



CHRIST

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

— Est 1859 —

Parish Profile Springfield, Missouri



Welcome to Christ Episcopal Church



Christ Episcopal Church thanks you for considering our call for a new rector to lead our parish. We have been praying for God to lead you to us, and we look forward to meeting you. We have prepared this profile in hopes that it will help you understand more about us, our values, and what we are searching for in our new rector.

Christ Church is located in Springfield, within the Diocese of West Missouri. We have a rich tradition of faith, fellowship, and serving our neighbors. Our mission statement is “To know Christ and to make Christ known.”

We are prayerful and devout members of the Body of Christ and proud members of the Episcopal Church. We are thankful for God’s grace and love for us, and we are most at home when worshiping and celebrating the Eucharist together on Sundays. But just as God’s love is everywhere, we, too, share and show our love beyond our church’s walls every day.

In the fall of 2022, our church participated in a survey called the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) administered by Holy Cow Consulting. We saw a nearly 100 percent participation rate in the survey, demonstrating the deep love and passion our members have for Christ Church. This parish profile is informed by both the recent insights provided by the CAT and our long history.

Our CAT survey results showed we have many strengths to celebrate and build upon, such as theological diversity among members, a welcoming and friendly atmosphere, a stellar music program, and a desire for our faith to be connected to all aspects of our lives. The survey also revealed a desire among our members to grow and showed there are opportunities for more of us to be involved in church leadership. It affirmed how important worshiping in the Episcopal tradition is to us.

Our parish wants to further share the Good News of Jesus and the gifts of community we have found at Christ Church with the people of our city. In particular we are hoping to partner with our next Rector in attracting new members - young and old, single and partnered. We want to expand our educational opportunities and spiritual formation. We also want a rector who will help us continue to reach out to our community and help those who are broken by life circumstances. We are seeking someone who will help us grow as a church and as individuals in seeking and serving Christ. If you believe you are such a person, we encourage you to apply.

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Who We Are



Christ Episcopal Church is a loving community of faithful people who come together to worship, learn and serve others. We have flourished and grown since our founding a century and a half ago. We have deepened our faith in God and our commitment to one another and our community.

According to the CAT survey, Christ Church is theologically centrist with high theological diversity within the parish. Welcoming theological diversity is one of our strengths and allows us to hold different perspectives together peacefully and respectfully. Our church has an open and friendly atmosphere. We value hospitality, inclusiveness, and strong spiritual practice.

Our parish family places a high value on the liturgy of the Episcopal Church and, in particular, our excellent music program. We are not “high church” or “low church,” but comfortably in between. While we value traditional liturgy, we are also willing to try new things, such as our recently added “Blue Christmas” service.

We have an active lay ministry and strong participation by our parishioners in the life of our church. Our church supports people in many forms of ministry and reminds them they are making a difference by showing God’s love through their actions. Our location near the downtown area of Springfield allows us to easily reach out to the larger community. We have had great educational programs in the past and are seeking to rebuild this tradition post-COVID.

We are one of the larger parishes in the Diocese of West Missouri, with an annual budget exceeding \$650,000 and a sizable foundation that exists solely for the benefit of the church. We have weathered the pandemic and even experienced a modest amount of growth in recent months. We have a long history of stability. Our rectors tend to have long tenures at Christ Church; in fact, our most recent rector was with us for 26 years.

Our people define our parish. We are grateful for what we have, and for what has been created and nurtured for over 150 years. At the same time, we want to grow. We want to welcome new members and young families, be spiritually enriched by strong sermons, expand our educational programs, and further our outreach ministries.

Who We Are Looking For



We are searching for a rector who is a dedicated follower of Jesus, who has a passion for the liturgy of the Episcopal Church and a desire to lead our members into a deeper faith and understanding of God's love for us.

We are looking for a spiritual leader who is an excellent preacher and has the ability to inspire and connect people to God's word. We hope our new rector will help us grow our relationship with God and Christ and spread the Gospel. To us, that includes reaching out to families and others who are seeking Christ in their life. We seek a rector who can lead us in Christian education and expand our outreach programs.

