

Share God's
Unconditional
Love with
Everyone

Trinity Church

Parish Profile 2023

**137 Trinity Hill Road
Mt. Pocono, PA 18344**

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Mt. Pocono, PA**

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<https://www.youtube.com/@trinitymountpocono5267/streams>



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The Congregation Wishes to Call a New Priest



A View of the Altar from the Pews

The Church is just a building, a beautiful building, but a building, nonetheless. We are the Church: the people and the clergy, and our commitment is to share God's love with everyone.

This is our invitation to learn more about Trinity Church, our parish, our practices, and our commitment to living up to our mission.

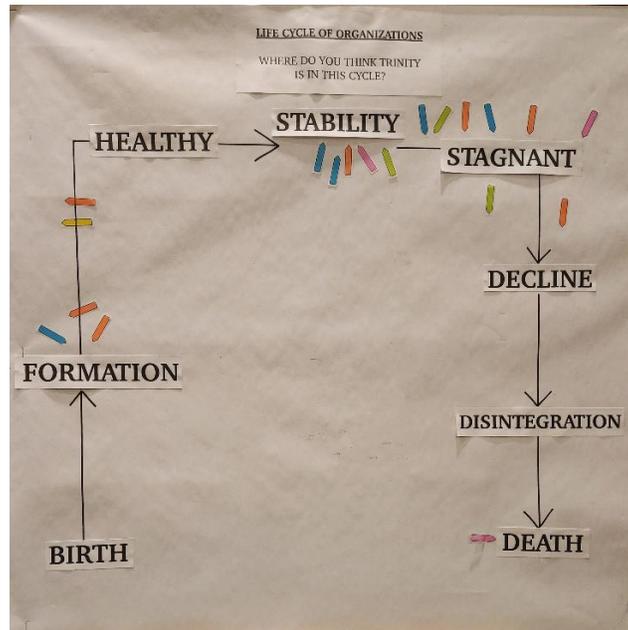
How We Worship

Sunday services at Trinity are held at 8 AM and 10 AM. Both are Rite II. We would be considered more "middle of the road" in terms of style of service. The early service is a more contemplative, spoken service with people gathered around the altar for communion. The later service is more traditional with music, a choir and lay eucharistic ministers. The priest wears an alb, cincture and stole. Parishioners come the altar to receive communion. Lay lectors are selected for each service and Communion is celebrated every Sunday at each service.

Coffee hour follows each service and is always well attended. Volunteers set up, clean up and provide assorted pastries or cookies. The fellowship after the 8 AM overlaps with the early arrivals for the 10 AM service. This reinforces the connections and relationships that bind our congregation into one community. For many of us, this is an extension of the worship service.

Parish Discernment

The Cycle of Organizations



Where we are in the lifecycle:

As part of our search process, we held four small group gatherings and reached out to others for one-on-one feedback. We shared a board that depicts the life cycle of the church. We asked everyone to place an arrow to show where they thought Trinity fell on that cycle. While no one put it in the “healthy” column, given our small size and budgetary constraints, our members feel we are far from the “decline” or “dying” end of the spectrum. Many felt we were somewhere between stable and stagnant. But quite a few said they felt we were closer to the beginning of the life cycle at “formation”; perhaps “reformation”! We think this is a beautiful way to think about our current time at Trinity. We are at a new beginning. Not starting over — but starting anew; redefining ourselves, recommitting to our mission statement of sharing God’s unconditional love with everyone.

Parish Discernment

What Defines Trinity?

We believe that we may be small, but we are mighty. Our size is our strength in that we all know and care about one another. And we make an outsized impact in our community.

Some of the words that people used to describe Trinity are accepting, nurturing, supportive, generous, innovative, diverse, open to trying new things and, most importantly, family. We love our beautiful sanctuary and wooded environment.

Trinity prides itself on being known as a welcoming, inclusive church. One of the meeting attendees commented that we didn't need a "welcoming committee" at our church, because we are all welcoming! Newer members commented that this was one of the reasons they kept coming back to Trinity.

We are a congregation that likes to be together. Whether it's "paint and sip" or a movie night, or Bible study and programs like Sacred Ground - we are a congregation with diverse interests and like to have a variety of offerings. We would like to expand on these programs, offering both social and religious activities, for our own development and to attract others to join with us.



