

Christ Church, Lockport

What are some significant moments in the history of your church that have shaped its identity today?

In 1816 the New York State Legislature passed an act marking present-day Lockport and its surrounding region as the area where the Erie Canal would pass through. Despite opponents of Governor DeWitt Clinton who thought the project was a foolish and unachievable undertaking, the canal was built and completed in 1825, connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean and transforming New York's economy and making the state a commercial center.

Those who constructed the canal, mostly Irish and Scottish immigrants, remained

after its completion. They needed a place to worship, so what would come to be known as Christ Episcopal Church began offering services in 1828. The first wedding in Christ Church was that of Washington Hunt and Mary Walbridge. Later, Washington Hunt became Governor of New York State. When Washington was confirmed, the rector baptized 74 new parishioners and confirmed 44. Almost 200 years later Christ is still providing for the spiritual needs of its members.



What makes your church unique in the region and the diocese?

As one of the oldest Episcopal Church's in our diocese we serve those who live in the Lockport area and the immediate surrounding communities. Our current church building was constructed in 1965 through the generosity of Mr. & Mrs. George W. Bewley, who donated the land. The parish obtained permission of the wardens and vestry of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Bloomington, IL, to use their church blueprints for Christ Church. (St. Matthew's was recently featured in the Anglican Digest for its unique architectural design and) Within ten years of its completion our parish grew three times in size. Although we grew in our new space, we brought our history with us. We have the original church bell and numerous artifacts from our first church: The bell is functional and on display in our bell tower, the stained-glass windows are in our Children's Chapel as are several dedication plaques (one in memory of Gov. Hunt who served as a vestry member), and the original stone baptismal font.

What are the most vibrant ministries or strengths of your parish today?

Christ Episcopal church opens our fellowship hall to non-profit groups for their use: Two musical groups practice weekly and put on concerts throughout the year, a counseling group that comes in once a week and that volunteers to help the church when needed, our Outreach program which delivers nonperishable food to the "Little Pantries" in Lockport every other week, we provide school supplies to the area

schools for children who cannot afford them, and every year we choose a family in need in the community that we sponsor for Christmas. We have three yearly events where we invite our larger community to attend and support us and we in turn then support the community. We have a talented musician and choir director in Timothy McQueen and bell choir director in Linda Few to complement our Sunday Worship experience.

Describe a moment in your community's life when you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit moving among you. What made that moment possible?

As a Faith Community we have decided to follow Jesus and there is no turning back as the old gospel hymn says. Our Church community is very strong in its love of God, who wants nothing more than to share His life and love with us now and forever. As a result, we welcome everyone to join us in loving and serving the Lord and one another. We welcome all whom God sends our way and invite them to the Lord's table. Through prayer we have witnessed several miracles of healing from life-threatening complications from COVID and other serious health issues. When Father Thomas invites the parishioners to begin Sunday worship by opening our hearts and minds to God and his Word, the presence of the Holy Spirit can be felt throughout the church.

How does your church engage with the local neighborhood, the civic life of your community, or diocesan and/or Episcopal Church-wide initiatives?

We are blessed to have a parishioner that is on the Lockport City Council which gives the city a presence of our church. We have participated in the Lockport Parade many times. Our doors are open to the community through the blessing of the animals, and the property is used for walking and exercising by our neighbors. We just installed a new basketball net for the children in the neighborhood, so they have a place to safely play. We support the church-wide initiatives by participating in the diocesan Convention through our delegates and alternates.



What are the hopes and dreams of your congregation for its next chapter?

Our dream is to make Christ present all of the Lockport Community. Together we are Christ!