Effective administration, including managing the church's facilities, finances, and staff, is crucial for us. The ideal candidate must also be an effective pastoral caregiver, capable of engaging people empathically and providing care during times of need. It is also essential for our next rector to be able to lead us through necessary periods of change, with the goal of growing and attracting new members.

Our CAT survey results show us that Christ Church is well positioned for the future. We are looking for the right person to help lead us into the next chapter of our journey.

How We Worship



Christ Episcopal Church offers two services on Sunday mornings. The 8 a.m. service is a spoken Rite I Holy Eucharist, while the 10 a.m. service is a Rite II service accompanied by the adult or junior choir. Our music program is one of the jewels of our church, bringing many of our members closer to God through the power of music.

Traditionally, we have held a Children's Sunday School and Youth Sunday School. These programs are currently coordinated in part by volunteers, and we are looking forward to redeveloping these offerings. Nursery care is provided for infants and toddlers on Sundays. On Thursday evenings, we celebrate a Rite I Holy Eucharist, with a monthly healing service. The church has an active lay ministry program providing support for the clergy, including acolytes, chalice bearers, lectors, and altar guild volunteers.

Our Church Home



The parish of Christ Episcopal Church was organized in 1859, just before the outbreak of the Civil War, when Springfield was home to 2,000 citizens. In 1866, a Gothic style chapel was erected, but it soon became clear that the building was unsuitable for the needs of the congregation. In 1869, the present location, described as “a very eligible” corner lot, was purchased. Although a new location farther from center city was once considered in the mid-20th century, we have proudly remained downtown all these years.

Christ Church stands today as a rare architectural treasure, boasting an 1870 Gothic wood nave, a 1920s High Gothic Revival stone chancel, and a beautiful private garden. In 2007, the church completed a \$5 million addition, which fully updated the parish hall, classrooms, and offices, and added magnificent stone cloister walkways. This addition was fully paid for by a capital campaign.

We are proud that our church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As the oldest surviving church building in Springfield and one of the few churches in the Ozarks region with its original appearance, Christ Church is a truly unique and special place.

Our Community - Springfield, Missouri



Springfield is the largest city in southern Missouri and is known as the “Queen City of the Ozarks.” It is the economic, cultural, educational and health care hub of Southwest Missouri. Springfield is the third largest city in the state after Kansas City and St. Louis, with a population of more than 170,000 in the city itself. Several growing and vibrant smaller cities surround it, bringing the total population of our immediate area to more than 400,000.

Nearby Branson and the Table Rock Lake recreational area, as well as many rivers, hiking and camping spots are just a stone’s throw away; and Kansas City, St. Louis, Tulsa, and Northwest Arkansas are all within a three-hour drive. Springfield has all the amenities of a mid-sized city while maintaining a friendly, small-town feel. The low cost of living, easy commutes, top-tier health care systems and friendly nature make it attractive to people of all ages and lifestyles.

Our downtown area is vibrant and always evolving, home to many excellent restaurants, theaters, music venues and art galleries. We are proud to be a part of the downtown community, yet a relaxing afternoon on the lake or a scenic hike are just a short drive away. Springfield boasts a truly world-class parks system with more than 100 parks and 75-plus miles of recreational trails.

Springfield boasts several very large employers and is home to the headquarters of national companies such as O’Reilly Auto Parts and Bass Pro Shops; but its economy is diverse and small businesses thrive here. Our city has very strong civic leadership and a reputation across the region as a place where people listen and collaborate to make things happen. Springfield has long been an excellent place to raise a family, with well-regarded public and private schools (including the largest public school district in the state with 24,000 students) and countless opportunities for activities, sports, and fine arts for kids of all ages.

Our thriving arts scene includes the Springfield Symphony, Springfield Little Theater, an art museum and many programs connected to our city’s colleges. In fact, higher education is one of our city’s greatest assets. We are home to a large public university (Missouri State University - just blocks from Christ Church), two private colleges (Drury University and Evangel University) and Ozarks Technical Community College.