Trinity's Booth at Pridefest

Ultimately, for many, what most defines Trinity remains our mission statement - to Share God's Unconditional Love with Everyone. Trinity's participation in events like Pridefest and Juneteenth festivals are examples of how we walk the walk.

What Is our purpose?

We are living in a time when the broader church is facing the same challenges as individual parishes. Since the end of Covid, most churches have lost up to 40% of their members. It begs the question - what role can the church play in today's world?

While church membership is in decline, we are living in a time when loneliness is an increasing problem. Social media and the ability to work from home has led to isolation. Human interaction is becoming more infrequent. It is in this context that members see we have a role to play as a gathering place. Members described the energy they get from being together, how it's refueling, renewing. We recognize the importance of relationships.

What we seek in a priest?

We want a priest who feels aligned with our mission statement and will help us live into that mission; a dynamic leader who will inspire other people to lead and develop new and expand on existing programs; someone with the enthusiasm to leverage our strengths to help us grow in size and spirit, someone who comes with experience and ideas and is focused on pastoral care.

We value well-crafted and relevant sermons, that use storytelling to make the lessons of the Bible relevant in our everyday lives. Jesus' stories were full of current events of the times. However - there are many things in our world that are important and no one single issue should dominate. People don't want to be told what to do or to think....rather we want to be motivated to think and act for the betterment of our community and all humankind.

We want a partnership

As we are seeking a part-time priest, we understand that leading our parish will require a partnership between clergy and lay members, to guard against burnout.

Since transitioning to a part time priest, 3 days/week, our lay leadership have taken the initiative to drive programs with guidance from the Vestry. Fellowship, social media presence, live streaming, monthly newsletters, fundraisers, along with Bible study and outreach are well developed programs within Trinity.

Our members have accepted and embraced the responsibility of pastoral care. Recently, seven individuals participated and completed the program to serve as Lay Eucharistic Visitors and are now able to bring communion to the homes of parishioners who, due to mobility issues or illness, are unable to attend services. In this way we are able to stay connected with and support all our members.

Our service to one another and the community are our keystones. These are the bridges that have attracted newcomers to stay at Trinity.

What we dream for the future?

There is general agreement that attracting families and getting more kids back in church is one of the most important things we can do to survive and grow.

All agree that we have something special at Trinity...that there's something at the core of what we are that is exciting. Our lay leadership is making things happen right now - so we know it's possible. Some people have left, but new people are coming in with a thirst for connection, for learning, and a bias toward action. We feel the presence of God and want to reflect that with each other and in our community.

Thoughts from our Youth:

One of the group discussion forums was held for our youth members to hear their voices and understand their needs. Our kids shared their favorite memories of Trinity, including annual events like the parish picnic and Christmas pageant, and special events like confirmation.

We consider our youth vital members of our congregation and are encourage them to become leaders, despite their many competing interests. Some of the ideas we have for this group are movie night, hiking, game night or field trips to museums.

They have clear thoughts about what they would like in a new priest. They want someone who is approachable, someone they can talk to (not just about religion) and ask questions. They want someone who won't get mad about the questions they ask. They'd like someone who would come to events and has a sense of humor. They want someone who is wise and that they can learn from, and who uses storytelling in their sermons.

It is rewarding and exciting to see youth participating in services as readers, ushers and in our Sunday live streams. While small in numbers, we are proud of our young members.



Youth Members Preparing Shrove Tuesday Pancakes

Trinity Mount Pocono: A Brief History



Entrance of Church facing North



Celebrating Rev. Jay O'Rear's Ordination & Last Sunday at Trinity

Trinity Mount Pocono was born at a service held July 12, 1896, and was consecrated on August 9, less than a month later. Begun as an Episcopal church for summer vacationers, year-round local Episcopalians later joined and in 1961 a mission congregation was established with services held weekly throughout the year. In the 1980s, Trinity became financially independent of Diocesan aid.

The parish hall was added to the church in 1926, the rectory was built in 1962, and in June of 1990, a major addition was completed, supplying rooms for Sunday School, a meeting room, and office space for the rector and parish administrator.

