

Christ Episcopal Church

Parish Profile



10 Henry Street
Binghamton, NY 13901



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Identity Statement

Christ Episcopal Church welcomes all to our compassionate, diverse congregation as we strive to know God more deeply through worship, service, and fellowship. The first church in Binghamton, our outreach is a beacon of light in our downtown, urban setting.



Letter to Prospective Candidates

Thank you for exploring the possibility of coming to Christ Episcopal Church as our Rector. As the first church in Binghamton, we have a long and rich history. Now we are seeking a new Rector to guide us into the future.

Our congregation is diverse. We come from both Binghamton neighborhoods and the surrounding suburbs. We believe you will find us to be a loving, hospitable group of faithful Christians that strive to love God and our neighbors with all our hearts, souls and minds. Our downtown Binghamton, New York location ideally positions us to serve God through our multiple outreach ministries; our proximity to Binghamton University creates the potential to minister to college students.

Having confidence in the steadfast love of God, we know in our hearts and minds that God is already preparing our next spiritual leader. More information is contained on our website and in this parish profile. For additional information on applying for the position of Rector at Christ Church, please contact the Rev. Canon Megan Castellan, Canon to the Ordinary for Formation and Mission Development at mcastellan@cnyepiscopal.org or call (315) 352-5322. To be considered for the position, please send a letter of interest, OTM profile, and resume to Rev. Canon Megan Castellan.

Again, thank you for your interest in the position of Rector at Christ Church. We hope to hear from you.

Yours in Christ,
Christ Church Vestry



Who are We Seeking

Christ Church seeks a Rector who is a dynamic leader, preacher, teacher and pastoral care giver, with strengths in administration. We seek a strategic leader who can both cast a vision and guide the congregation to that vision. In this moment of significant change, we seek a Rector who can lead during uncertain times, with excellent communication skills, and the ability to address conflict when it arises. We seek a candidate who has the capacity to inspire and connect people to God's word through preaching and is liturgically adept. Our next Rector should provide compassionate pastoral care for all who are in need and work well with people of all ages. In administration, our next Rector should have skills to effectively manage church operations, develop and support staff and nurture lay leadership.

Our People and Fellowship



Our people are a diverse group brought together by a shared love of Christ, scripture, service and fellowship. Our congregation brings together people of different ages, incomes, races, ethnicities and sexual orientation. We are theologically moderate, with about half of us more theologically progressive and half more conservative. Our people are very supportive of each other in ways big and small, from assisting fellow parishioners with major crises, such as flood recovery, to daily needs, like a prayer or meal. We enthusiastically engage in fellowship

through our weekly coffee hours and special meals, such as our Harvest Dinner, our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and our Agape Meal. The community we develop through worship and fellowship nurtures us to serve those in the greater community.

Worship and Music

Christ Church is grounded in joyfully reverent worship and the compassionate love of Jesus Christ. Eucharistically centered, members anticipate Sunday worship as a gathering of friends who deeply engage scripture and are nourished together at the Lord's table. Christ Church's Gothic revival architecture speaks to its long tradition of high church liturgy; however, in more recent years, a broader liturgical expression has blossomed. Holy Eucharist Rite II is primarily used, with supplemental texts and Rite I used occasionally. Christ Church's liturgical flexibility is further evident in a more formal 10:00 a.m. Service of Holy Eucharist on Sundays in the church and the relaxed summertime *Mass on the Grass* on Saturday evenings. The Tuesday Eucharist at Noon in the Dewees Chapel focuses on the major and lesser feasts of the Church. Rosary is prayed in the Chapel twice a month. In the parish survey, more than 86% of parishioners indicated that "I often leave worship energized and inspired." In addition, 84% tended to agree that "our worship services prepare me to live a Christian life that makes a difference in the world."



Christ Church appreciates and is committed to excellence in liturgical music. The choir leads worship in a variety of musical styles, using primarily the Hymnal 1982, supplemented by additional resources. The Rev. Dr. Paul Cienniwa serves as the Director of Music. A Minister of Youth Music was recently established to create a youth choir of both parish youth and youth from the wider community. Jackie Maillet, who serves as Minister of Youth Music, and Paul Cienniwa bring many years of experience in church settings and music education. A major refurbishment of the Casavant Frères Ltée organ was recently completed in the fall of 2023.

