



# Saint Mary's

## EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## 2025 Parish Profile



Dyersburg, Tennessee



# St. Mary's Episcopal Church: A Beloved Community of Faith and Service

St. Mary's Episcopal Church embodies the spirit of community and service, uniting people from diverse backgrounds and theological perspectives in a shared commitment to the love of God and one another. We have several parishioners who identify as LGBTQ+. All have served on the vestry. When one LGBTQ+ person's vestry term ended this year, another LGBTQ+ person was elected to the vestry. Two gay parishioners were married in our nave. One of our LGBTQ+ parishioners serves as the Vice Chancellor to our Bishop and is also serving on the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church (2022-2027). We are grateful for and proud of the leadership offered to us and the wider Episcopal Church by these faithful parishioners.

At the heart of St. Mary's is its traditional liturgical expression, where worship is a time of reverence and beauty. Parishioners gather each week to share in the sacred rhythms of the Eucharist, enriched by a commitment to excellence in worship. The church's liturgical life offers a sanctuary for reflection and prayer, welcoming all who seek spiritual solace.

St. Mary's has a long history of community interconnectedness. Over the years, it has been a place where neighbors come together, offering mutual care and support. The diversity of its parishioners—ranging from conservative to progressive—adds depth to its ministry, demonstrating that people can live and work together in the midst of differences. The common thread that binds them is their shared commitment to Christ's love, embodied in service and compassion.

The dedication of parishioners is evident in the church's outreach efforts, where generosity flows both internally and externally. St. Mary's has been a faithful partner in local outreach, including Habitat for Humanity, food ministries, and the Matthew 25:40 ministry, which serves the poor and homeless. The church also provides its parish house for community programs, including 12-step meetings and various local events, reflecting its strong leadership for the common good. The church's ability to make it work—through times of joy and difficulty alike—speaks to its teamwork, resilience, and commitment. When the pandemic hit, St. Mary's adapted quickly, offering online services that helped members stay connected while attracting new visitors. The former early service has been replaced with an online service, ensuring that those who are unable to attend in person can still feel part of the church family.

Despite challenges, the church community rallied together when its rector left, ensuring that both in-person and online services continued without interruption. Lay Readers stepped forward to help lead morning prayer and licensed additional Lay Eucharistic Ministers' to take communion to homebound parishioners, embodying the spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility.

We worship together, serve together, and support one another in love. This is our beloved community. Without this beloved community, our parish would not exist. We are the only Episcopal witness in our area, and we wish to continue living out our Baptismal Covenant to "seek and serve Christ in all persons" and "respect the dignity of every human being."



## Desired Characteristics for a Priest

An ideal priest embodies spiritual leadership and deep pastoral care, offering unwavering support and guidance throughout all stages of life. Leading with compassion, they encourage personal growth and stand by their community during both joyful and difficult times, fostering a thriving, resilient faith community. Below are key traits that define such a priest:

- 1. Proactive Support in Life's Milestones.** A priest who reaches out during key moments like the birth of a child or baptism, offering guidance before it's even requested, helps parishioners feel supported in times of transition.
- 2. Presence During Challenges.** Staying by a parishioner's side during medical procedures or difficult times—such as illness or loss—demonstrates a priest's deep commitment to caring for their flock beyond the church walls.
- 3. Encouraging Leadership and Growth.** A priest who identifies potential congregational leaders and encourages them—especially when they're hesitant—helps individuals grow spiritually and strengthens the church as a whole.
- 4. Caring for All Generations.** Inspirational leadership should extend to children and youth, nurturing the next generation of the faith and ensuring the vitality of the church for years to come.
- 5. Compassionate Support in Grief.** A priest who provides pastoral care during times of loss—offering both comfort and spiritual guidance—helps parishioners navigate their grief with faith and resilience.
- 6. Resilience and Stability.** Whether navigating church transitions or personal hardships, a resilient priest provides stability and leadership, helping the congregation remain united and hopeful.
- 7. Ministry Beyond the Pulpit.** True pastoral care extends beyond services—making hospital visits, offering home blessings, and being involved in community life to support parishioners in tangible ways.