In 1996, a Centennial Fund was raised for repair and improvements throughout the building, including restoration of our stained-glass windows, most of which were designed by the renowned Willet Studios of Philadelphia, known for the award-winning Great Sanctuary Window in The Cadet Chapel at West Point and windows at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. (Trinity's first window, the Ascension Window, was planned and executed by award-winning Italian American artist Nicola D'Ascenzo.) Windows were replaced in the church building to conserve heat and energy, a courtyard and a memorial garden were added with appropriate landscaping featuring native plants.

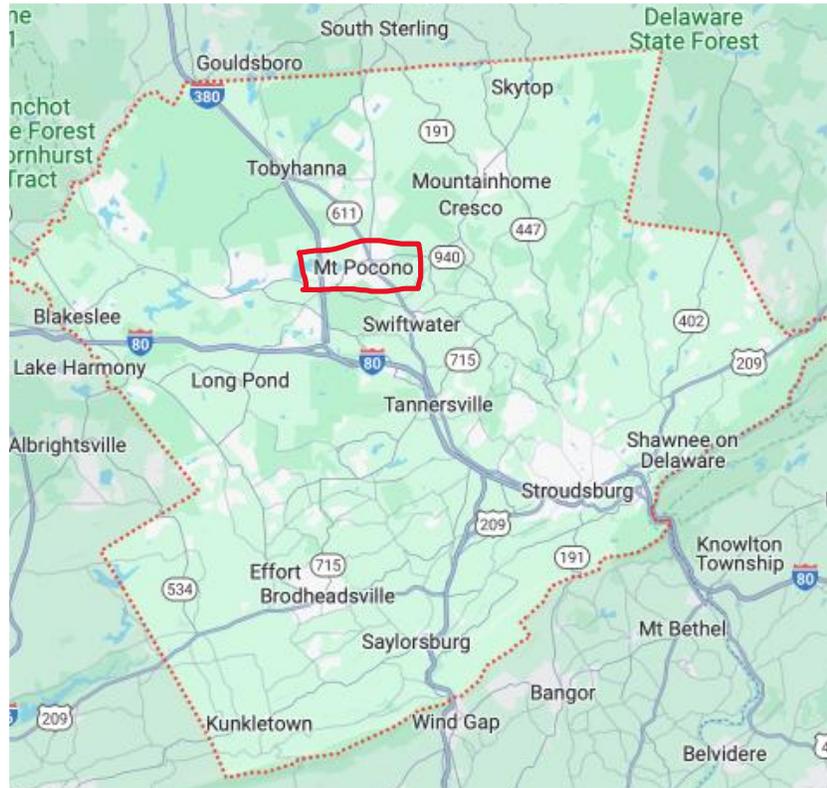
In the past, Trinity's congregation boasted as many as 250 parishioners. Now, as has been experienced by so many congregations, our numbers have fallen. Today there are 51 congregants in our very active and loving congregation involved in several ministries. Despite its size, Trinity's congregation is quite diverse. We have parishioners from South America, the Caribbean, Europe, Canada, Japan, and Africa. We are an active, caring congregation and enjoy any reason to spend time together. We have a coffee hour after both Sunday services and have various potluck dinners throughout the year.

Several of our members have been certified as Eucharistic ministers and we have begun a "Meals and Wheels" ministry that provides meals and rides to our homebound members. We were one of the founding congregations when Family Promise of Monroe County was established and continue to provide a home-cooked meal every Tuesday to the families that are housed there. As a founding member of the Pocono Mountain Ecumenical Hunger Ministry, Trinity continues to provide volunteers to assist with stocking shelves and distributing food to about 175 families per month. Unfortunately, this number climbs in the winter months and recently was over 200 families. Our participation in the Mount Pocono Festival and in Pride Day for the last few years has helped to make Trinity more visible in the community.

During the pandemic it was a challenge to provide services to our members, and that challenge was met by offering live on-line Sunday services, which we still maintain. Our website keeps our parishioners and the community at large up to date on news of our activities and upcoming events. In addition, Trinity publishes a monthly newsletter filled with information about the state of the parish, as well as news of celebrations past and to come.

Demographics

Trinity Mount Pocono Parish Geography and Demographics



Map of Monroe County and communities in which many Trinity members reside.

We are a “country church”. There is no “downtown” close by thus making us more of a destination church. Members travel from near and far. The radius from Trinity is roughly 30 miles in each direction making travel time up to 45 minutes for the furthest from the Church.

