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

There are so many significant moments – our “Wine into Water” event that funded the building of a well in a third world country; thirty good-natured parishioners shoveling shoulder-to-shoulder in the rain to beautify the church grounds for Easter; more than a dozen teens and their advisors heading off on their annual summer mission trip; receiving the occupancy permit for our new building, adding five thousand square feet to our facilities; the glorious and joyful funeral of a long-time parishioner. Ultimately, the one experience we’ve decided to describe is the recent series of congregational meetings that have refreshed our parish vision, and identified the characteristics we seek in a new rector.

Having settled into our new building, on five Sunday mornings last spring we gathered parishioners to revisit the Vision that brought us to this point, and explore where we might be going next. Participation was lively and enthusiastic. Working from the metaphor of a free-flowing river, we appreciated the significance of the robust currents already underway, as well as tributaries which will undoubtedly enrich the flow. We found that we have lots of energy for the future, and look forward to healthy involvement in new and ongoing programs. Perhaps because our visioning conversations have been so open and inclusive over time, we hit up against no sticking points.

Listening to the open give and take among parishioners, the diversity that never degenerated into debate, and the sparkling synergy of the discussion across age groups, it became clear that we are in a very good place. We are a strong parish with active lay leadership, and we know ourselves well. We seek a rector who enjoys participating in shared leadership with a vigorous laity.

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

We are a faith community that feels very comfortable with moving forward. First and foremost we seek renewal through our worship and are highly aware of the progression of seasons cycling from Advent to Advent. We experience the ongoing truths of faith anew, again and again, in fresh “aha” ways.

Second, we are committed to staying connected to unfolding circumstances around us. We started our visioning process more than four years ago by asking the kind of questions that would challenge and stretch us:

- What emerging demographic trends are shaping the pool of potential parishioners in “our” zip codes?
- What is currently changing about the local, popular perception of how people best meet spiritual and ethical needs?
- What places other than St. Michael’s will be available to meet their perceived needs? How can we stand out enough to get noticed?
• What changes are emerging in the criteria by which people make donation decisions, both for money and for volunteer time and energy?
• What will our diocese be doing that will affect us?
• What is becoming important to applicants seeking professional and administrative positions in the church?
• What changes internal to St. Michael’s can be expected to affect our future?

The answers we found have gradually shaped and guided all dimensions of programming, and equipped us to build an expressive web site that visitors say brings them to our doors. In our latest directory we added ten new households, eight of whom have school or preschool age children.

We see the Church of the future consisting largely of today’s young families, many of whom are finding faith and a church home at St. Michael’s and All Angels. Responding to their welcome presence, we have developed a strong Sunday School program and active teen group that take seriously youth’s needs for spiritual growth, creating a context that is highly attractive to their parents. We have recently completed a large addition to the church that provides modern classrooms and nursery facilities. Being added now is an outdoor camera with indoor display screen that enables parents at coffee hour to see their children on the playground. As they say, “How cool!”

But no single generation ever makes up the Church. We prepare, support, and equip all our members in various ways to move the Church forward, helping them to identify natural gifts and interests, casually connecting them with others who share in those assets, and inviting them into relevant activities. We have an active group of “Silvers and Sages” who support the parish daily in prayer, and openly care about the opportunities for all ages. We have an active group of “20s and 30’s” that is loosely self-organized in ways that are comfortable for them; they spontaneously approach any peer who comes through the door, but also volunteer for traditional roles in worship, work parties, and elected positions. We have an active cadre of volunteers of all ages, who take advantage of flexible scheduling around their many outside commitments. In short, we are preparing for the Church of the future by welcoming and involving all sorts of people today.

3. Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community. (Lay leaders, not the priest)

As we envision the future of St. Michael and All Angels, the essential gifts and skills for faithful lay leaders are:

• A vision for opportunities
• Passion for serving others and compassion for those who struggle
• Commitment to the congregation and dependable follow-through
• Willingness to work through systems that get things done
• Contagious enthusiasm that draws people in
• Open and collaborative attitude
• A sense of humor
• Ability to learn from failure and move on
4. Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.

It is important to note that St. Michael’s does not talk about our worship in terms of being “Traditional” or “Contemporary,” but in terms of bringing the Prayer Book to life so we can engage more fully with God. Our Rite I 8 o’clock service is appreciated for its quiet simplicity. Although from time to time hymns have been added, most of our early worshippers are satisfied with a spoken service quietly led by priest and worship leader. Our Rite II 10:30 service is vibrant, multisensory, and very family-friendly. Music is drawn from a variety of sources, hymns from both The Hymnal 1982 and our own “homegrown” Green Songbook, and anthems amplifying the readings from a wide range of aesthetics and eras. Our highly capable Associate for Liturgical Arts collaborates with our priest on planning, and our four-part, all volunteer choir of sixteen voices leads robust congregational singing. Accompaniment comes alternately from pipe organ and grand piano, accented occasionally by volunteer instrumentalists. Choristers meet frequently with Sunday School classes, and our children sing in worship at regular intervals.

