

A Profile of Christ Church Cathedral

The Greater Cincinnati Area

Christ Church Cathedral draws its parishioners from the tristate region of southwestern Ohio, northern Kentucky and southeastern Indiana. More than 100 separate communities comprise the 13 counties of the Greater Cincinnati area, with a metropolitan-area population of over two million.

Transportation in and around the city is excellent. The Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport is nearby, located in northern Kentucky. The city is serviced by Amtrak and a system of interstate highways that is easily accessible and well maintained.

Life in Cincinnati is as fast- or slow-paced as one's lifestyle dictates, and the cost of living is very close to the national average. Greater Cincinnati offers the newcomer the choice of living downtown in an architecturally historic area with attractive residential units in the central business district or in one of many suburban areas that range from golf-course communities to moderately-priced townships. Across the river in Kentucky, everything from horse farms to river-front developments are available.

Excellent medical care is plentiful from many fine physicians, dentists and other health professionals. There are approximately 27 area hospitals.

The school systems of Greater Cincinnati, both private and public, are on a par with those of other Midwestern cities of similar size. The tristate area is also well served by many colleges and universities, including the University of Cincinnati, Xavier University, the College of Mount St. Joseph, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Northern Kentucky University, Thomas More College and Miami University in nearby Oxford, Ohio.

There is vigor and variety in Cincinnati's commercial and industrial life. Cincinnati is a multi-industrial and multi-product city. Many leading corporations either are headquartered in Cincinnati or maintain major facilities within the area.

Downtown is alive and well with the excitement of new stores, the enchantment of world-class hotels and restaurants, townhouses and contemporary penthouses. Tristate shopping offers many fine opportunities in malls surrounding the city and in the downtown area itself. Dining in and around Cincinnati is nothing less than outstanding. Many truly fine restaurants can be found in all areas including several floating establishments on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River.

The Cincinnati area is not without its problems. Like all eastern and Midwestern cities, Cincinnati is faced with a growing number of people living well below the poverty line. Homelessness is on the rise, and the shortage of decent and affordable housing remains a major local concern. The public school system confronts issues such as a high dropout rate

and a limited tax base, and certain inner-city neighborhoods suffer from blight and economic deterioration.

Meanwhile, after years of successful urban renewal, the downtown area has experienced much growth. As Cincinnati looks to the future amid all its strengths and weaknesses, an opportunity exists for a downtown church, such as Christ Church Cathedral, to play a significant role.

History of Christ Church Cathedral

Christ Church, Cincinnati, was founded on May 17, 1817, at a meeting held in the home of Dr. Daniel Drake, with the Rev. Philander Chase presiding. The first rector, the Rev. Samuel Johnson, was called in 1818. At the annual meeting held May 17, 1820, Christ Church was formally incorporated in the State of Ohio as the Episcopal Society of Christ Church, Cincinnati, and began its long history of Christian service to its parishioners and to the community.

Christ Church has always been located in the downtown area of the city known as the Basin. The location of the first building was on East Sixth Street. In 1835, the Church moved its present location at 318 East Fourth Street.

The neighborhood adjacent to Christ Church, now known as Lytle Park, was an area where many early community leaders lived, including many prominent members of Christ Church: Daniel Drake, General William Lytle and Nicholas Longworth. The 1820s through the post Civil War era is often referred to as the “Golden Age of Lytle Square.”

Responding to Newcomers in the Neighborhood

During the 1830s and 1840s many immigrants from northern Europe arrived in Cincinnati. Christ Church responded to help these newcomers with the development of mission and relief agencies. These, in turn, became the foundation for the Church’s commitment to service to the community at large. The Ladies’ Benevolent Society of Christ Church began its work by raising money for relief of the poor, aid for the sick and the purchase of clothing for indigent school children.

