



# Saint Mary's

## EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## 2023 Parish Profile



Dyersburg, Tennessee



# History of St. Mary's Church

The first record of an Episcopal church in Dyersburg is in 1896 when the church was listed in the Diocese of Tennessee proceedings as having been assessed \$5. In 1889 the church had been officially sanctioned when Bishop Charles T. Quintard and other clergy held a convocation in the building of the Methodist church. A city lot at the present site of the church building was given and the church met at the YMCA Hall and in a private residence until a church building could be completed.

In 1898 the name St. Mary's was chosen for the church because of the "uncommonly large number of ladies in the church named Mary." In 1903 the first church building – a modest frame building in the shape of a cross with a vaulted ceiling – was completed. In February 1904 Bishop Thomas Gailor came to consecrate the new building, but found an outstanding debt of \$1,400 for lumber and would not consecrate it until the debt was paid. The church treasurer personally paid the debt and the consecration went on as scheduled. The church reported 26 communicants, six baptisms and three confirmations in 1904.

Until 1945 the church was yoked with other churches and shared priests. In 1945 the church's first rectory was completed. On June 23, 1946, the present church was consecrated by Bishop Edmund Dandridge. During various times in its history, St. Mary's has benefited from the services of supply and retired priests during interim periods without a full-time priest. Lay readers have served to lead worships, including Zoom services.

During the 1960s the parish completed a parish house at the corner of King and Masonic streets. Numerous renovations and additions to the church plant have been completed since 1960 and a new rectory was built in Pioneer West subdivision during the 1980s, which has since been sold. The Old Rectory now serves as the administrative offices for the church as well as the administrative office of Habitat for Humanity and Sunday school activities.

Our church celebrates using the traditional service (Rite I and II) as well as Morning Prayer. Bible studies are enjoyed by our members. The parish has an active Men's Group, which meets monthly. Total church membership is reported to be 95 persons with 16% under 35 years old, 42% between 35 and 65, and 42% over 65. Our average Sunday attendance has hovered in the low 40s since 2018. The church enjoys a solid financial footing with income consistently matching or exceeding expenses as well as an endowment for outreach purposes.





## St. Mary's in the Community

St. Mary's and its parishioners through their professional lives as business people, artists, students, industrial managers, farmers, contractors, physicians, police officers, attorneys, educators, and homemakers, are deeply involved in the Dyersburg community.

Over the past 30 years, members have been involved in community leadership positions, the Dyersburg/Dyer County Chamber of Commerce, in civic groups, and support for ecumenical services to the community including the Dyersburg/Dyer County ministerial alliance. Members of St. Mary's were instrumental in the founding of the United Way of Dyer County; the YMCA of Dyer County; Northwest Safeline, an agency that helps people deal with the issues and realities of spousal abuse; Matthew 25:40, an agency that coordinates short-term relief for people in economic crisis; and Habitat for Humanity in Northwest Tennessee, which has constructed more than 30 homes for low-income families living in sub-standard housing. St. Mary's provided significant support for Dyer County Adult Education, Inc., the Dyer County Chapter of the American Red Cross, and Transitions, a ministry focused on assisting women attempting to make the transition from prison to civilian life. Also, St. Mary's took a leadership role in coordination and providing disaster relief for victims of Hurricane Katrina as well as Dyer County Disaster Relief, which provided assistance to families effected by local tornadoes and floods. Several members of the church provided leadership in the construction of a 2.1 mile trail in a wilderness area of the county. Members of the church are also involved in the Mississippi River Corridor Project, a region-wide effort to improve awareness and access to the natural and historic resources associated with West Tennessee.

An annual portion of the parish budget is devoted to support of Matthew 25:40. Additional support is provided to the community through the rector's discretionary fund and contributions by individual members of the church. Annually, help is provided to roughly 60 household annually receiving emergency assistance for rent, utilities, gas, and other needs. Since July 2011, over \$40,000 of assistance has been provided. The congregation annually contributes funds to a local non-profit through the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper and provides the use of its buildings without charge to a variety of scouting activities, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous and civic groups for meetings.