Like many American cities, poverty and homelessness are challenges for Springfield. We are also lagging when it comes to diversity. Despite a longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion among our city and civic institutions, Springfield remains 84 percent white. Our community is tackling these issues head-on, and Christ Church has been involved in efforts to make Springfield a better home for all our neighbors and stands ready to do more to show God’s love to those in need.

Fellowship



Christ Church has a very active fellowship, with a variety of different programs. We offer a brunch every other month after services for parishioners to have a chance to share a meal together. We have several evening fellowship opportunities such as Dinner for 8 (a dinner party at the home of a parishioner), wine and cheese socials, and Vinton (a social group that meets monthly for a meal and community presentation).

Christ Church has an active men's fellowship, which meets regularly for breakfast, conversation, evening beers and more. We host an annual meeting, choir performances, parish-wide receptions for baptisms, barbecues, and a potluck to celebrate our Stewardship Campaign. During Lent, we have weekly soup suppers with a Lenten program. We regularly host fundraising socials including a chili cook-off, trivia night, bingo, and our annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.

Children and Youth



Christ Church offers worship services and programs for people of all ages. During the 10 a.m. Sunday service, a nursery is available for infants to 3-year-olds and a Children's Worship program is offered for 4- to 7-year-olds. The children rejoin the service after the peace to receive communion with their families.

The church organizes various family activities throughout the year, such as Welcome Back Sunday, a Halloween Carnival, St. Nicholas party, Christmas pageant, Epiphany Sunday, Lenten activities, Easter festivities, and more. Sunday School classes are available for children in K-5th grades, and a youth group meets on Wednesday evenings.

The youth and children at Christ Church are active in outreach programs, Diocesan events, singing in choirs, serving as acolytes, volunteering and attending Vacation Bible School, and participating in various activities that foster their spiritual growth.

Outreach



Christ Church is situated in the downtown area and plays a crucial role in supporting those in need within the community. Christ Church partners with other downtown churches to staff and support the Well of Life food pantry and we manage Next to New, a resale shop where profits benefit those in need in the greater community.

We have served community dinners in our parish hall for unhoused and food-insecure neighbors, and we provide water and sack lunches from the church daily. We also have members who volunteer at various feeding programs and other organizations across the community, including Rare Breed (for unhoused and at-risk teens), Safe to Sleep (a women's shelter), and Eden Village (which builds homes for people experiencing homelessness).

We have partnered with an elementary school in a high poverty neighborhood for 15 years, providing support for both the staff and children throughout the school year. We have a strong involvement with Haiti through mission trips and donations to a clinic there.

The outreach committee at Christ Church is always on the lookout for new opportunities to serve the community and continues to be a strong and active presence in the area.

Music



Music is central to Christ Church, and is intrinsically linked with our worship, liturgy and overall identity. Our choral program includes a robust adult choir, with professional and volunteer singers leading Sunday 10 a.m. services, joined by a talented youth choir every other Sunday. Our handbell choir, including youth and adults, regularly offers preludes. Christmas, Palm Sunday and Easter typically include guest brass or string ensembles.

Weekly musical offerings are deliberately selected to reflect scripture readings and liturgical seasons. Services include preludes and postludes, hymns, service music and Anglican chant, all accompanied by our organist. Anthems range from early music to 21st century composers, including our own Dr. Carlyle Sharpe, from whom our church has commissioned several special pieces. Outside of Sunday services, our musicians present Evensong and Compline, recitals and new this year, a Hymn Festival, partnering with other area churches.

The youth choir raises funds to take an annual tour to another community, performing in an Episcopal Church while taking in the local attractions. This choir has twice performed at the National Cathedral.

Music plays a significant role in the parish life at Christ Church, contributing to a joyful and contemplative atmosphere while strengthening our congregation's worship experience. Visitors often remark on the quality of the choirs, and we believe music helps attract new members. Our CAT survey results show more than 80 percent of the congregation is "highly satisfied" with our music program. Christ Church continues to invest in our music program and make music a priority.