The outreach efforts of Christ Church continued during the Civil War with financial assistance provided to local charities, other Episcopal Churches in Ohio and to Episcopal Church missions. These efforts were refined after the Civil War by offerings designated for special purposes. The first Sunday’s offering went for the rector’s charitable purposes, the Christmas offering for the Helping Hand Society, and the Easter Offering for the Aged and Infirm Clergy Fund.

By the late 1880s, old-line families of the city were moving to the suburban hilltops, and the parish became concerned about the changing neighborhood of the Basin. The parish wrestled with ways to continue to meet the needs of its original members, many no longer

living nearby, and to develop ways to reach out to its new neighbors, many of whom were immigrants in need of help.

By the turn of the century, Christ Church had responded to the changing neighborhood by organizing and sponsoring groups for the personal growth and social development of young people and adults. The Young Ladies' Guild, the Young Men's Club, the Boy's Club and the Sewing School were organized. The Women's Auxiliary became a primary supporter of Children's Hospital. The Helping Hand Club supported missions locally and in Oregon, Wyoming and Nevada as well as in southern Ohio. Christ Church was also influential in the founding of the Associated Charities, later to become the United Appeal.

The 20th century brought the opening and revitalization of Christ Church in ways undreamed of in 1817. The sign, "All Seats Free. Welcome," marked the end of pew rental and the beginning of the support of the Church through individual member contributions.

When the Rev. Frank Nelson became the rector in 1900, the Parish House was the center of a neighborhood to which people came for help and recreation, and from which parishioners went forth to help their neighbors. Under the Rev. Mr. Nelson's leadership (1900-1939), the parish continued to expand services to the community, but it also became a place of leadership in the improvement of the City of Cincinnati itself. The Rev. Mr. Nelson emphasized three aspects of Christ Church's life: worship, social responsibility and financial stewardship.

Reaching Out to the World Beyond Fourth Street

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Christ Church remained active in community affairs. Parish organizations and groups flourished. The Rev. Mr. Nelson's influence and leadership in the city led to the organization of the Cincinnati Charter Committee in 1924 to help reform the corrupt politics of the time. Its first meeting was held at Christ Church. The Charter Committee spearheaded the first system of government managed by a city manager under a city charter. During the Depression, outreach to the poor and the unemployed continued, and Christ Church provided religious education for children in nearby Guilford School. During the 1937 flooding of the Ohio River, Christ Church provided shelter and meals for those left homeless.

No history of Christ Church would be complete without mention of the World Wars. During World War I, the vestry voted by formal resolution to approve Congress's Declaration of War. Christ Church Camp, then located at Miamiville, was used as a military camp for soldiers assigned to defend the Pennsylvania Railroad Bridge at Miamiville. The Centennial Chapel, built in 1917 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Church's founding, was subsequently dedicated as the Centennial Memorial Chapel after World War II to commemorate fallen heroes of both World Wars. Christ Church also supported the efforts of the National Episcopal Church to raise money to rebuild churches destroyed by war.

The Rev. Nelson Burroughs (1939-1949) became rector of a Church that was liturgically “low” and led the congregation to an appreciation of a wider range of liturgical services. He established the Boar’s Head and Yule Log Festival in 1940, which continues to be offered each year during the Christmas Season as the Church’s musical gift to the city.

When St. Michael’s Cathedral in Coventry, England, was bombed, Christ Church immediately sent contributions for its rebuilding, initiating close ties with Coventry Cathedral. Junior Warden Charles Taft became the first layman elected president of the Federal Council of Churches. It was also during this period that the unique Rector’s Discretionary Fund was created. Plans for the building of a new church were begun to replace the 1835 sanctuary seriously in need of repair. When the Rev. Mr. Burroughs left to become Bishop of Ohio in 1949, the work and influence of Christ Church was firmly established.

Under the rectorship of the Rev. Morris Arnold (1950-1972), plans for the new church building were completed. Ground was broken in 1955 and the new church dedicated on Palm Sunday 1957 as a memorial to the Rev. Frank Nelson.

