive moment for the congregation. Keeping Miss Millie's Closet (durable medical equipment) and our own food pantry open to the community during the pandemic further enhances this "pandemic moment" in St. John's history.

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

Recently, dedicated parishioners have been doing much groundwork preparing us to call a new Rector, and our interim has done a stellar job in adjusting to COVID, reaching out to and meeting the needs of parishioners and instilling hope in our congregation. We are also reflecting on how to grow our youth programs, renew our music program, and restart our new member ministry as we have gained new members during Covid. We are focusing on youth programs, music, a new member committee, and social gatherings. Additionally, we've got a wedding coordinator, and are making facility improvements. And, of course, we are improving our technology so our worship and some other groups are accessible to anyone who would like to participate. Technology improvements include Zoom-only worship and hybrid. Additionally, we are improving our outdoor areas to include prayer gardens and outdoor seating for those who would like a quiet place to pray, meditate, or have small gatherings.

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

compassionate, flexible, energetic, inspirational

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

St. John's continues to adjust to the 'new world' of in-person worship while simultaneously offering live-stream hybrid worship. Our House Band has re-formed; we have a new organist/pianist; our choir is slowly rebuilding; and our overall attendance is approaching our pre-pandemic numbers. We are pleased to have an 8:00 a.m. live Eucharist service, a 10:00 a.m. live and live-stream service, and a Sunday 8:00 p.m. Zoom Compline. We love music and place a high premium on it to enhance our worship. We have found a comfortable balance between our House Band and more traditional music. Our Handbell Choir has found new life and plays monthly at our 10 a.m. service.

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How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Throughout our long Transition period, the congregation has been involved in discerning our way forward, which has really been a whole-congregation ministry. For example, the Discovery Process involved the congregation in 3 phases of research and discernment, which included taking an objective look at how we connect with each other and our community. Later, during Holy Conversations, we reflected prayerfully on how we envision our future parish life with a new rector. And most recently, through the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) Survey, many parishioners responded to survey questions designed to help provide a clear picture of who we are as a church and what directions are most important for our future. Our lectors have remained active throughout the various formats we have followed through Covid: Men's and Women's Bible Study, Prayer Groups, and Book Club. Also, our Acolyte program is very strong, involving many of our teen members. And, more recently, as we emerge from the Covid lockdown, parishioners are starting, or restarting, ministries such as music and wedding coordinator, and launching an entirely new worship technology ministry, just to name a few.

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

Bible study, prayer groups, book clubs and more are the staples of our congregation. Even during the early days of the covid lockdown, groups stayed connected virtually for prayer, Bible study and book club. In fact, some virtual groups actually expanded during this time! We are very successful at hosting Zoom gatherings (Bible studies and book clubs) that also include past church members from across the country. When people could not get out during the pandemic this was, and still is, a way we keep in touch and keep our emotional connections alive. Additionally, we hosted a spectacularly successful parish dinner to celebrate our fellowship and return to vibrancy. It was attended by 100, and half the event was generously paid for with a special gift. We are deeply grateful for the leadership of our interim rector who joined us just prior to the covid lockdown. Not only did he help us navigate a difficult, frightening and uncertain era, he did it with grace, hope and vision.

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

We offer our facility for meetings of Narcotics Anonymous, Al Anon, PFLAG, and we have hosted Red Cross blood drives. We once had an active Befrienders ministry and until Covid, we had an active team of Lay Eucharistic Visitors who assisted the rector. As we continue to strengthen and grow, we are looking forward to the many other opportunities to connect with the Plymouth community and beyond.

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

St. John's has been very active in two organizations: Crossroads of Michigan, a large social services agency in Downtown Detroit; and Gleaners, a large regional food bank serving five communities in Southeastern Michigan. We have continued to provide dinners at Crossroads throughout the pandemic; St. John's takes turns with other area churches to donate food and money for meals, prepare and serve meals, and collect gently used clothing and hygiene products for clients. Our men's groups also organize a hugely successful sock drive each year. Participation with the Gleaners organization has waned during the pandemic; however, we are looking forward to renewed engagement in the near future. In addition to strong support of these two organizations, St. John's has a small food pantry that helps feed families in our local area and a program that lends durable medical equipment to people in the community. We are currently working to expand our food pantry to reach out to food insecure families with children in the elementary and middle schools that adjoin our property.