10:30 liturgies are seasonally enriched by extended processions, pageants dramatized by our children, and vibrant visual displays such as All Saints’ memorial streamers vesting the altar, and a noble overhead Advent wreath spanned by Sarum blue streamers.

During the summer, to serve families having Sunday recreational plans, our second service shifts to 10:00, deftly condenses the Ministry of the Word, and borrows Eucharistic prayers from churches throughout the Anglican Communion.

5. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

We are a place that welcomes all, and makes a point of growing relationships and inviting involvement. We take the initiative to strike up conversation with newcomers, include them in popular activities like the St. Nicholas Breakfast and Work Parties, and help them follow personal interests into specialties like the monthly feeding program.

Our fall Stewardship Campaign addresses Giving Time to God as energetically as it does giving funds. Our letter to each parishioner begins by thanking the person for their current ministries and acknowledging their current areas of involvement. They are invited to renew, add or drop any activity as they feel led, and the responses are collected and distributed to various ministry heads who get in touch with parishioners to incorporate them as they have asked.

While our approach is never flawless, a continuing endeavor is made to recruit, guide and support people in ministries that are personally meaningful to them. As a result, nearly 80% of our households undertake some identifiable form of ministry.

6. As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?
St. Michael’s is known as a caring parish. People reach out to each other, send birthday cards, and just “check in,” and a Prayer Chain intercedes for those going through difficult times. The Parish Life Network meets regularly with the rector to confidentially share identified needs and organize ways to address them, be they spiritual, emotional or physical. Commission chairs know that creating a caring community within their group is as important as accomplishing tasks.

We pray together on Wednesday and Sunday mornings, offer a monthly Healing Eucharist and two weekly midweek Bible Studies. For those who cannot make it to church on Sunday, we have a website where parishioners can read and hear sermons that are posted throughout the year.

We offer a variety of faith formation activities from nursery care, to Sunday School, to Teen Stream, to Connect for Parents, to seasonal adult courses. In Advent and Lent we also have quiet days for parishioners to meditate on the reasons for the seasons.

We have an active Newcomers Welcoming committee that ties in with all the other ministries. Visitors receive a personal note from the priest, and repeat visitors receive a note from the committee chair. Twice a year we host a Newcomers coffee where our newest members can mix informally, and make connections with the vestry and other lay leaders. Children are warmly welcomed in worship and bags of “quiet” activities are provided for their enjoyment.

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

St. Michael’s serves the wider world in many ways. We are active in the Issaquah Meals Program, where parishioners join in a community-wide effort to provide wholesome suppers to the needy. We also take our turn preparing nutritious meals whenever Tent City (a rotating, regional shelter for the homeless) comes to Issaquah. We collect food and clothing to be distributed through the Issaquah Food and Clothing Bank, and help solicit food at local grocery stores each October for the Mayor’s Month of Caring. Several times each month our rector’s discretionary fund provides financial assistance for basics like groceries, rent, utilities, and prescriptions. Recently we also celebrated a parish-wide Wine into Water event in collaboration with Episcopal Relief and Development, raising more than $5,000 to fund a third world well.

Many parishioners also volunteer individually in the Issaquah community. Some help staff the Issaquah Community Services which provides emergency cash for utility payments, rent, bus fare, and similar support. Others are part of local government or service organizations, promoting the welfare of the entire community. Our parish is represented on the Nourishing Network, a collaborative web committed to working for food security for everyone in Issaquah, and on the Issaquah Community Network, which offers services to homeless youth.

Our teens savor a long-standing relationship with an Episcopal mission serving farm workers’ children in the Skagit Valley to the north. Our youth work year-round to raise funds and prepare materials for the Vacation Bible School they provide each summer, and every December they set up a Christmas giving tree to gather requested clothing items and grocery gift cards for the Skagit Valley farm families.
In recent years St. Michael’s has also started pioneering a unique series of outward-focused, community-based ministries. Since 2008 each December we have invited the community for a Sing-Along, Play-Along Messiah event, networking through local musical associations and partnering with The Issaquah Press for publicity; each year we draw a diverse group of area residents into our nave, and to date we have raised more than $3500 for the local community fund. In 2009 as the recession reached the Pacific Northwest, we hosted a series of complimentary lunches for Issaquah area residents seeking work; we recruited professional employment consultants to volunteer their time as speakers; we again partnered with The Press for publicity, we prepared seven biweekly buffet lunches, and as a result personally engaged with 55 job seekers.

8. Describe your worshpping community’s involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region.

Much of our wider Church involvement takes the form of community caring as described above. We also participate in the ecumenical Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council, a collaborative of churches of many denominations and social service agencies to identify local needs and provide services. Our priest and a St. Michael’s parishioner are currently completing a two year term co-leading the Eastside Episcopal Churches (regional network) of the Diocese of Olympia. Our facility is always open to diocesan functions as needed, and a year from this fall we will be hosting a weekend conference for middle schoolers. Recently our ‘20s & 30s’ group of young adults invited their diocesan peers here for supper with the bishop, and organized a Habitat for Humanity team from across the diocese. Our priest has served in a series of diocesan positions, with the full support of the congregation. St. Michael’s granted her a two month writing leave in 2011 so she could complete the continuing education curriculum for The Resurgent Church. She also serves as chair of the Diocesan Board of Directors.

