

Emmanuel Priest In Charge Profile -- January 2026

About Us

We are a small congregation on Mercer Island in the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia. We see ourselves as a faithful, resilient and caring community: closely connected - in many cases for generations - with the life and history of our parishioners and neighbors.

We have around 140 members drawn from both the island and the neighboring communities of Seattle and Bellevue, with average Sunday attendance of 50. Our Sunday services and some special events are live-streamed on YouTube and Zoom to allow participation by members and guests who cannot attend in person.

Our operating budget for 2025 is approximately \$500,000 funded by pledges and tenant leases - supporting a full time Priest and Office Administrator and half-time Music Director. The current budget plans for an operating deficit, which can be offset from reserve funds. We are also blessed with a significant endowment.

Our nearly five-acre property includes five buildings and three parking lots. These beautiful grounds draw neighbors and other guests for dog walking, visits to our memorial garden and labyrinth, and sharing in our "P-Patch" community garden. A four-bedroom rectory on a private corner of the property was completed in 2019.

We gratefully support social action "outreach" ministries on Mercer Island and beyond. We share our campus with an excellent (non-religious) preschool and a thriving, well-known youth theater program.

Challenges and Opportunities

In the past two decades our attendance has declined concerningly and our aging congregation has not been renewed by many younger members. This decline is felt especially in the reduced capacity for lay leadership and volunteers to sustain ministry and programs, which were formerly vibrant and highly valued by our congregation and community.

This decline and its causes mirror those observed at many of our sister churches and is likely accelerated by rapid demographic changes and ethnic diversification in our local community. However, various attempts to reverse this decline by adapting liturgy, music and programs under recent rectors have not succeeded.

Our tenant organizations are valued community partners and contribute an increasing share of our revenue, but the management of the tenant relationships has given rise to new administrative challenges.

In early 2024, our last rector resigned unexpectedly, citing lack of support for staff from certain dissatisfied parishioners, and concerns that the Vestry had not satisfactorily addressed those issues with the people involved. This has been a significant focus of our present interim ministry, which has included widespread member participation and diocesan support. It has also yielded the development of a new 'community covenant,' which was completed late in 2024.

Through the experience of these setbacks and challenges, we now see the need for change and envisage a future that respects our legacy but is not shackled to it. The Vestry and members of the congregation are actively discussing our mission and what will be needed to secure its viability. Some all-parish and smaller group meetings have opened up conversations on our future, ways to improve engagement with current and future members and the possibility of larger strategic changes.

Priest in Charge

What do we seek in a priest-in-charge? Everything, of course. Here are five key hopes:

- We will be blessed by a priest with a lively faith, ever deepening and prayerful, who will be an example to us and lead us in forming, re-forming and deepening our own individual faith in Christ and our relationships with one another in the Body of Christ.
- We will be blessed by a priest who is a leader, who can work with us to look outward, envision a future of abundance and navigate change.
- We will be blessed by a priest who accepts and loves us for who we are, individually and collectively – conveyed in the warmth of worship leadership and preaching, and in making time for pastoral care, particularly but not only among our elderly members.
- We will be blessed by a priest who is capable in administration and adaptable in management of ... whatever arises. For a while at least, we will prefer a priest who focuses on the needs of the parish and is not overly involved in commitments beyond the parish.
- We will be blessed by a priest who will appreciate living in our rectory and sharing in our community life, including connecting with local clergy.

**Initial clergy inquiries should be made to the Venerable David Bishop,
Canon Missioner for Transitions, Diocese of Olympia, dbishop@ecww.org**

Useful Links:

[Home | Emmanuel, the Episcopal Church on Mercer Island](#)

[The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia](#)

[City of Mercer Island, Washington](#)