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

We are proud of our Tech Team, which was developed in response to our desire to offer worship services and connectivity to prayer, book club and Bible study groups during the Covid era. The tech challenges of trying to provide a complete service experience via YouTube and Zoom seemed daunting at first, but as usual the Holy Spirit was with us and wonderful things happened! We've made friends at other parishes who have mentored us, we continue to learn and improve on our technology, and have been blessed with special thank offerings from parishioners to help fund these efforts. One of our new parishioners—who joined at the very beginning of the "Covid season" has become one of our key Tech Team members! For more information, contact: Karen Gabrys at kgabrys54@gmail.com.

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

Stewardship has faltered in recent years and we've focused mostly on money rather than on a wholistic approach that also includes time and talent and remains a priority throughout the year. In spite of this approach, parishioner contributions continue to cover at least the minimum expenses. Parishioners have also made several generous special gifts as "thanks" offerings, to cover unanticipated expenses, improve the facility, and to upgrade technology to accommodate virtual services. Additionally, caring for the memorial garden, which is a spiritual place where we can feel separated from the usual rush of the world and be with the memory of those we love, is an important act of stewardship. A small and very dedicated team leads this sacred facet of stewardship.

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

The strain that comes from all of the changes created by staff turnover and environmental factors has led to conflict among leadership at times and within the parish. Sometimes conflict has been worked out in healthy ways and other times dysfunction created hard feelings and ruptured relationships. In the past we were better at creating vision and mission statements than implementing them. We were better at gathering opinion than acting on the information collected. With consistent and dedicated leadership, St. Johns can flourish. While our conflict has sometimes been hurtful, we've learned from these conflicts and have become more aware of how our actions are perceived by others. The main thing we've done is become much more transparent in our decision making. We are involving more church members in planning and activities so Vestry is not doing everything and the congregation sees first-hand what we are doing and why. We also email a weekly newsletter so church members know of upcoming events, COVID updates, and building issues and plans. Over the past year and a half, we are healing, we are experiencing positive change.

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

Addressing change has gone well when led with openness, empathy and compassion, for the good of St. John's and our parish community. Change did not go so well when it was led in a centralized manner driven by the charisma and/or control of individual leaders rather than through the involvement and participation of the parish community. Many are weary of leadership that uses St. John's as a way to build a resume or as a stepping stone for future opportunities. St. John's deserves leadership that values who we are and works to make us better. If we do this, growth and renewal can naturally occur rather than trying to force it. However, we have learned how slowly change can happen and how impatient people can be when things move slowly. This has been very apparent in both the search for a new priest and in our ability to set up a new way of worship over the past 15 months. Even when things are going according to plan, people tend to focus on the outcome they want and not all the steps it takes to get there. Becoming more transparent has greatly helped ease a lot of tension and mistrust within our congregation and has made it easier for us to get our church healthy again.



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### Prior Incumbents

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Rev. John H. Conners	Interim	2019-12	

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Rev. Regina Johnson	Supply	2019-07	

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
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Church School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School	Number of Students for Children School
	3	19

Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School	Number of Students for Adults School
		2	25

Day School	Number of Students for Day School	Number of Teachers for Day School	Number of Total Staff for Day School
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Worshipping Community Web site: <https://stjohnsplymouth.org>

Media Links:

Online References:

> <https://www.facebook.com/StJohnsEpiscopalPlymouth>

Languages Significantly Represented:

**English**

Provide Worship or Classes in:

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### References

Bishop:

313-832-4400 bishopperry@edomi.org

**The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A.  
Perry**

Diocesan Transition Minister

630-258-8882 eekevag@edomi.org

**The Rev. Ellen Ekevag**

Current Warden/Board Chair

[jayne.ga@gmail.com](mailto:jayne.ga@gmail.com)

**Jayne Watson**

Previous Warden/Board Chair

Search Chair

[mindsueosann@gmail.com](mailto:mindsueosann@gmail.com)

**Mindy Osann**

Parish/Institution

Local Community Leader

**John Stewart**, long time Plymouth attorney, former Michigan State Representative, and current Plymouth Township Trustee.  
[jcstewart1949@comcast.net](mailto:jcstewart1949@comcast.net)