Christ Church is proud to have a bell tower with eleven hand-rung chimes or bells. The steeple and bell tower were added to the Church in 1903. Christ Church is the only church in Binghamton to still have hand-rung chimes in operation. The Chimers Guild rings the bells each Sunday before and after services. They are also rung before the summer Saturday evening services. At the conclusion of weddings, the chimes peel in celebration. A bell is rung at funerals, with the number of tolls representing the age of the deceased.



Currently, the Rev. Deacon Kay Drebert serves as Deacon at Christ Church. Deacon Kay preaches regularly, with two licensed lay preachers occasionally preaching. The Rev. Jim Jones, a retired cleric and long-time member of the congregation, assists in liturgy on special occasions. Christ Church has a strong team of readers but Lay Eucharistic Minister and acolyte roles have been difficult to fill post-pandemic.



Our *First Sundays!* began in September 2023. Clergy lead liturgical education for children and youth at 9:00 a.m. after which they are the primary servers in the Holy Eucharist. Other Sundays of the month, children and youth begin Sunday school at 10:00 a.m. and then join the congregation at the Peace. Comments included in the parish survey indicated a desire for more integration of children and youth in worship, children’s sermons, and youth serving in liturgical roles, which requires children to be in church for the entire service. The top priority of the parish survey is “to make necessary changes to attract

families and young people.” The new rector will lead the congregation in discernment and changes that affect worship and Sunday School as Christ Church strives to be a vital, growing congregation that flourishes through its love of liturgy.

Outreach and Ministries

At Christ Church, community outreach is a large part of our mission. Through the CHOW (Community Hunger Outreach) Food Pantry, Katie’s Clothing Closet and the Winter Warmth Project, we provide food and clothing for those in need within our local community. The programs are run by volunteers within our church and the wider community. Fund raisers to support these outreach projects include a Cabaret show, a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and two rummage sales annually, raising between \$5,000 and \$7,000 annually.



CHOW food pantry

Our CHOW food pantry, coordinated with the Broome County Council of Churches, has served people for over 20 years. The pantry is open five days during the last two weeks of each month and is set up as a small store. Some of our food is supplied by CHOW; however, most of our stock is either donated through parish food drives or purchased with funds through our outreach budget. Our customers are clients referred to us by CHOW, but we can also accommodate walk-ins. Last year our food pantry served over 400 scheduled and walk-in clients.

Katie's Clothing Closet

Katie's Clothing Closet provides clothing and some household goods free of charge to children, women and men. The closet is set up as a store, and our volunteers know the stock and help clients select items. Katie's closet is open five weekdays and one Saturday morning during the last two weeks of the month. Our stock of clothes is supplied not only by our parish families, but also by people in the wider community and college students. People like knowing their clothing is being given away, free of charge, and that the clothing is helping those in need. Last year the closet accommodated over 700 people.



Winter Warmth Project



The Winter Warmth Project provides free winter hats, mittens, and scarves to people in need. Many of the hats and scarves are knit by our parishioners and their friends. A large quantity is also supplied through a collection barrel at the Broome County Festival of Lights held in Otsiningo Park during the holiday season. Any additional supplies are purchased through the outreach budget. Members of Christ Church place a hat, pair of mittens and a scarf in plastic bag and hang them on the church railing. Anyone is free to help themselves by simply taking a plastic bag. Last year this project provided over 300 sets to the Binghamton community.

Education

There are 14 children in the church. We currently have two Sunday School classes which include children from 1st grade up to 7th grade. Nursery care is provided for preschoolers. Curriculum from Cokesbury and Abingdon Press are in used in the classes which are held from 10:00 a.m. to 10:35 a.m. during the 10:00 church service with the children leaving class to join their families for the second half of the service and receive communion. Sunday School meets from September until the end of May. The parish has worked to rebuild our Sunday School since the pandemic when classes were held virtually, and we are pleased with the slow but steady return of families with children. In addition to attending Sunday School there are other opportunities for the children to participate in the life of the church such as being an acolyte and joining a youth choir. We have a history of First Communion and Confirmation classes, and we look forward to continuing these traditions.