Trinity Mount Pocono Episcopal Church is in Monroe County, PA, just south of Mt Pocono, on Trinity Hill Road, a short parallel road of busy Route 611. Trinity members come from many surrounding communities, including Mt Pocono, Tobyhanna, Long Pond, Cresco, Tannersville, Brodheadsville, and Stroudsburg. Trinity Mount Pocono is part of Convocation IV of the Diocese of Bethlehem, and it is located north of almost all other Convocation IV churches, except Good Shepherd, Milford. Directly north of Trinity Mt Pocono, there are no other Episcopal churches closer than St Mark’s Episcopal Church in Moscow, PA and St. John’s Episcopal Church in Hamlin PA (both churches are 22 miles away). To the south, the closest Episcopal church is Christ Church, Stroudsburg (14 miles from Trinity).

Mount Pocono sits roughly in the center of the lovely Pocono Mountains, a popular vacation destination of mountains, valleys, forests, lakes, and streams. The Pocono Mountains overlap four counties of northeastern Pennsylvania, shaped like an oval starting at Milford, PA in the northeast, encompassing the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and slanting southwest to end at Hazleton and Tamaqua. Notable features of the Pocono Mountains include popular tourist destinations like Jim Thorpe, vacation resorts and communities (Kalahari, Great Wolf Lodge, Lake Harmony, Split Rock), State Parks (Tobyhanna, Hickory Run), ski resorts (Jack Frost/Big Boulder, Camelback, Shawnee Mountain), and a casino (Mount Airy). The largest employers in the region are the Tobyhanna Army Depot, which comprises both active-duty service members and civilian contractors conducting research and development; and a Sanofi Pasteur vaccine production facility in Swiftwater.

Local K-12 education includes the very large (305 square miles) Pocono Mountain School District, with 2 high schools, 2 junior high schools, 2 intermediate schools, 3 elementary schools, and a cyber school. Monroe Career and Technical Institute provides consumer and technical education for high school students and continuing education for adults. There are also local private and charter schools. Post-high school education within driving distance is provided by the Monroe Campus of Northampton Community College, East Stroudsburg University, University of Scranton, Penn State Scranton, and Marywood University.

For the purpose of the United States census, the largest population centers in Monroe County north of Stroudsburg are Pocono Township and Coolbaugh Township. Demographic data from the 2022 Census are listed in Table 1. This area is considered one of the most diverse parts of northeastern Pennsylvania.

Table 1 Demographic data from Monroe County, Pocono Township, Coolbaugh Township, and the United States (2022)

Measure	Monroe County	Pocono Township	Coolbaugh Township	United States
Population	165,198	10,883	20,723	333,287,557
Population by age:				
Under 5 years	4.5%	4.9%	5.4%	5.6%
Under 18 years	19.1%	20.5%	19.5%	21.7%
65 years and older	19.6%	19.0%	16.9%	17.3%
Female persons	49.8%	55%	48.9%	50.4%

Self-identified race and ethnicity				
White alone	75.8%	74.5%	57.8%	75.5%
Black or African American alone	17.5%	12.3%	23.2%	13.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.7%	1.0%	0.2%	1.3%
Asian alone	2.8%	3.6%	3.6%	6.3%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone	0.1%	0	0	0.3%
Two or more races	3.0%	7.1%	7.2%	3.0%
Hispanic or Latino	18.8%	18.9%	30.3%	19.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	61.8%	60.4%	41%	58.9%
Veterans	10,833 (6.6%)	491 (4.5%)	1,305 (6.3%)	17,431,290 (5.2%)
Foreign-born persons	10.3%	11.7%	15.9%	13.6%
Language other than English spoken at home	16.5%	20.6%	28.3%	21.7%
With a disability, under 65 years	10.3%	5.4%	13.7%	8.7%
Median household income	\$72,679	\$81,960	\$67,500	\$69,021

Source:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/poconotownshipmonroecountypennsylvania,PA/PST0452>
[22](#)

The regular attendees of Trinity include all age ranges, with a majority of older and midlife adults. A core group of lifelong members is complemented by those who are relative Poconos newcomers. Trinity’s greatest diversity is the international character of our membership, with members coming from Africa, South America, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean, and other countries. The warm welcome extended to newcomers has been key to Trinity’s appeal that keeps visitors returning and becoming regular church attendees. Our goal is to keep that warm welcome and extend opportunities for small group interactions outside of worship to facilitate relationship-building and deepening connections between recent and long-standing members.