Embracing Diversity, New Ministries

The Rev. Mr. Arnold set up a Social Relationship Committee to begin work on the inclusion of African Americans. In 1959 the first two African Americans were confirmed, and the first step toward racial integration of the Church was initiated.

These years saw many other “firsts” at Christ Church. The clergy staff was increased to three assistants, the education program was reorganized, an adult education program was added, and a tutoring program for neighboring children was begun. At this time children also began to attend Holy Eucharist with their parents. The first women were elected to the vestry in 1965 and, in 1967, the first black priest, the Rev. John Mason, was called to the staff.

The partnership with Coventry Cathedral continued. The Coventry parish presented Christ Church with the Clark Fitzgerald sculpture, “The Plumb Line and the City,” now displayed in the sanctuary.

Christ Church’s outreach efforts were tested by the urban unrest of the late 1960s, and the rector took a leadership role in joining with other denominations to establish an inner-city ministry focused on the social and economic plight of blacks and Appalachians. The Rev. Mr. Arnold gave urban ministry a high priority, and Christ Church clergy assistants were well-trained in inner-city work.

Christ Church took a bold step in the summer of 1968 by making the Undercroft available to participants in the Poor People’s March on their way to Washington, D.C. In 1972, the Rev. Mr. Arnold was elected Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts, leaving Christ Church with a rich legacy of social action and Christian commitment.

Laying Foundations for Today

During the Rev. Edward Sims's rectorship (1972-1984), Christ Church continued on its path of social outreach. Responding to the refugee crisis created by the Vietnam War, the parish took in a Cambodian family in 1980. At the same time the Church began a soup kitchen in which parish volunteers provided soup and sandwiches to the poor for over a year. The project led to the parish's current connection with the Drop-In Center, where parish volunteers prepare and serve a hot meal each month throughout the year. This initiative also led to further activities in Over-the-Rhine, such as support of low-cost housing.

The Church embarked on a sanctuary renovation project in 1980 to provide a 25-year update to the 1950s church building. The "static and classical" altar and choir configuration were radically modified to an "open stage" format that allowed flexible placement of the altar, choir and lectern. The reconstruction also added new space in the Parish House for the establishment of the Downtown Montessori School, providing infant care and pre-schooling for parish and inner-city families. During this same period a children's library, the Tree House, was established, and the first woman priest assistant was called.

The Community Issues Forum, which continues every other Thursday, began as an experimental Lenten program in 1979. Its goal was to offer to the public informative presentations and panels on important community issues. The Forum shifted to its present lunch-hour format in 1980. Mayors, city managers, city council members and civic, religious and business leaders have regularly led discussions at the Forum on a wide range of topics from downtown development to AIDS.

The Christ Church Native American Project was also started under the leadership of the Rev. Mr. Sims. This effort was made possible through the very generous financial bequest of a parishioner.

When the Rev. Mr. Sims retired in 1984, the Rev. Milton Saville was appointed interim. He had been an assistant under the Rev. Mr. Arnold in the 1960s and, after a distinguished career in the United States and abroad, returned as assistant to the Rev. Mr. Sims and later filled the temporary position until 1986.

During the rectorship of the Rev. James Snodgrass (1986-1989), new social action programs were encouraged by setting aside a percentage of the endowment as a Mission Fund to provide seed money for worthy social projects. In addition, both adult and youth education were expanded, and the Koinonia Worship Service brought together families with young children for their own service in the Chapel.

Christ Church became a catalyst for "social thinking" with the initiation of the annual Charles P. Taft Memorial Lecture, bringing to Cincinnati prominent speakers to stir the "social conscience." Congresswoman Barbara Jordan was the first Taft Lecturer; other world-renowned speakers have included the Most Rev. Desmond Tutu, archbishop of South Africa, and Michael Berenbaum, the director of the National Holocaust Museum.

Christ Church hosted the Diocesan Convention that elected the Rev. Herbert Thompson, Jr., as Bishop Coadjutor. The parish was significantly involved in his installation. The Rev. Mr. Snodgrass resigned as rector in 1989, and the Rev. Richard Harig became interim rector in 1990.