An opportunity for Adult Education is our weekly Bible Study which has been in existence for ten years. Bible Study meets on Tuesdays from 10:30 a.m. to noon. The number of participants has varied from 8 to 20 and is led by clergy. In the last three years we have been using *The Revised Common Lectionary Bible Study* curriculum published by Paraklete Press of California.

The Church Campus



Our historic building, designed by Richard Upjohn, is located on the second largest green space in downtown Binghamton. Over the years, the campus has undergone several major restorations and is on the NYS Historic Registry. Our landscaping follows much of an English tradition and is maintained by St. Fiacre's Gardening Guild. The retaining walls, steps, and benches provide places for people to sit, rest and eat their lunch.

During the summer months we hold weekly Saturday evening Mass on the Grass services. We also have an interior Dorst Memorial Close that can be used for small services and gatherings. In addition, on the grounds is a Memorial Garden and a Columbarium.



Visitors and members of the Binghamton Community exclaim frequently about the beauty of the church and the grounds, highlighting that the church has an important presence in the city.

The History of Christ Church

Christ Church, which was first named St. Anne's was founded in 1810 shortly after the founding of the settlement of Binghamton. The first services were held at the courthouse and served by a circuit rider. There followed two more church buildings until construction was finished on the present one in 1855.

Our present church was designed by Richard Upjohn, a prominent architect of the Episcopal churches, who advanced Gothic Revival design. The builder was John Stewart Wells, a young man of 31, whose commitment to the church spanned his entire lifetime. In 1903, at the age of 81, he had the Christ Church steeple erected at his own expense. The chime of 11 bells was given to the Church by the Jarvis family.

The building remained mostly unchanged in appearance until the centennial in 1910, when the Rev. Harry Longley, who became rector in 1899, challenged and infused the congregation with energy. This revitalization resulted in many improvements to the interior of the building. The Italian marble altar, reredos and baptismal font were added; the choir stalls were moved to the chancel; and a mosaic floor laid down. Windows in the nave not filled with stained glass, were fitted with memorial windows. A Gorham rose window was added to the west wall and a rood beam was added in 1918.



Since that time, improvements and repairs to the church include a new parish hall in 1970, an enclosed courtyard, repointing of the exterior walls, replacement of the 150-year-old slate roof, the addition of a Memorial Garden and Columbarium and rebuilding the organ.

The Rector with the longest tenure was the Rev. Theodore Dewees. He and his family of five children occupied the rectory for 28 years. He was a beloved Rector and the congregation thrived under his tenure with many social and charitable activities. He guided the church through the Great Depression when the church cemetery was removed to make way for an income producing parking lot.

"The history of Christ Church is a record of continuous renewal of the vision of the people and continuous renewal and preservation of the fabric of the church." As detailed in the book, *Christ Church and its community* written by Susan Miller.

Wider Community

The Greater Binghamton area is in the Southern Tier Region of New York State, at the confluence of the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers. Located in the heartland of Upstate New York, Binghamton is surrounded by lively cities and quaint villages. The area has many beautiful parks and outdoor recreational opportunities. Three interstate highways connect Binghamton to many major eastern cities within a one-day drive.



Community Links

- Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce - <https://greaterbinghamtonchamber.com/>
- Binghamton University - <https://www.binghamton.edu/>
- SUNY Broome - <https://www1.sunybroome.edu/>
- Binghamton Philharmonic – <https://binghamtonphilharmonic.org/>
- Binghamton Black Bears Hockey - <https://www.binghamtonblackbears.com/>
- Binghamton Rumble Ponies - <https://www.milb.com/binghamton>
- Broadway in Binghamton - <https://nacentertainment.com/broadway-in-binghamton/>
- Spiedie Fest and Balloon Rally - <https://www.spiediefest.com/>
- Dick’s Sporting Goods Open - <https://www.dsgopen.com/>
- Blues on the Bridge - <https://bluesonthebridge.com/>
- Tri-Cities Opera - <https://www.tricityopera.com/>
- The KNOW Theatre - <https://knowtheatre.org/>
- Roberson Museum and Science Center - <https://roberson.org/>

Outside organizations who use our Great Hall and parish classrooms includes the Girl Scouts, ALANON, The English Country Dancers, Vestal Community Band, and Red Cross Blood Drive. The Binghamton Philharmonic previously ran a summer music camp for teenage musicians. Use of our facilities by outside groups is supported by the congregation.