The church collaborated with First United Methodist Church of Dyersburg to fund and found Canterbury Place, an assisted-living facility. St. Mary's parishioners played active roles in managing the facility until it sold in 2015.

In the 1980s St. Mary's was the recipient of a gift that generously endowed the parish. The Vestry decided that the corpus of the money should not be invaded and that the interest should be used for outreach and for extraordinary operating expenses in accordance with the donor's wishes. In 1994 St. Mary's purchased and renovated a retail building to create the Wheeler Outreach Center, adjacent to the church's building, which provides it rent- and utility-free to local non-profits agencies. Currently, Matthew 25:40, Inc. is housed there.



# Dyersburg/Dyer County, Tennessee

## Location.

Located in northwest Tennessee on major highways, Dyersburg and Dyer County are at the gateway to mid-America. They are within a day's drive of 76 percent of the nation. Dyersburg is a regional medical, retail, employment and cultural center for more than 300,000 people who live in 10 counties in a tri-state area (in Arkansas, Missouri and Tennessee.) During the 1980s the population of Dyer County increased 16.4 percent. That growth slowed in the 1990s. The estimated population in 2020 was 37,201. The 2020 census found the City of Dyersburg's population to be 16,164. The 2022 population estimate for Dyer County is 36,801, with roughly 82% of the population being white and 12% being black.

The area is usually frost-free from mid-April to mid-October. Records show that the first vegetation-killing frost occurs on the average on October 15. The average annual precipitation is about 53 inches. The average temperature in January, the area's coldest month, is 38.3 degrees Fahrenheit and in July, the warmest month, it is 80.4 degrees Fahrenheit.

A bridge across the Mississippi River links Dyer County with Interstate 55, a major north-south highway in the center of the country. Four lanes of U.S. 412 link Dyersburg/Dyer County to Interstate 40, a major east-west highway across the country. Dyersburg is on the designated route of the proposed Interstate 69 corridor that will link Canada to Mexico.

## Economy.

Dyersburg/Dyer County have a diversified industrial base with manufacturers of food products, automotive products, electrical distribution equipment, household consumer and cleaning products, lighting fixtures and bottled soft drinks. Of the county's labor force of more than 16,400, about 40 percent are employed in industry. Agriculture also is an important component of Dyer County industry with 56 percent of the land in the county in agricultural production. Dyer County's 2020 average household income was \$45,042. The State of Tennessee does not have a state income tax.

The area economy is expected to boom with the announcement of Ford's Blue Oval City, scheduled to begin production of electric F-150 trucks. Located in Staton, TN, 40 miles away, the plant is expected to employ 5,800 people.

## Education.

The county has two public school districts with total enrollment of 6,355 students in 2018-19. There is one Christian school operating in the county and several families in the country educate their children at home. Tennessee College of Applied Technology has a reported enrollment of 477. Dyersburg State Community College enrolls about 2,600 students in certificate and two-year degree programs. It offers associate degree programs through divisions of nursing and allied health, arts and sciences and business and technology. Courses are offered in Dyersburg by the University of Memphis and the University of Tennessee at Martin. Dyersburg State has transfer agreements with the University of Memphis (located 80 miles south of Dyersburg) and the University of Tennessee at Martin (located 45





## Dyersburg/Dyer County, Tennessee (continued)

miles north of Dyersburg.)

### Medical.

Dyersburg serves as a regional medical center for Northwest Tennessee anchored by Dyersburg Regional Medical Center. The medical community meets most patients' need. With 225 licensed beds and a medical staff of more than 100 physicians, the hospital offers a variety of services, including diagnostic imaging, emergency department, family medicine, GI/endoscopy services, laboratory services, neurology services, orthopedic services, pediatrics, physical therapy, rehabilitation services, sleep disorder center, speech therapy, surgical services, telemedicine, urology, women's health, and wound care.

