



November 16, 2023

Introducing the Abbey of St. Nicholas

At the 158th Diocesan Convention on November 11, Bishop Ketlen announced the advent of a new community in our diocese: the Abbey of St. Nicholas. This ministry will be connected to the Church of the Advent in the Brookline neighborhood of Pittsburgh and has been a missional project that the Rev. William “Biff” Carpenter has felt called to for some time.

The “abbey” is a model of Christian monasticism that became popular throughout England and was a part of the formation of The Church of England. Its principal mission is to minister to its community by both proclamation of the Gospel and service to the poor and needy. In a post-Christian America, where traditional parish models are increasingly difficult to sustain, the abbey model offers a ministry that is aimed at becoming financially self-sustaining and encourages a form of discipleship that is both broad and deep enough to make a real and lasting impact on individual participants and the Church.



The Rev. Biff Carpenter observes that “When Christians first set foot in England, they would send monastics out, at least two or three at a time, to a new community. They would plant out, literally plant a garden, begin to cultivate agricultural products and their job was to literally copy the gospel into the native language and to propagate the gospel, to educate and catechize the community and raise up a church organically in time. Once the church was formed, they would send a few more monastics to the next town and then to the next town. And I realized the abbey model is every bit as applicable today as it was in the 700’s or the 500’s. We have all of these unchurched communities where people have no ties to Christianity. They know nothing about it except for

what they’ve learned from popular culture and you’re not going to fix that by inviting them to church. You’re going to have to go out there and spend years cultivating relationships and spending really difficult time just listening and receiving the miscommunications and misunderstandings without trying to get anything in return, in particular, trying to get them into a church. So, once those relationships begin to form and the trust is there, then they’ll begin to ask the big questions. All of that takes time and time costs money. So, this abbey’s model is following the original tradition.”

More information about the Abbey of St. Nicholas, including the discernment for why the Abbey will be in the Brookline community, what connections it has to the community, how it will sustain itself and the selection of the name, will be periodically

released as the Abbey's opening date approaches. In addition to this, information will also be released about the Abbey's house blessing which will take place on the Feast of St. Nicholas, December 6 at 6 p.m.

The Church of the Advent and the Abbey of St. Nicholas are located at 3010 Pioneer Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15226.

The Abbey can be found on the web at saintnicksabbey.org and can be contacted at saintnicksabbey@gmail.com.



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