Our Diocese

The Diocese of Central New York (DCNY) was established in 1868 and includes 14 counties. There are 82 distinct congregations, five chapels, one outreach mission, and one college chaplaincy. The congregations are clustered into nine districts, each overseen by a dean appointed by the bishop. There are over 11,000 Episcopalians who worship in parish churches and chapels in DCNY. The Diocesan office is situated in the center of the diocese in Liverpool, a suburb of Syracuse, New York. The Diocese provides support, guidance, and assistance to parishes in a variety of ways.



The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe was elected to be the 11th Bishop and the first female bishop of DCNY on August 6, 2016. She succeeded Bishop Gladstone B. “Skip” Adams III, who served DCNY for more than 15 years. The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe was consecrated on December 3, 2016.

The Search Process

Christ Church has used this period of transition as an opportunity for self-reflection and to reenergize the congregation. The process began with a series of cottage meetings as we shared our personal histories and reflected on what our church community means to us individually and collectively. This was followed by a series of congregational meetings during which we established group norms of behavior, examined our priorities, engaged in strategic visioning, and learned models for congregational vitality. We established specific committees for the transition process: a history committee to examine the history of the church in relation to historical events; a data collection committee to oversee the HolyCow! parish survey, and a profile team to create a church profile and portfolio for finding a new rector.



Technology

Christ Church has invested in its information technology, online presence and security during the past year. The Interim Rector hosted two information technology interns from Binghamton University who provided support as we redesigned our website, updated social media and did an analysis of our WIFI technology and administrative operations. As a result, the church office has a new administrative computer integrated with security system cameras; upgraded WIFI technology throughout the building to support live-stream worship and hybrid meetings; and a redesigned website to better welcome newcomers and provides essential information on our outreach ministries and life as a parish. These upgrades support our mission and ministry as we better communicate internally and reach out in service to the wider community.

Finances

Christ Episcopal Church has held strong during the pandemic years. Despite challenges, the parish was able to worship remotely and continue to operate, addressing the needs of the congregation and the at-large community through its outreach programs.

We have shown growth following the pandemic. The average Sunday attendance for the most recent year is 60 and shows a trend upward. Services are live streamed weekly, and summer outdoor services remain attended throughout the summer months.

Pledges and gifts giving have been strong over the past three years. Parish support of capital projects allowed Christ Church to undertake building structure repairs, organ refurbishment, heating system replacement and general remodeling ensuring our building is safe and well maintained. During 2023, the congregation generously supported a fund-raising campaign to recondition the hardware and timber beams supporting the bells, which will ensure the safety of chiming the bells for many years to come.

The current financial focus of Christ Church is to grow our stewardship program while continuing to meet our financial obligations in a timely manner. To this end, the parish installed a new financial system, has

undertaken a plan to relieve debt (having completed major facility upgrade over the past three years) while implementing a two-year capital plan to expand our endowment.

Christ Church is a generous and community-oriented congregation committed to its location in downtown Binghamton and its Christian mission.

How People Apply

To apply, please send a letter of interest, resume, and OTM profile to the Rev. Canon Megan Castellan, at mcastellan@cnyepiscopal.org.

Vision for the Future

We have a robust parish community, which includes strong fellowship, excellence in worship, and vital outreach programs. Building on these we desire to offer more programs and events that not only enrich our parish life, but that connect with and support people outside our parish. We want every person who walks through our doors to feel Christ's welcoming love and engage with our parish community. These connections will create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships, to help our parish flourish and spread God's love.