The Holy Spirit at Work at Trinity

“Share God’s Unconditional Love with Everyone” is the Trinity mission statement. This was developed in the early 2000’s and is a succinct summary of the vision members had of Trinity’s call as a congregation. Living into this mission statement is demonstrated by the warm welcome visitors receive when they come to our worship services, stay for fellowship time, and join in discussions and programs. Living into this mission statement spurs involvement in outreach through Family Promise of Stroudsburg – providing meals for homeless families. As a founding congregation and active participant of the Pocono Mountain Ecumenical Hunger Ministry, our mission statement translates to many volunteer hours at the local food bank. As a host of Alcoholics Anonymous, our mission statement translates to sharing our space three nights a week with our chapter.

Our two weekly worship services provide spiritual nurture for members who find their inspiration in the quiet, reflective 8 AM service or the music-filled 10 AM service often attended by families. As a small congregation, people can learn each other’s stories, develop a supportive network, and find ways to share their gifts with the church and join in community-serving activities. As with many churches, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated cessation of in-person services hit our community hard.

The pandemic challenged Trinity to find new ways to connect with our community and to continue providing our members a spiritual home, at a time when our physical space was not available. Zoom meetings provided an initial answer, but once Trinity began to cautiously welcome back parishioners, we knew our online offering would need to expand, so those not yet ready for in-person services would still feel included in our services. We learned about the Diocese of Bethlehem’s Mission Resources Grant program, so applied and received a grant to fund all the equipment necessary to live-stream our services. Currently we provide a two-camera switched feed of our 10a service, and also live-stream special events like holiday services and funerals. Past services remain on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@trinitymountpocono5267/streams> and recent services can also be found on our re-vamped website: <https://www.trinitymtpocono.org/>

We are very blessed to have two experienced videographers among our members. They provided technical support to initiate live streaming and recording of our 10 AM service – this was essential during COVID and remains important to members who are unable to attend worship due to transportation and mobility challenges. Today, they are ably assisted by one of our youth members, who is able to run the equipment and live stream the service each Sunday.



Riley Setting up for the Live Stream

Trinity members are engaged and curious, participating in Bible studies and book studies for adults. From October 2021 through May 2022, a cohort of 10 people engaged in the Episcopal church’s “Sacred Ground” antiracism curriculum, meeting in person or on Zoom on a regular basis to discuss the assigned readings and videos. The group members are committed to growing the Beloved Community by conducting follow-up meetings and trips, as well as by extending the invitation to form another Sacred Ground group to Trinity members and members of nearby churches.

A group of 6 youth were confirmed in August 2023, one of whom has become a regular lector/intercessor at the 10 AM service. Another assumed the responsibility for filming and live streaming the 10 AM service. Others are preparing to become acolytes and to continue helping with the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper. Their enthusiastic participation is a welcome addition to the adults who regularly serve in the many roles needed to keep worship running smoothly!



2023 Confirmation Class with Bishop Kevin Nichols

Fellowship events are an important part of our church family's culture. The Annual summer picnic, Thanksgiving dinner, sip and paint, along with Sunday coffee hour after each service are opportunities for bonding and sharing which builds the cohesiveness within the parish.