## Streamlined Goals for Next Three Years for St. Mary's

These streamlined goals focus on growth, service, and leadership, ensuring the church remains a vibrant, supportive, and relevant presence in both the community and the wider world.

- 1. Inclusive Growth and Engagement.** Foster both numerical and spiritual growth by creating a welcoming environment for all persons to worship and lead—people of color, LGBTQ+ persons, and anyone else who may not feel valued or accepted as who they are, as God made them.
- 2. Active Community Outreach and Service.** Continue St. Mary's tradition of identifying and addressing local community needs. Develop outreach initiatives that serve the broader community, positioning the church as a resource and support system, not only for its members but also for neighboring churches and organizations.
- 3. Living Our Christian Values in Today's World.** Be a visible and active presence in today's culture, living into our Christian values by addressing social issues, fostering unity across theological differences, and ensuring the church is a safe, welcoming place for all people. Develop programs to appeal to younger generations and ensure the Church remains accessible and inclusive to all.
- 4. Leadership Development and Support.** Encourage and nurture leadership within the congregation, particularly among younger and emerging leaders. Support smaller churches and local ministries, offering resources, guidance, and mentorship to help strengthen the wider church community.





## Observations about St. Mary's

St. Mary's is a church with a deep passion for serving the community, living out its baptismal promises to proclaim the good news, seek justice, and love neighbors as themselves. The congregation has a strong history of impactful ministries in Dyersburg, with a sense of pride in past contributions.

St. Mary's values ecumenical relationships and community outreach, working alongside other local congregations to foster unity in Christ's mission. This is marked by humility, patience,



and love, making St. Mary's a beacon of acceptance in a challenging cultural climate.

The church places a high value on working together, achieving shared goals through unity and collaboration. Notably, the congregation's focus is not on the building but on its ministry and outward service to the community. While they care for their worship space, it remains a tool for fulfilling their mission rather than the primary focus, reflecting a healthy, outward-looking approach to ministry.

## General Information

St. Mary's parishioners, through their diverse professional lives—as businesspeople, 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 held community leadership positions and contributed actively to the Dyersburg/Dyer County Chamber of Commerce, civic groups, and ecumenical services, including the Dyersburg/Dyer County Ministerial Alliance. St. Mary's members were instrumental in founding several impactful organizations, including the United Way of Dyer County, the Dyer County YMCA, and Northwest Safeline, an agency supporting those affected by spousal abuse. They also helped establish Matthew 25:40, an agency providing short-term assistance for individuals in financial crisis, and Habitat for Humanity in Northwest Tennessee, which has built more than 30 homes for families in need. Additionally, St. Mary's has significantly supported Dyer County Adult Education, the local chapter of the American Red Cross, and Transitions, a ministry dedicated to helping women reintegrate into society post-incarceration. The church has also coordinated disaster relief, supporting victims of Hurricane Katrina and providing aid through Dyer County Disaster Relief for families affected by tornadoes and floods. Church members played a leadership role in creating a 2.1-mile wilderness trail in the county and are also involved in the

Mississippi River Corridor Project, aimed at increasing access to the natural and historical resources of West Tennessee.

St. Mary's dedicates an annual portion of its budget to Matthew 25:40 and provides additional support to the community through the rector's discretionary fund and contributions from individual parishioners. Each year, assistance is extended to approximately 60 households, covering emergency needs such as rent, utilities, and transportation. Since July 2011, over \$40,000 in aid has been distributed. The congregation also raises funds for local nonprofits through the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper and offers its buildings free of charge to groups like Scouts, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous, and other civic organizations for their meetings.

In partnership with First United Methodist Church of Dyersburg, St. Mary's helped fund and establish Canterbury Place, an assisted-living facility, and its members actively managed the facility until its sale in 2015. In the 1980s, St. Mary's received a generous endowment, with the Vestry deciding to preserve the principal and use the interest for outreach and special operating expenses in line with the donor's wishes. In 1994, St. Mary's purchased and renovated a nearby retail building to create the Wheeler Outreach Center. This facility, adjacent to the church, is provided rent free to local nonprofit agencies and currently houses Matthew 25:40, Inc.



