
St. Augustine, Rocklin, Northern California

Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge

Contact:
andrea@norcalepiscopal.org

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

In July of 2019, our pastor of eight years, Rev. Liz Armstrong, announced she would be leaving to fill another position at the request of the bishop. It came as a surprise. Much to our credit, the church has not only persevered but grown stronger. New members have arrived and chosen to make St. Augustine their home, sharing our common vision. This transition time brought out the best in us. Attendance is steady and slightly higher. Programs are in place and moving forward. Our lay leaders and ministry volunteers have stepped up with renewed energy. The interim team, comprised of the lead pastor, associate pastor, senior warden, junior warden and treasurer, has guided the congregation with a steady hand. Our profile team has worked hard to present the story of St. Augustine to potential candidates for a new rector. The search team will be ready to discern the right call for our new rector. Prayer is at the center of our transition process. Prayer grounds us in the Holy Spirit and guides our work as we prepare for a new rector who will join us in our next journey. We are ready!

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

In an effort to reach our community beyond the sanctuary, we are embracing the use of social media. Our sermons are posted weekly, and many new attendees have mentioned that they watched several sermons prior to their first visit. Facebook and Instagram are also used for engagement and outreach. Events are also shared on a community app known as NextDoor. During a recent Rise Against Hunger meal-packing event, 67% of the participants were not current members of our church. Many mentioned that they signed up because they saw the post on social media. The website is under review with a vision to make it more appealing and attractive within the limitations of the current architecture. We recognize that technology tools are an important way to attract potential younger church members. St. Augustine is flexible and forward thinking. In addition to the use of technology, we continue to look for creative ways to reach the changing church community. A new rector could help us think outside the box and consider the possibility of a variety of service times and types and a more visible presence in the surrounding area.

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

Compassionate and empowering leader, flexible, good listener

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

St. Augustine strongly identifies with the Episcopal liturgical tradition as central to our worship. We offer two Sunday services: 8 a.m. is contemplative in nature, without music; the 10 a.m. service is more traditional and offers choir and piano music. Our priests and acolytes are vested for both services. St. Augustine has two regular contemplative prayer service offerings at noon on Fridays and in the evening on Mondays. These services offer an opportunity to build a closer relationship with God as well as provide peace, comfort and solace in the midst of our busy lives. At our services, the members not only welcome one another but make special attempts to welcome anyone who is visiting, regardless of their faith, race or way of being. All are welcome and visitors quickly learn that we are a safe place for people seeking God. The blended music at St. Augustine is an integral part of our worship, and we are blessed to have both an adult and children's choir. Our music director is an experienced Episcopal accompanist with solo experience, a beautiful voice and a significant historical background in music.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

The Spirit has endowed our parish with a talented and loving group of persons. St. Augustine is blessed with what the diocese has called "a deep bench" of lay leadership. At no time was this clearer than during the construction of the church. Parishioners stepped forward with skills in construction, project management, engineering, graphic art and much more. We have also been blessed with many specialists, from CPAs to medical advocates, from editors to caterers, who have come forward at precisely the moment they are needed. We listen with gratitude as young children read scripture during services and sing to us in the children's choir. There is a deep concern not only for one another but for the world at large as evidenced by the outreach programs, again headed by parishioners with particular skill sets. A number of activities employ the talents of parishioners wishing to serve, cooking for the homeless, singing in the adult choir, helping with the liturgy and decorating the building in a beautiful and tasteful manner. We continually seek ways to involve new members in our parish ministries.

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

Spiritually we offer various forms of worship as described in the outline of our liturgy, adult formation class, children's classes, Episcopal 101 classes and the services of a certified spiritual director when requested. We have study groups and seasonal events for adults and children. Lay persons have offered healing prayer under the guidance and training of the priests. St. Augustine has a strong program of pastoral care for those parishioners who are temporarily or terminally ill. It includes an online sign-up for meal delivery to the parishioner, a parish nurse and a doctor who will function as a medical advocate and accompany parishioners to medical appointments upon request. A prayer chain is activated, and the parish keeps in close touch with the family and one another during these times. Lay Eucharistic visits are completed regularly by trained lay persons. The parish welcomes all, regardless of mental or physical challenges. Our associate pastor, a retired nurse, worked with a licensed marriage and family therapist to conduct a six-week grief course." The group now meets monthly with a coordinator to provide support for one another.

