

St. James' – West Bend Clergy Team

In the immortal words of Monty Python: “And now for something completely different...” At St. James' in West Bend, it's not only *different*, it's *new* and, to the best of our collective knowledge, has never been done before. This “something” is the parish's new clergy team.

Three years ago, St. James' was faced with the challenge of calling a new rector. Always a daunting task, the search process was even more difficult due to financial constraints. In short, the parish simply could not afford to hire a new, full-time priest. What to do?

Eventually, the solution came into focus. With full and much-appreciated support from Bishop Miller and Canon Peggy Bean, the Bishop's assistant for congregational development, St. James'-West Bend embarked on an entirely new model of parish ministry and leadership using a team approach. The team, which was formally installed last June by Bishop Miller, consists of three part-time clergy associates along with the junior and senior wardens, Vicki Knaak and Chris Aliota, respectively. While the wardens focus primarily on matters of parish programming, administration and upkeep, the three clergy associates (two priests and one deacon) have the following areas of responsibility: the Rev. Richard Edwin Craig, III, as Sunday Clergy Associate, directs all aspects of public worship and liturgy (and not just on Sundays!); the Rev. Anna Doherty (who remains vicar at St. Aidan's in Hartford) works closely with the vestry, committees, and the team itself to provide guidance as our Leadership Development Associate; and the Rev. Cathleen Milliken serves as Pastoral Care Associate while retaining duties as parish deacon. Because these areas of ministry overlap from time to time, and because unforeseen situations are likely, the team has learned that the keys to success include plenty of flexibility and communication with each other, the vestry, and the congregation as a whole.

Having passed the six-month mark, the team continues to work well in a spirit of mutual ministry and collaboration. So far, this approach has been a viable and positive alternative to hiring a full-time rector, particularly for a small parish coping with a limited budget during an economic downturn. If your parish is considering the clergy team model, please don't hesitate to contact the team members at St. James' – they would be more than happy to share their experience and respond to your questions. They can be reached at 262-334-4242.