# Dyersburg/Dyer County Data

## Location

Situated in northwest Tennessee at the crossroads of major highways, Dyersburg and Dyer County serve as the gateway to Mid-America, positioned within a day's drive of 76 percent of the U.S. population. Dyersburg is a regional medical, retail, employment, and cultural hub for over 300,000 people across a tri-state area, including parts of Arkansas, Missouri, and Tennessee. Dyer County's population grew by 16.4 percent during the 1980s, though growth slowed in the 1990s. As of 2020, the estimated population was 37,201, with the City of Dyersburg recording 16,164 residents in the 2020 census. The 2022 population estimate for Dyer County is 36,801, with approximately 82% of residents identifying as white and 12% as Black. A bridge across the Mississippi River connects Dyer County to Interstate 55, a major north-south highway in the center of the U.S. Additionally, four lanes of U.S. Highway 412 link Dyersburg/Dyer County to Interstate 40, a significant east-west route. Dyersburg is on the proposed path of Interstate 69, which will extend from Canada to Mexico.

## Economy

Dyersburg and Dyer County feature a diversified industrial base, with manufacturing in food products, automotive components, electrical distribution equipment, consumer goods, and bottled soft drinks. Approximately 40 percent of the county's labor force of 16,400 is employed in industry. Agriculture also plays a vital role, with 56 percent of the county's land dedicated to farming. The average household income in Dyer County was \$45,042 in 2020, and Tennessee residents benefit from the absence of a state income tax.

The local economy is expected to expand significantly with the opening of Ford's Blue Oval City, located 40 miles away in Stanton, TN. This vehicle manufacturing facility is projected to employ 5,800 people.



## Education

We are proud of our award-winning Dyersburg City Schools and Dyer County Schools. Most recently, both Dyersburg City Schools and Dyer County Schools were named as two of 12 Exemplary School districts in the State by the Tennessee Department of Education. Both school districts have achieved this ranking in past years as well as other top rankings

by third-party reviewers of schools in the region and nationally. The two public school districts serve 6,276 students in the 2023–24 academic year. The county is also home to one Christian school, and some families choose to homeschool their children.

The Tennessee College of Applied Technology reports an enrollment of 477 while Dyersburg State Community College enrolls about 2,600 students in certificate and associate degree programs, offering courses in nursing, allied health, arts and sciences, and business and technology. Additionally, both the University of Memphis and the University of Tennessee at Martin offer classes in Dyersburg. Dyersburg State has transfer agreements with these universities, located 80 miles south and 45 miles north, respectively.

## Medical

Dyersburg serves as a regional medical hub for Northwest Tennessee, centered around the Dyersburg Regional

Medical Center. This facility, with 225 licensed beds and a medical staff of over 100 physicians, provides comprehensive care that meets most patients' needs. Services include diagnostic imaging, emergency care, family medicine, GI/endoscopy, laboratory services, neurology, orthopedics, pediatrics, physical therapy, rehabilitation, a sleep disorder center, speech therapy, surgical services, telemedicine, urology, women's health, and wound care.

## Recreation

Northwest Tennessee is a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts, offering abundant fishing and hunting opportunities. Dyer





### *Dyersburg/Dyer County Data (continued)*

County lies along the Mississippi Flyway, a globally important bird area that supports the migration of over 325 bird species—60% of all species in the U.S.—and provides essential resources for up to 40% of North America's waterfowl during spring and fall migrations. North of Dyer County is Reelfoot Lake, known for its scenic beauty, excellent fishing, and the presence of American bald eagles. The county also features three golf courses.

### **Climate**

The region's growing season spans from mid-April to mid-October, with the first vegetation-killing frost typically arriving around October 15. Average annual precipitation is about 53 inches. January, the coldest month, averages 38.3°F, while July, the warmest month, averages 80.4°F.