Outreach continued to be a high priority. The vestry approved the transfer of \$500,000 per year from the vestry-designated funds (nonrestricted) for a period of eight years, yielding a total of \$4 million. This sector of the endowment fund would be managed by the trustees and the income used for the benefit of the needy consistent with the parish's mission statement. In April of 1991, Christ Church hosted the National Conference of Path's Crossing, bringing together Native Americans and their partner Episcopal congregations for study and fellowship.

From Church to Cathedral

In September 1991 the Rev. James Leo (1991-1998) became the 17th rector of Christ Church. One of his first actions was to lead the parish through the decision process to become the Cathedral for the Diocese of Southern Ohio. In May 1993, Christ Church was consecrated a Cathedral, fulfilling the dream of Bishop Thompson.

During the same year, the "new" Cathedral celebrated its 175th anniversary with many special events. In August the Cathedral choir became the choir-in-residence at England's Durham Cathedral. This was a high honor for the music program at Christ Church, which continues to be a major draw to the Cathedral with its high standards of musical excellence.

In 1994 the vestry approved the Restoration/Renewal Project, the largest undertaking in the Church's history, to renovate the Cathedral emphasizing handicapped accessibility, updated mechanical systems and "beauty." After the Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival in December 1996, the main sanctuary was turned over to the architect Philip Markwood for a 15-month renovation project. The congregation moved to the Centennial Chapel for multiple Sunday services. The physical disruption did not interfere with the spirit of the Cathedral's outreach projects. The completion of a Habitat for Humanity house, mostly constructed by members of the congregation for a grateful inner-city family, was an example of continued outreach.

In April 1998 the Cathedral was rededicated to the glory of God in a joyous ecumenical service. Operating on a parallel track to the reconstruction, the vestry's ad hoc Vision Coordination Committee worked to prioritize and implement plans to best utilize the facilities in the parish's role as a Cathedral for the Diocese of Southern Ohio and the city of Cincinnati.

In May of 1998, the Very Rev. James Leo retired as the first dean of the Cathedral. In 1999, the Rev. James A. Diamond was installed as the Cathedral's second dean. During his tenure, which continues through today, Dean Diamond has established the Cathedral

as a center of reconciliation, strengthened Christian Formation for children and youth and adults, and expanded the music program.

Parish Facilities

Christ Church Cathedral, at the corner of Fourth and Sycamore, is three blocks east and one block south of Fountain Square, the center of Cincinnati's downtown. This is a quadrant of the downtown dominated by office buildings but also adjacent to some of the oldest and most established urban residential developments.

Occupying nearly a fourth of a city block, the Cathedral's immediate neighbors include the offices of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, a historic theater, a Masonic Temple, a residential tower and several small historic commercial buildings. Adjacent blocks are dominated by corporate headquarter buildings. A new office complex is under construction across the street. When complete in 2011, it will house between 4,000 to 6,000 employees. The Cathedral is planning ways to serve the needs of these downtown workers.

The Cathedral complex is comprised of three principle buildings: the Cathedral, the Parish House and Centennial Chapel. These are extensively connected but have contrasting architectural styles. An extensive renovation was completed in April 1998. Designed by Phillip Markwood of Columbus, Ohio, it has dramatically improved access to all areas of the complex, improved the flow of traffic within and among the three buildings, and established some architectural integration.

The Cathedral's corner location affords 50 feet of frontage on Sycamore and 260 feet on East Fourth Street. Christ Church moved to this site in 1835 from a previous location on East Sixth Street. The original church building, which faced Fourth Street, was completely demolished and replaced by a modern design in 1957. The orientation of the church was changed at this time to face Sycamore and run west to east.

The six-story Romanesque-Gothic-style Parish House was built in 1907. Its clock tower is reflected in the Cathedral's logo. A gift of Mary Emery, it was built to replace a two-story 1899 structure no longer adequate to house expanding services to the congregation and to the neighborhood.