Memorial Gathering for Rev. Ralph Roth



Shrove Pancake Supper



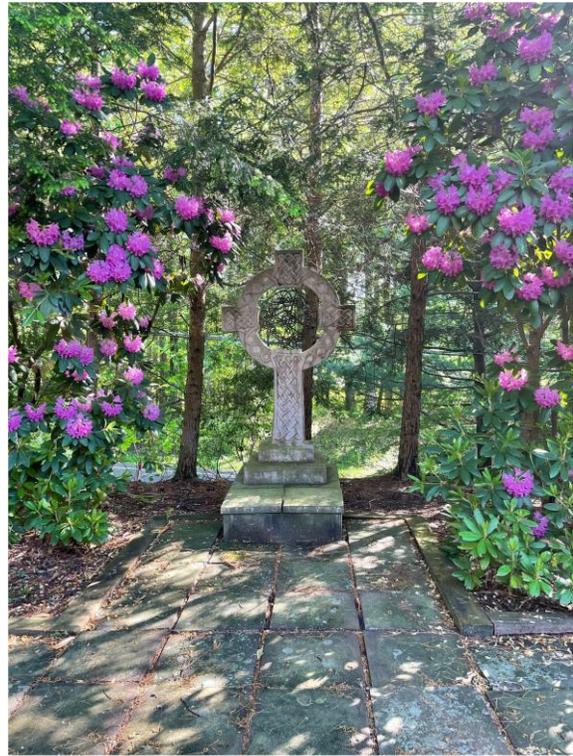
Summer Picnic at a Local Park

Buildings & Grounds

Memorial Garden



Entrance to the Memorial Garden



Memorial Garden

A Memorial Garden for burial of ashes, designed and constructed by professionals from the parish, provides a quiet and dignified setting for its purpose. Ashes are interred under slate slabs, which form a broad pavement surrounded by massive trees and lovely gardens. In its entirety, the Garden offers a welcome contemplative refuge from our hectic world and a fitting memorial to loved ones. On the opposite side of the church building, another garden, remembering a long-time parishioner, graces our front entrance along with a patio.

Labyrinth & Meditation Path



The Labyrinth after Spring Clean-up

Just beyond our parking lot on an adjacent parcel sits our meditation path and labyrinth, an area open to the public for introspection, prayer, and communing with nature. The labyrinth and path were dedicated in 2004. Fourteen markers along the meditation path represent Stations of the Cross. Benches invite visitors to sit in quiet contemplation. The labyrinth, a classical seven-circuit path with a tree at the center, is designed so that you are facing Jerusalem upon entering it.

Parking Area

Several years ago, it became apparent that work on the driveway and parking areas was needed. As the church property is built on a hillside, rain runoff was creating serious ruts and treacherous conditions. Maintaining a “country feel” was desired, but the gravel would regularly be washed away. By using a combination of gravel, millings and binders we restored the driveway and parking areas achieving a balance: country feel and resilient surface. This achieved our goal of keeping a little church in the woods where one feels close to nature. Funding for this project was largely a result of a grant from the “Long Name Society”.

Buildings

Church & Rectory: under the supervision of the Senior Warden, we are vigorous about routine maintenance and repairs. This prevents larger problems from occurring and in the long run is more fiscally responsible. While budgets are tight, it is recognized that regular maintenance will extend the overall life of our physical plant. Summer and fall cleanups are generally well attended events to do bigger projects, naturally including lunch!



Raking & Blowing Leaves Last Fall's During Clean-up

Many Hands Make Light Work !

The Rectory, which is currently rented, is an attractive two-story house nestled in the woods on the slope above the church. The first floor features an eat-in kitchen, dining area, living room, study, powder room, screened in porch and a large deck off the back to the house. (The deck will be replaced this spring, funds have been set aside for the project.) There is an attached two car garage and a basement for additional storage. The second floor includes three bedrooms and two full baths.



Screened Porch in Front



Deck in Back

During the summer of 2023, a much larger project was contracted. New shingles were installed on both the Church and Rectory. The funding for this major capital expense came primarily from 3 parishioners. Upon completion of the project a “Roof Blessing and thanksgiving” ceremony occurred.



Blessing the New Roof

Summary of key information from Parochial Reports

Metrics Six Year History

Stewardship Pledges	Pledges	Total Pledges
2019	42	70020
2020	43	83546
2021	31	60719
2022	33	70395
2023	34	84833

Summary of Key information from Parochial Reports

General Statistics	2019	2020`	2021*	2022*	2023
Baptized Members	54	51	42	38	39
Baptisms	7		2	3	2
Confirmations			2		6
Received by Bishop			2		
Marriages					
Burials	1	2	3	4	3
Attendance	44	44	33	25	42
Sunday Average					
Easter (Saturday Vigil & Sunday Services)	115	0	0	79	72
			* Covid Impact		

Financial Reports (see Attachments)

Attachment I 2023 Income Statement vs Actuals

Attachment II 2023 Year End Balance Sheet

Attachment III 2024 Approved Budget

Attachment IV 2022 Parochial Report

Attachment V 2023 Parochial Report

Attachment VI Financial Discussion