### Recreation.

Northwest Tennessee is a sports lover's paradise with abundant fishing and hunting opportunities. Dyer County sits on the Mississippi Flyway, which is recognized as a Globally Important Bird Area. More than 325 species (60% of all species in the U.S.) use the river as a migration corridor. The river valley also provides food and shelter for up to 40% of all of the waterfowl in North America during the Spring and Fall migrations. Just north of Dyer County is Reelfoot Lake, known for its hunting beauty, good fishing, and the American bald eagle. The county has three golf courses.

### Culture.

Arts groups in the community include the Dyersburg Arts Council, Dyersburg Choral Society, and a theatre group. Each year the Memphis Symphony Orchestra performs in Dyersburg. Memphis, with its cultural and community attractions, is about a 90-minute drive to the south. Jackson, Tennessee, with three universities and musical entertainment, is less than an hour's drive away. Nashville, Tennessee's capital, is roughly three hours away. St. Louis, with many cultural and sports attractions, is about 3 ½ hours away by car.

Additional information about Dyer County may be found at the following website:  
[www.dyercountychamber.com](http://www.dyercountychamber.com)



## Parish Demographics

*From the 2022 parochial report:*

Communications in good standing:	95
Children (0-12)	1
Youth (ages 13-17)	5
Young adults (ages 18-34)	9
Middle adults (ages 35-64)	40
Senior adults (ages 65 and older)	40
Average weekly attendance:	47
Average Sunday attendance:	36
Total operating revenue:	\$ 181,607
Total operating expense:	\$ 184,047
Year-end cash balance:	\$ 43,489

*We have no outstanding mortgage or other loans.*



# The Diocese of West Tennessee

There are currently more than 11,000 total baptized members worshipping in 34 congregations in West Tennessee. These congregations range in size from Immanuel, La Grange with four members to Calvary, Memphis with 2,150 baptized members. The Diocese of West Tennessee includes the western third of the state from the Mississippi River to the Tennessee River.

The Episcopal Church was officially established in Tennessee in 1834. In 1981, the Diocese of Tennessee voted to divide into three dioceses, and was incorporated in union with The General Convention of The Episcopal Church USA on December 31, 1982. The diocese boasts a number of unique programs and facilities including: St. Columba Center, a diocesan conference and retreat center; Emmanuel Episcopal Center, a ministry to public housing communities in South Memphis; Barth House, a campus ministry to local colleges; and the Good Shepard Center, a training center for the Catechesis of the Good Shepard. The seat of the Diocese is St. Mary's Cathedral which was consecrated in 1858 and served as a refuge during the Yellow Fever epidemics. It also played an integral part of the civil rights movement in the city in the 1960s.



The first Bishop of the Diocese was the Rt. Rev. Alex Dockery Dickson, consecrated on April 9, 1983 and retired in September 1994. He was succeeded by the Rt. Rev. James Malone Coleman, consecrated on November 13, 1993 and retired in June 2001. The third Bishop of West Tennessee in the Rt. Rev. Don Edward Johnson, who served until 2019. In May 2019, the Rt. Rev. Phoebe Roaf became Bishop of West Tennessee.

Members of St. Mary's have historically been active in the Diocese of West Tennessee serving on numerous boards and committees. St. Mary's has had a lay member on the Bishop and Council as well as the Diocesan Finance Committee. A member was elected to a seat on the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church.

Additional information about the Diocese of West Tennessee may be found at the following website: [www.episwtn.org/about.html](http://www.episwtn.org/about.html)

## Prayer for Our Rector

*"Almighty God, giver of every good gift: look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a rector for this parish, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen."*



## For More Information

### Contact:

St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
108 North King Avenue  
Dyersburg, TN 38024  
731.285.3522  
[www.stmarysepiscopaldyersburg.org](http://www.stmarysepiscopaldyersburg.org)

Canon Sharon Alexander  
[salexander@episwtn.org](mailto:salexander@episwtn.org)

Joe Emery, Senior Warden  
[joesemery@gmail.com](mailto:joesemery@gmail.com)

Doris Davis, Parish Administrator  
[ddavis@stmarysdyersburg.org](mailto:ddavis@stmarysdyersburg.org)



Follow us on Facebook:  
St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Dyersburg