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

St. Augustine has an active Kairos Prison Ministry that brings Christ's love and forgiveness to Folsom Prison. Kairos members also assist formerly incarcerated individuals in becoming productive citizens. Through intense four-day weekends, members demonstrate the unconditional love and forgiveness of God. One of our parishioners, a retired physician, has stepped up to act as a patient advocate, accompanying members to medical appointments and providing support as needed. St. Augustine has a Prayer Shawl Ministry that meets monthly to knit or crochet, enjoy fellowship and pray together. The group creates shawls that are blessed during a Sunday service. These shawls are given freely to those who are sick or in need of a special covering of prayer. The care and love of knitting and crochet have been combined into a prayerful ministry that reaches out to those in need of a tangible reminder of God's ever-present comfort and love. Bear Hugs is a project designed and created by one of our youth members. These stuffed bears are appliqued with a large heart, blessed by our rector and then delivered to children at local hospitals to provide comfort during stressful times.

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

A grocery cart at the entrance of St. Augustine gathers food and clothing donations that are distributed weekly to a local Episcopal food pantry and to The Gathering Inn Homeless Shelter. Our homeless brothers and sisters are also provided with dinner and place to sleep one day each month in partnership with The Gathering Inn. A team from St. Augustine regularly prepares and serves meals at the St. Vincent de Paul dining room. We support an Episcopal Church which has now become a mission for refugees through donations and service at their food bank. St. Augustine has been the site for several meal-packing events for Rise Against Hunger, an international hunger relief organization. St. Augustine also partners with St. Luc School in Thomassique, Haiti,. Parishioners have made several working trips to Haiti, and fundraisers have been held to support this effort. We have been able to equip students with uniforms, train teachers, provide noon meals and even procure additional land for the school expansion.

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

One of our oldest outreach projects has been involvement with The Gathering Inn homeless shelter in Roseville. We supported them through the purchase of a washer and dryer in addition to donating clothing and personal hygiene items. We also assisted with the daily check-in and Christmas gift bags. When our building was complete, we were able to begin our regular Gathering Inn Hosting Program which occurs ever second Wednesday of the month. We serve dinner on glass plates rather than paper as a sign of respect for our guests. Prior to the dinner, the sanctuary is cleared of chairs for the men's sleeping mats. The women sleep in the narthex, and once a five-day-old baby slept with its parents in our nursery. After dinner, we show a movie on the service screens in the sanctuary. From time to time, on a day that St. Augustine is not scheduled to host, we receive an urgent message that the hosting church is unable to fulfill their obligation and asking that we consider doing an additional day. We have filled that need. The Gathering Inn staff provides the dinner, and we supply the shelter.

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

The people of St. Augustine recognize that much has been given to us...our land, our building, its contents and a loving church community. We strive to be good stewards of these gifts. Our stewardship programs are based on the three traditional items of time, talent and treasure to ensure that each member can contribute in his/own way. St. Augustine's outreach programs are visible evidence of a compassionate, giving heart. They also evidence the commitment of time and talent. Because of the high percentage of retirees in the parish, it has become clear to us that we need to establish a long-term giving plan for those reaching the end of our lives. The budget committee is currently working hard to plan and project needs in terms of annual giving. We recognize that many of our young families have budgets that are stretched and that some of our older members are on fixed incomes. Our goal is to expand our annual fall stewardship program to become a year-round experience of creating opportunities for pledging our time, pledging our talents and pledging our funds.

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

St. Augustine is comprised of parishioners who know how "to stay at the table." This means no angry outbursts and no leaving miscommunications simmering without direct address. As we were preparing to enter into a capital campaign and move ahead with building, it was apparent that several key parish members had differing opinions on the advisability of this action. It was quietly discussed by those concerned, and although the issue was not completely resolved at the time, all left the meeting at peace, knowing that Christ was visible in every person and opinion. Our nation is presenting numerous opportunities for disagreements and the parish stance can best be described as one of quiet regard for the fact that opinions vary widely. At times we have quietly stated concern in this fashion: This is a discussion that could anger persons and has no place in an atmosphere of love and work for the Kingdom. St. Augustine focuses on the love of God and the love for one another rather than permitting disagreements to turn into open conflict. We recognize the danger in disregarding conflict and strive to love and help one another reach a state of peace in potentially contentious situations.

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?

St. Augustine is the poster child for change. In each of its seven new locations, people left, new people joined the church, and these new people rose up and shared the vision. Each time they brought new energy and new gifts that propelled St. Augustine further forward, finally to the building of a new church building, a permanent home. This new home was a beacon to the community that brought more members and a new shared vision for the future of St. Augustine.