The Centennial Chapel, an authentic Gothic design, was built in 1917. All of these buildings have been renovated several times.

The Cathedral

The current church, completed in 1957, was designed by David Briggs Maxwell of Oxford, Ohio. Its bold modern design stands in stark contrast to the other buildings. Some of the more aggressive elements were eliminated in a major interior renovation in 1982 by William Schickel, creating a plain but inspirational worship space.

Twelve of the fourteen stained glass windows came from the 1835 church. The other two Gorham windows date from 1913. All were cleaned and repaired in the 1997-98 renovation and are in excellent condition.

A major success of the recent renovation was the addition of stylized Gothic wood detailing to the Cathedral inspired by the Centennial Chapel. All aspects of the church are now dominated by clean, modern but Gothic lines. The sanctuary seats 488 with a balcony capacity of 128. The spacious chancel will accommodate 95. The wooden beams of the ceiling soar to 46 feet. The worship space is of genuine cathedral proportions. The chancel furnishings remain flexibly modern, and the chancel space is totally handicapped accessible and adaptable for various theatrical and liturgical uses.

The Cathedral organ was custom built for the 1957 church by Walter Holtkamp, Sr. Its 71 ranks of pipes in five divisions are mounted in a loft over the chancel with the console on the chancel floor. Special attention was given in the recent renovation to improving Cathedral acoustics, and the sanctuary is now said to have an exceptionally good sound. Lighting and sound systems are also state of the art with substantial theatrical capacity.

The parish's main gathering place, the Cathedral Undercroft, has a capacity of 631 on the main floor and 30 on the stage. A new elevator makes this and the Centennial Chapel handicapped accessible for the first time. The room is served by a commercial quality kitchen as well as by enhanced sound and state-of-the-art multi-media systems. The intermediate and connecting levels of the complex contain robing rooms, a Flower Guild work room, music library, nursery, roof-top cloister and columbarium.

The Parish House

The Parish House sits behind the Cathedral and extends the frontage of the parish complex to a full half block on Fourth Street. The six-story building originally served as a center for recreation and community service for the then-teeming population of the city's Basin. It has been renovated numerous times and more renovation is being planned.

The first floor of the Parish House was reopened to Fourth Street as part of the 1997-98 renovation. A bookstore, outreach office and reception area share the first floor along with a new Vestry Room and Library/Parlor created in what was the original auditorium. Administrative, clerical and staff offices are on the second floor along with the Ascension Chapel. The third and fourth floors have classrooms and small meeting rooms. The fourth floor also has a small apartment. A gymnasium and locker rooms are on the fifth floor.

The Centennial Chapel

Built in celebration of the centennial of Christ Church in 1917, this structure sits north of the Cathedral and behind the diocesan offices that face Sycamore. This neo-Gothic building provided much of the inspiration for the architectural integration of the recent renovation. The Chapel has individual seating for 125, large stained-glass windows east

and west, commemorative international flags, a traditionally ornate pulpit and elaborate vaulted wood ceiling in the style of an English country church.

The Centennial Chapel served admirably for the entire parish's worship during the renovation and is now due for some maintenance and restoration of its own. The lower level, which formerly housed a public health clinic, has just undergone small-scale renovation and serve multiple uses.

New ramps, a new elevator and connecting stairs and hallways now make the inspirational Chapel space more accessible to the whole parish. These same elements also provide access to the newly developed rooftop garden area, known as the Cloister, and its columbarium.

Mechanical Systems

The entire parish complex approaches 100,000 square feet of usable space. It is served by a centralized steam heating system with four boilers and an ice-storage cooling system newly extended to the third and fourth floors of the Parish House. The cooling system is new; the boilers are in good condition and have redundant capacity. The control system is new and state of the art. Both elevators are new.

Summary

Christ Church Cathedral is a large and varied facility, which reflects the diversity and long history of the parish. Its current use continues in the tradition of faith and service.