Our Associate for Liturgical Arts & Youth Formation serves on the Liturgy and Arts Commission for the diocese, and directs the Compline Choir at St. Mark’s Cathedral. He has just been awarded the first installment of a multi-year diocesan grant for a music outreach program called Youth Musi-quah, which is described in our answer to question 9.

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

We have initiated a number of innovative ministries in the last five years. We considered focusing on our Sing Along Messiah held annually to raise emergency funds for local residents; Gabriel’s Guild which honors elderly parishioners and involves them in praying daily for the life of the parish; and Career Connection, a series of luncheons with speakers on resume writing and interview skills, open to all in the community who are looking for work.

We decided, however, to focus on Youth Musi-quah, our multi-year diocesan grant for interfaith after school music.
In the planning since 2011, *Musi-quah* will mobilize our staff and volunteers in turning our brand new music center into a bridge between St. Michael’s and Issaquah’s arts-loving community. *Musi-quah* invites 3rd through 5th graders to discover their own musical voices and blend them in exploring the melodic riches of different cultures and faiths. Parents appreciate how this kid-safe, peer learning environment offers their child a wholesome and affordable after-school activity. As the weeks go by, families discover how imaginative programming brings out the best in a child, and nurtures growth in gratitude, creativity and commitment.

The Musi-quah approach brings melodies and lyrics off the printed page and makes reading notes and rhythms second nature. Music skills are introduced gradually and absorbed naturally by hearing, seeing, and doing. Today's media-savvy youth are keenly aware of the diversity filling their world; they arrive at Musi-quah primed and ready to experience for themselves the musical heritage of diverse, intriguing destinations. Musi-quah partners with parents by hand-picking lyrics which inspire and affirm a healthy appreciation for self, others, and the world we all share. It opens the lyrical riches of diverse world religions to children, allowing youthful spirits to sample the spiritual wisdom of the ages. In addition, students perform at some of Issaquah’s most family-friendly, art-loving, events.

As Musi-quah matures over the next three years we believe it will bring dozens of young families into relationship with St. Michael’s, as well as reach countless more through performances at community events.

**Person to contact:** Dr. Jason Anderson, Associate for Liturgical Arts & Youth Formation, St. Michael and All Angel’s Episcopal Church, Issaquah, WA.

**Prior Incumbents**

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**Christian Education**

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Day School: None

**Worshiping Community Websites:**

St. Michael and All Angels  

Photos from St. Michael’s  
[http://photobucket.com/stmichaelandallangels](http://photobucket.com/stmichaelandallangels)

Musi-quah, St. Michael’s Youth Music Program  

**Media Links:**

Issaquah Press  

Issaquah/Sammamish Patch  

Issaquah/ Sammamish Reporter  

**Online References:**

City of Issaquah  
[http://www.ci.issaquah.wa.us/](http://www.ci.issaquah.wa.us/)

Issaquah School District  
[http://www.issaquah.wednet.edu/](http://www.issaquah.wednet.edu/)

Issaquah Chamber of Commerce  

Front Street Web  

Issaquah Virtual Tour  
[http://www.issaquah.org/tours/tours1.htm](http://www.issaquah.org/tours/tours1.htm)

Images of Issaquah Screensaver  
[http://www.levicannon.com/saver.htm](http://www.levicannon.com/saver.htm)

Issaquah Kiwanis
Outside Magazine
Named Issaquah as one of the “best towns” in 2011 saying...
“As Boeing’s and Microsoft’s fastest-growing bedroom community, the former lumber town (pop. 23,200) has experienced a surge in out-of-towners in the past few years. And for good reason: a 20-minute drive can put you in downtown Seattle or the oyster flats on Puget Sound. An hour away, there’s skiing in the Cascades, kayaking and rafting on the Class IV Skykomish River, and access to a half-dozen steelhead streams. Even better, Issaquah hasn't been totally yuppified. The biggest party of the year is Salmon Days, a two-day festival in October celebrating the return of the spawning fish.

Diocese of Olympia
http://www.ecww.org/
Languages Significantly Represented: English
Provide Worship or Classes in:
Seasonal classes and series are offered for many ages: Communion Classes for elementary age children, SCRIPT Christian formation sessions with the rector and Confirmation Preparation for teens, Pre-Baptism Classes and Sunday morning Connect for parents, annual meditations and classes in Advent and Lent, Wednesday morning Bible Study led by the rector, and Thursday morning Mom’s Bible Study led by its members, as well as occasional series like this fall’s pilot “Stone Soup” that gathers parishioners for discussion around a topic they all want to talk about.

References
Bishop: The Rt. Rev. Greg Rickel grickel@excww.org
Diocesan Transition Minister: The Rev. Canon Joan Anthony janthony@ecww.org