



Office for
Transition
Ministry

Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio (last updated Feb 11, 2025)

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, West Tennessee

108 N. King Avenue, Dyersburg, TN 38024, United States

Contact:

Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge

rcourtney@episwtn.org

Weekly Average Sunday
Attendance (ASA)

36

Number of Weekend
Worship Services

42

Number of Weekday
Worship Services

Number of Other per Month
Worship Services

Current Annual
Compensation

Cash Stipend

Housing / Rectory Detail

Utilities

SECA reimbursement

Compensation Available for
New Position

\$70000

Housing Available for

Pension Plan

**We're in compliance with
CPF requirements.**

Healthcare Options
Clergy only

Dental
Yes

Housing Equity Allowance in
budget

No

Annual Equity Amount

Vacation Weeks

4

Vacation Weeks Details

Continuing Education Weeks

2 (standard)

Continuing Education Weeks
Details

Continuing Education
Funding in budget

\$501-\$1000/year

Sabbatical Provision

Yes

Travel/Auto Account

Yes

Other Professional Account

Yes

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Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry which you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.

One recent moment of success and fulfillment at St. Mary's Episcopal Church was our ability to navigate a leadership transition after the rector's departure while continuing to offer vibrant worship and pastoral care. The congregation demonstrates remarkable resilience and unity by stepping up collectively to ensure that both in-person and online services continue seamlessly. Lay leaders embrace expanded roles, with lay readers officiating Morning Prayer, and newly licensed Eucharistic Ministers providing communion to homebound members. This collaborative effort not only maintains our spiritual life but also strengthens our sense of community, showcasing the dedication, adaptability, and shared responsibility that define St. Mary's mission. This moment exemplifies our deep commitment to the core values of teamwork, service, and inclusive worship, even in challenging times.

How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?

St. Mary's is actively preparing for the Church of the future through intentional formation, inclusivity, and technological engagement. We prioritize lifelong Christian education by offering diverse programs for all ages, including children's and youth ministries, adult Bible studies, and forums on contemporary theological and social issues. This ongoing commitment to spiritual growth equips our congregation to navigate faith in a changing world. Recognizing the importance of inclusion, we foster a welcoming and diverse worship community. By engaging in listening sessions and dialogue, we cultivate a culture of openness to new ideas and expressions of faith while remaining rooted in the Episcopal tradition. We also invest in leadership development, empowering members to take on active roles in ministry and equipping them with skills for collaborative mission work. To enhance connection and accessibility, we integrate technology into our worship and outreach. Our live-streamed services, online prayer gatherings, and virtual pastoral care opportunities extend the reach of our ministry beyond physical walls, making worship and community life accessible to a broader audience.

Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.

compassion, communication, collaboration, resilience, inspirational, future-oriented

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Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.

St. Mary's Episcopal Church embraces a liturgical style rooted in the rich traditions of the Episcopal Church, emphasizing reverence, beauty, and inclusivity in our worship. Our primary liturgical expression is centered on the Eucharist, and reflects a commitment to excellence, incorporating sacred music, scripture, and prayer to create a contemplative and spiritually enriching experience. Additionally, St. Mary's offers Morning Prayer, led by lay readers. Recognizing the diverse needs of our members, St. Mary's also provides an online worship option, initiated during the pandemic and now serving as a replacement for the former early Sunday service. This online service ensures that those unable to attend in person remain connected to the church's worshipping community. The sacred space of St. Mary's is always open for prayer and reflection, welcoming individuals from all backgrounds to find solace and spiritual renewal. This liturgical diversity and adaptability reflect St. Mary's commitment to creating an inclusive, prayerful environment that honors tradition while remaining responsive to the evolving needs of our congregation.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

We embrace an inclusive and collaborative approach to ministry, where lay involvement is central to the church's life. Parishioners actively share in leadership and service, fostering a strong sense of responsibility and engagement. During the pastoral transition, the congregation stepped up, with lay readers leading Morning Prayer and licensed Eucharistic Ministers providing communion to the homebound. St. Mary's also nurtures leadership by identifying and mentoring potential leaders, empowering them to discover their gifts. Parishioners serve in various liturgical roles, such as readers, chalice bearers, and acolytes, and contribute to committees and outreach initiatives. The church encourages participation in community service projects, including Habitat for Humanity, local food ministries, and Matthew 25:40, a ministry for the poor and homeless. We support the wider community by offering our facilities for 12-step meetings and civic events. Through shared leadership, outreach, and mentorship, St. Mary's cultivates a vibrant, inclusive ministry where all are encouraged to live out their faith through service and compassion.

As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

We nurture the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of our community through a holistic and compassionate approach to ministry. Spiritually, we center ourselves in the sacred rhythms of worship and Bible study that provide a foundation for deep reflection and growth, and provide a sanctuary for prayer and contemplation. Emotionally, we prioritize pastoral care and a strong sense of community connection. Parishioners support one another through life's transitions, from moments of joy to times of sorrow. Eucharistic Visitors extend the church's ministry to homebound members, ensuring a continued connection to the spiritual life of the congregation. St. Mary's warm, inclusive environment fosters mutual encouragement and a sense of belonging across generations and theological perspectives. Physically, St. Mary's emphasizes outreach and service as expressions of well-being. Partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, food ministries, and Matthew 25:40 reflect our commitment to addressing the physical needs of the wider community. By opening our facilities for support groups and community events, we further demonstrate care for the well-being of all seeking support and fellowship.

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How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?