Christian Formation



Christ Church offers various opportunities for learning and practicing Christian values, including Sunday morning adult classes with discussions on current topics, guest speakers, and videos during Lent, as well as lay readers for evening prayer. A monthly book club, meeting at the church, promotes fellowship and discussion on relevant topics. Our women's Bible study group meets weekly, with a focus on the lectionary and upcoming readings, especially the New Testament and Gospel readings. The church also offers classes for all ages during Lent.

In the past, we have hosted EFM (Education for Ministry), which has produced leaders in our church, and Stephens Ministries, which provided one-to-one care for those in need. These are examples of programs our members say they would like to rebuild.

The church supports and encourages men and women who seek a deeper relationship with Christ, and several have been called to be candidates for Holy Orders.

Church Leadership



We have a strong, committed vestry that works closely with the rector to lead and support our parish. They especially showed their passion and care for the church during the eight-month period between the retirement of our previous rector and the arrival of our current interim rector.

Our ministry council oversees eight committees: Communication, Building and Grounds, Hospitality/Parish Life, Worship/Liturgy, Finance, Outreach, Christian Education, and Pastoral Care and Welcome. All these committees are active and serve the church well.

We are currently in a period of restructuring our church staff to better meet our needs and fit our budget. We have a very dedicated and talented staff who help make Christ Church what it is, and we are seeking a rector who can effectively lead and inspire our staff members.

Congregational Assessment Tool Results

In preparation for our rector search, parishioners participated in the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT), administered by Holy Cow Consulting. More than 120 members took the survey, which Holy Cow Consulting considered a 100 percent participation rate, as this number is equal to Christ Church's average weekly attendance. The CAT has helped us explore our aspirations, strengths and weaknesses and allowed us to better discern what we are looking for in our new rector. From this instrument, we learned a great deal about ourselves. Below are some top-line findings from the CAT results.



Demographics

We are a theologically diverse community. Our parish includes individuals with progressive views, as well as those with more conservative views. We have members of all ages and family types but, like many churches, our membership skews older. About 70 percent of those who responded to the CAT survey were 65 and older. Only about 4 percent of respondents were 35 and under, but we know the membership in this age group is higher than responses indicate. Over half of our parishioners have been at Christ Church for more than 20 years. Our total church income and the average percentage of income given by parishioners is in the 60th percentile for Episcopal churches.

The level of education among our parishioners is high. In fact, 55 percent of survey respondents hold graduate degrees. Springfield's many universities and two major hospital systems likely contribute to the high level of education in the parish.

Aspirations

All age groups expressed three main priorities as we move forward in this new phase of our church life. Interestingly, these priorities were expressed by both frequent and infrequent attendees alike. They include:

- Develop a strategy for reaching new people and incorporating them into our parish life
- Actively work at bringing in families with children and youth
- Create ministries that contribute to the healing of individuals who are broken by life circumstances

These three priorities were stated by members of all ages. In addition, the younger members expressed a desire for outreach to the marginalized and advocacy for social change that reflects the values of the kingdom of God. Older members prioritized more opportunities for meaningful relationships and increased Christian education and spiritual formation for all ages.