### **Culture**

Dyersburg's arts community includes the Dyersburg Arts Council, the Dyersburg Choral Society, and a local theater group. Each year, the Memphis Symphony Orchestra performs in Dyersburg. Nearby cities offer additional cultural attractions: Memphis, with a variety of cultural and community events, is

about a 90-minute drive to the south; Jackson, Tennessee, with three universities and a lively music scene, is under an hour away; Nashville, the state capital, is roughly three hours away; and St. Louis, with its wealth of cultural and sports attractions, is about a 3.5-hour drive.

For more information about Dyer County, visit Dyer County Chamber of Commerce and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development.

## Diocese of West Tennessee

There are over 6,000 baptized members worshipping in 29 congregations across West Tennessee. These congregations vary in size from Ravenscroft Chapel in Brighton with an average Sunday attendance of 8, to Church of the Holy Communion in Memphis with an average Sunday attendance of over 300. The Diocese of West Tennessee spans the western third of the state, from the Mississippi River to the Tennessee River.



refuge during the Yellow Fever epidemics and played a significant role in the city's civil rights movement during the 1960s.

The Rt. Rev. Alex Dockery Dickson was consecrated as the first Bishop of the Diocese on April 9, 1983, and served until his retirement in September 1994. He was succeeded by the Rt. Rev. James Malone Coleman, consecrated on November 13, 1993, who retired in June 2001. The Rt. Rev. Don Edward

Johnson served as the third Bishop of

The Episcopal Church was officially established in Tennessee in 1834. In 1981, the Diocese of Tennessee voted to divide into three separate dioceses, and on December 31, 1982, the Diocese of West Tennessee was incorporated into union with the General Convention of The Episcopal Church USA. The Diocese offers several unique programs and facilities, including St. Columba Camp & Retreat Center in Bartlett, Barth House Episcopal Center on the University of Memphis campus, as well as the training headquarters of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at St. Philip in Memphis. The diocesan seat is St. Mary's Cathedral, consecrated in 1858, which served as a

West Tennessee until 2019, followed by the Rt. Rev. Phoebe Roaf, who became Bishop in May 2019.

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 and clergy member on the Bishop and Council as well as the Standing Committee, and one member currently serves on the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church (2022-2027).

For more information about the Diocese of West Tennessee, visit [www.episwtn.org/about.html](http://www.episwtn.org/about.html).

# History of St. Mary's

The earliest record of an Episcopal church in Dyersburg dates back to 1896, when the church was listed in the Diocese of Tennessee proceedings with a \$5 assessment. However, it was officially sanctioned earlier, in 1889, when Bishop Charles T. Quintard and other clergy held a convocation in the local Methodist church building. A city lot was later donated at the church's current site, and services were held at the YMCA Hall and in a private residence until a permanent building could be constructed.

In 1898, the name "St. Mary's" was chosen due to the "uncommonly large number of ladies in the church named Mary." By 1903, the first church building—a modest, cross-shaped frame structure with a vaulted ceiling—was completed. In February 1904, Bishop Thomas Gailor arrived to consecrate the new building but discovered an outstanding \$1,400 debt for lumber and delayed the consecration until it was settled. The church treasurer paid the debt personally, allowing the consecration to proceed as planned. In 1904, St. Mary's reported 26 communicants, six baptisms, and three confirmations.

Until 1945, St. Mary's shared clergy with other congregations. That year, the church completed its first rectory. On June 23, 1946, the current church building was consecrated by Bishop Edmund Dandridge. Throughout its history, St. Mary's has relied on supply and retired priests during interim periods without a full-time priest, with lay readers leading worship services, including Zoom services in recent years.



In the 1960s, the parish built a parish house at the corner of King and Masonic Streets. Since 1960, the church has undergone several renovations and additions. A new rectory was constructed in the Pioneer West subdivision in the 1980s, though it has since been sold. The Old Rectory now serves as the church's administrative office and hosts the administrative office of Habitat for Humanity and Sunday school activities.