We extend pastoral care by actively engaging in service and outreach initiatives that embody Christ's love and compassion. We partner with local organizations to address critical community needs. Our long-standing support for Habitat for Humanity helps provide affordable housing, while Matthew 25:40, a ministry housed rent-free in the church's Wheeler Outreach Center, offers assistance to individuals facing financial crises. Additionally, donations from parishioners provide emergency aid for housing, utilities, and transportation, impacting over 60 households annually. We open our facilities to community programs, including 12-step recovery meetings and civic organizations. Our members also provide hands-on service through disaster relief efforts, assisting victims of hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes, and contribute to regional initiatives like Transitions, supporting women reintegrating post-incarceration. Collaborating with ecumenical partners, the church fosters unity and shared ministry across denominations. Through dedicated service, St. Mary's embodies the Gospel's call to love and care for all people, reaching far beyond our church's doors.

Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region.

We actively engage in the wider Episcopal Church and the local community, fostering partnerships and collaborative ministries. As part of our Diocese, we participate in diocesan events and support initiatives promoting social justice, spiritual growth, and community service. Regionally, we are also involved in ministries like Matthew 25:40, which helps families in financial crisis. Additionally, St. Mary's participates in ecumenical efforts with other faith communities to promote shared initiatives and unity in service. The church's disaster relief efforts extend beyond the local region, offering aid to areas affected by natural disasters across the U.S. Over the past 30+ years, St. Mary's members have been involved in community leadership, contributing to the founding of local organizations such as the United Way of Dyer County, the YMCA, and Northwest Safeline, which supports individuals facing spousal abuse. St. Mary's also played a key role in the establishment of Habitat for Humanity in Northwest Tennessee, which has built over 30 homes for low-income families. Through these efforts, St. Mary's lives out its mission of being Christ's hands and feet in the world.

Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted about this?

In the past five years, St. Mary's Episcopal Church has initiated a holiday meal ministry for the area's unhoused population. Each year, parishioners come together to prepare and serve a hot, festive meal for Thanksgiving and Christmas to individuals and families experiencing homelessness or food insecurity in the community. This ministry provides not only nourishment but also a sense of connection and dignity for those in need. Volunteers from the congregation coordinate the event, with donations of food, time, and resources from members of the church and the wider community. The church's commitment to outreach and compassion is evident in this annual event, fostering a spirit of service and love. The holiday meal ministry is a vital part of St. Mary's mission to care for the marginalized and uphold the values of hospitality and inclusion. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Rachel Craig, who coordinates this ministry; her number is 731.676.4109.

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What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?

At St. Mary's Episcopal Church, stewardship goes beyond financial giving, emphasizing the responsible management of time, talent, and treasure as acts of faith. Financial stewardship is vital for sustaining the church's ministries and outreach, with an annual pledge campaign where members commit to supporting the church's mission. This fosters a culture of generosity, ensuring resources are available for worship, outreach, and community engagement. Beyond finances, St. Mary's encourages the stewardship of time and talents, with members actively participating in various ministries such as worship leadership, pastoral care, and community outreach. This collective involvement ensures all members feel valued and empowered. Stewardship shapes the church's life by fostering mutual care and support, with the understanding that everything we have is a gift from God to be shared in service to others. While the church does not conduct an annual appeal, members respond generously when specific needs arise, whether for additional funds, food, or volunteer work. This approach strengthens the church community and its mission to serve others.

What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?

St. Mary's Episcopal Church approaches conflict with a focus on communication, collaboration, and reconciliation. With a community that includes diverse theological perspectives, disagreements have naturally arisen. However, the church emphasizes mutual respect, understanding, and a shared mission of service. Leadership, including lay leaders and clergy, prioritizes open and honest communication, listening to all voices to find common ground. Prayer and discernment guide the church in moments of tension. Conflicts are addressed with grace, patience, and a commitment to love and service, ensuring healing and unity. For interpersonal disputes, direct resolution is encouraged, supported by pastoral care when needed. The church believes that conflict, when handled with humility, can lead to growth both personally and as a congregation. The only recent conflict involved a parishioner wanting to change the service to suit her preferences. This issue was addressed by the senior warden, in concert with the Bishop and Vestry, through a respectful discussion. This approach allows St. Mary's to remain united in its mission to serve God and the community, even amid challenges.

What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

Navigating change has been an ongoing part of our ministry, shaped by both internal and external factors. One of the most successful instances of change was the adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic. When in-person worship was no longer feasible, the church quickly transitioned to virtual services, ensuring continued connection with the congregation. The experience highlighted the importance of adaptability and utilizing technology to serve the community. The transition after the departure of our rector posed challenges. There were moments of uncertainty, particularly around ensuring continuity in worship and pastoral care. Despite these challenges, through collaboration and shared leadership, the church maintained stability. Being without a priest has been a significant change, but the congregation has remained committed, with weekly services continuing under the guidance of supply priests. Attendance ranges from 15 to 52 members, with up to 73 for baptisms. Additionally, Sunday morning Zoom prayer services have been offered, averaging around 7 participants. These experiences reaffirm the importance of communication, collaboration, and a shared commitment to the church's mission.



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Prior Incumbents

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Gary Meade	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	2007-12	2022-11

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Jack Rogers	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	2003-03	2007-11

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Joe Porter	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	1989-12	2001-08

Church School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School	Number of Students for Children School
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Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School	Number of Students for Adults School
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Day School	Number of Students for Day School	Number of Teachers for Day School	Number of Total Staff for Day School
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Worshipping Community Web site: <https://saint-marys-episcopal-church-test.yolasite.com/>

Media Links:

Online References:

> <https://www.facebook.com/SaintMarysEpiscopalChurch>

Languages Significantly Represented:

English

Provide Worship or Classes in:

English

References

Bishop:

The Rt. Rev. Phoebe Roaf

Diocesan Transition Minister

**The Rev. Canon Rob
Courtney**

901-937-4782; rcourtney@episwtn.org

Current Warden/Board Chair

Previous Warden/Board Chair

Search Chair

Parish/Institution

Local Community Leader