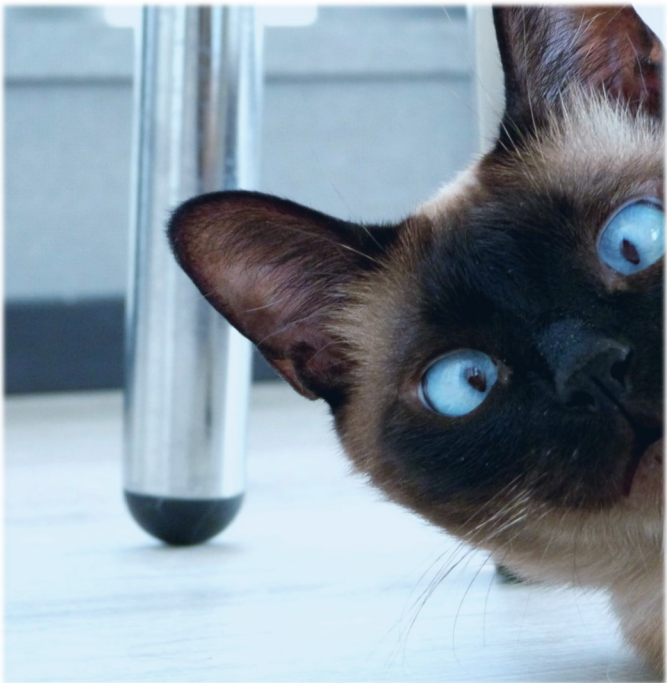
Average Sunday
Attendance for 2022

8 a.m. Rite I: 40
10 a.m. Rite II: 100

Strengths

We learned through the CAT survey that our congregation feels a need for growth and is motivated to make the necessary changes for that to occur. Our parishioners place a priority on developing ways to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church and to offer help and support to those in need. Furthermore, we are ready and willing to increase our Christian education opportunities and spiritual formation for all ages.

As with many churches, our attendance and programs declined during COVID. However, we are gradually moving back to the level of participation we had pre-COVID. The pandemic required us to find creative ways to offer worship opportunities and support even when we were not able to meet face-to face. With restrictions eased and, God willing, the pandemic mostly behind us, Christ Church has seen a very modest growth in attendance recently. While small, the consultants with Holy Cow tell us any such growth is bucking the national trend, and certainly a strength for our church.



MORE THAN ENOUGH

2023 Stewardship Campaign Results as of January 1, 2023:
Pledged Income: \$534,864
Total Pledges: 120

The CAT showed high agreement concerning the spiritual vitality of the church. The majority indicated they have an experiential faith. They said their spirituality informs the way they view life, and they expressed an intention for their faith to be connected to all aspects of their life.

As previously stated, another strength of Christ Church is our theological diversity. The CAT revealed that our church has a paraclete culture. According to Holy Cow Consulting, paraclete churches tend to be less demanding of a particular understanding of the faith, but more clear about the benefits of a particular liturgical tradition. Indeed, the survey showed that parishioners view Christ Church as hospitable and accepting of those with differing views. The majority agreed the atmosphere among parishioners is friendly, and we genuinely care for one another during times of need. Furthermore, they indicated being part of Christ Church has added meaning to their lives.

Finally, Christ Church has a long history and is financially stable.

Challenges

Although we have many strengths at Christ Church, we do face some challenges. Our parish has a clear desire to live out our faith by serving those who are less fortunate or marginalized. Although we have multiple outreach programs in our community, members say they want to find even more ways to serve our neighbors and incorporate them into the life of our church. Our location in the downtown area of Springfield provides many opportunities for this type of outreach.

Although our membership dropped significantly during the pandemic, our attendance is now the same as it was three years ago. However, we need to find ways to attract younger families, youth, and children. Building stronger Christian education and spiritual formation could help in bringing new people to the church, as well as supporting our current members.

Thanks Be To God!



Thank you for taking the time to read all the way through this profile of Christ Episcopal Church. We are so grateful for our many blessings and for the strengths and opportunities our church home provides for us as the body of Christ in Springfield. We are filled with hope for the future and are continuing to pray for the right person to answer our call for a new rector. We look forward to hearing from candidates and moving ahead in our journey of faith.

Dear God of all, who wishes the best for your people, remind us that we live within your grace and care, that we are your people and a voice to others about Christ Jesus,

Guide us we seek new leadership for next chapter in the life of our church,

Guide us as our parish grows, and as we seek a rector to build upon our congregation's many strengths;

Guide us as we seek candidates of deep faith, a kind heart, and a desire to share the abundant gifts we have received with our neighbors;

We ask you, Lord, to provide us with a devoted servant and minister who will help us as we continually seek to know Christ and to make Christ known.