St. Mary's celebrates services using traditional liturgies (Rite I and II) as well as Morning Prayer. Bible studies are a popular activity among members. The parish also has an active Men's Group that meets monthly. The church has a membership of approximately 95 people, with 16% under age 35, 42% between ages 35 and 65, and 42% over age 65. St. Mary's enjoys stable finances, with income regularly meeting or exceeding expenses and an endowment dedicated to outreach initiatives.

## Parish Demographics

| From the parochial reports:       | 2022      | 2023      | 2024      |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Communicants in good standing     | 95        | 84        | 44        |
| Children (0-12)                   | 1         | 0         | 0         |
| Youth (ages 13-17)                | 5         | 5         | 6         |
| Young adults (ages 18-34)         | 9         | 9         | 2         |
| Middle adults (ages 35-64)        | 40        | 40        | 8         |
| Senior adults (ages 65 and older) | 40        | 30        | 28        |
| Average weekly attendance         | 47        | 26        | 0         |
| Average Sunday attendance         | 36        | 25        | 24        |
| Total operating revenue           | \$181,607 | \$167,485 | \$165,197 |
| Total operating expense           | \$184,047 | \$154,694 | \$148,610 |
| % of budget given to Outreach     | 7.40%     | 33.40%    | 8.00%     |



# Why Move to Dyersburg, Tennessee?

Dyersburg, located in Dyer County in the heart of Northwest Tennessee, offers a charming, small-town lifestyle with easy access to larger cities like Memphis. Whether you're seeking a quieter pace of life, affordable housing, excellent schools, or job opportunities, Dyersburg has much to offer. Here's why you should consider making Dyersburg your new home.

## ♦ Affordable Housing

Dyersburg stands out for its affordable housing market. As of the latest data, the median home price in Dyersburg is approximately \$120,000, significantly lower than the national average. Renting is also budget-friendly, with the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment typically around \$600 to \$700 per month. Whether you're looking to buy or rent, Dyersburg offers a wide range of housing options, from cozy single-family homes to apartment complexes, at prices that are well below the national average. This affordability allows you to enjoy a high quality of life without the financial strain often associated with larger cities.

## ♦ Education

Dyer County is served by the Dyersburg and Dyer County award-winning school districts, which includes several elementary, middle, and high schools, in addition to a public library and various educational resources. The area has a reputation for strong academic performance and offers a variety of extracurricular activities for students, including sports, music, and clubs.

For those seeking higher education opportunities, Dyersburg State Community College is located in the city. It provides accessible, affordable post-secondary education, including associate degrees, technical programs, and workforce development courses. The college is known for its friendly atmosphere and strong connections to local industries, making it an excellent option for students pursuing vocational or academic paths.

## ♦ Quality of Life

Dyersburg offers a variety of recreational activities, from outdoor pursuits like hiking, fishing, and boating on the nearby Mississippi River and Reelfoot Lake, to cultural experiences like the annual Dyer County Fair and local arts events. The city's small-town charm, low crime rates, and family-friendly atmosphere make it a great place to raise a family or enjoy retirement.

## ♦ Employment Opportunities

Dyersburg's economy is diverse, with major industries including manufacturing, agriculture, retail, and healthcare. Key employers in the area include ERMCO, Tyson Foods, NSK, and Dyersburg Regional Medical Center, providing a broad range of job opportunities in healthcare, manufacturing, and logistics. The region has seen growth in distribution and warehousing as well, given its proximity to major transportation routes like Interstate 155 and the Mississippi River. In addition, Dyersburg's low unemployment rate, which hovers around 4.0%, suggests a relatively stable job market. The city also offers a business-friendly environment for entrepreneurs looking to start or grow a small business. Many local organizations and government incentives are in place to support workforce development and entrepreneurship.

With a reasonable cost of living, excellent public schools, and an abundance of employment opportunities, Dyersburg, Tennessee, presents a compelling case for those looking for a peaceful and affordable place to call home. Whether you're moving for work, education, or lifestyle, Dyersburg offers an inviting community with room to grow.

## For More Information About St. Mary's

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