



“From the start, Christ Episcopal Church has felt like home to me.”

Christ Episcopal Church, formally known as Christ Church Episcopal of Alleghany County is a very young parish. The idea of our parish began in 1997 at a home Bible study made up of individuals that were not cradle-Episcopalians, but who saw a need for an Episcopal Church in our county and made the vision a reality. Over an 18-month period, the numbers of individuals interested grew sufficient for regular Sunday worship, and on June 21, 1998, the Alleghany Episcopal Mission held its first Sunday service in a local business in downtown Sparta, North Carolina.

From the beginning, the late Rev Barry Kramer and the late Rev Chuck Blanck led the congregation, bringing members together around the liturgy and traditions of the Episcopal Church. Within 6 months of the mission holding its first service, it moved to share a local church building, and in July of the following year (1999), The Rev Stanley McGraw began as priest-in-charge. During his tenure, Christ Church was granted full parish status at the Diocese of Western North Carolina Annual Convention. The date was November 9, 2000.

By 2002, a permanent church building had been built and the church was dedicated on April 9, 2002, Easter Sunday. From the idea of an Episcopal Church to mission status, and then full parish status to worshipping in our current location took a short five years.

Father Blanck returned as priest-in-charge after Father McGraw retired, and then at his retirement, Father Kramer returned as the interim priest. In May 2010, Christ Church called its first full-time rector, The Rev Lin Walton who served until 2015. He was followed by The Rev Dr James Doss, who served as interim priest until The Rev Stephanie Parker was called in

September 2016 as the second full-time rector. In early August 2020, The Rev Parker left to serve at another parish in NC.

For the past two and a half years, our parish weathered life without a permanent priest, lived through a natural disaster (an earthquake days after The Rev Parker departed), a major reconstruction project, and managed all the restrictions of COVID. We struggled, like most churches. But as COVID restrictions lifted and an influx of new residents arrived, we found ourselves flourishing. We now enjoy weekly in-person worship services, weekly spiritual formation groups, renewed outreach in our community, an increase in membership and visitors, and a healthy budget heading into 2023.



“I remember the first Sunday we attended and they sang “Surely the Spirit of the Lord is in this place” and I cried. I could feel the Spirit. I still do every time I walk in the door.”

Who are we:

We are a small parish nestled in the mountains of northwestern North Carolina. Our county, Alleghany, is one of the smaller counties in the state and one of the few still mostly untouched by development. We have amazing mountain views, rolling hills, a fair amount of Christmas trees, and a quintessential small-town feel.

Our parish is made up of individuals 60-80 years old, mostly retired but a few still work. Some of us are married, some widowed, and some live alone. We are generous, kind, and involved in our community. We are a parish that gives whatever we can, be it \$25 or \$2,500.

We are a blend of many denominations – Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal – who have chosen to worship in the Episcopal tradition. We enjoy learning about our denomination, being guided spiritually, worshiping, praying, and singing. We have an incredible rotation of musicians that play on Sundays and for special services, but we do not have a choir.

Holy Eucharist is important to us. Welcoming visitors and making them feel included is important to us. Hospitality is important to us and is demonstrated by weekly coffee hour after each service.

We volunteer at our local food closet (established by founding members of Christ Church), Alleghany CARES (a local thrift store that was established to handle the many needs of those living in poverty in our county), the prison just over the Virginia line in Independence, the local Meals-on-Wheels delivery, and more. We seek to love like Jesus.



“It’s easy to forget how much work and dedication goes into keeping us fed with food & fellowship. I had no idea!”



“Hospitality includes how we greet visitors. We always want them to remember they are welcome here.”



“I grew up in the Baptist Church with parents and grandparents who were ordained ministers. I knew little about the Episcopal Church, but once I learned how progressive, inclusive, and loving the church is, I was sold! I was confirmed by our Bishop José in March 2022.”

The spirit and hopes of CC:

We participated in a process with Canon Augusta Anderson in August 2021 in which we were asked what we love about Christ Church. Many answers included outreach efforts, worship, music, a welcoming membership, but the one answer that is often shared is feeling spirit, feeling at home, feeling God’s love upon entering the sanctuary. It’s an individual experience that creates our common bond as a parish. We sing “Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place” each Sunday after communion. It still brings tears to our eyes because we feel that presence.

In articulating our hopes for our future, we put our experience in worship on the top of our list. We include more opportunities to learn, pray, and sing. We expand our efforts to reach out to those in need. We open ourselves to thinking about our faith and our own spiritual path. We want spiritual counseling to be available. We want weekly worship.

“Bishop Michael has said many times, ‘if it isn’t about Love, it isn’t about God.’ We’ve adopted part of his language – we seek to love like Jesus.”



“I guess we all have an idea about what we want in a priest. I hope we’re able to call someone who understands how to work with older people like me. Someone who’ll listen. I just can’t wait to have a permanent priest here again!”

What does CC need in a priest:

We want a seasoned priest who is well-versed in the needs of older adults, has strong counseling skills, demonstrates strong leadership abilities, makes worship & teaching priorities, manages his/her time given the part-time nature of the job, presents in a welcoming, kind, loving manner, actively participates in community outreach opportunities, and guides us in our future.

We appreciate open communication, collaboration, humor, intelligence, and sensitivity. We are an inclusive parish and expect that from a priest.

Our ideal priest would lead us in worship each Sunday morning. He or she would actively participate in the coffee hour following the service and might create an adult forum to be offered during that time. Part-time is 20 hours per week, so sermon preparation (5 hrs) and time on Sundays (3.5 hrs+) might take eight or more hours, leaving 11-12 hours to be provided during the week. Administrative time can be contained to 2 hrs (or less) a week, meeting with the Sr Warden 1-2 hrs/week (or as needed), and that leaves 8 hours a week for parishioner meetings/counseling and/or monthly meetings. The Vestry meets once a month on Tuesdays at 10:00 am. The priest would lead the Vestry meetings and so Tuesdays might be one of the days to be on-site. Again, this is an ideal situation for our parish and we understand that changes might be in order.

“I’d like a priest whose theology is inclusive, abundance acknowledging, and acquainted with grace; someone who understands the liturgy and knows how to use it.”

“I’d like a priest who becomes involved with the community and outreach as much as possible, one who is able to conduct quarterly Bible studies, and who delivers succinct and stimulating sermons.”

“We’d like a priest who is a knowledgeable teacher, passionate about the growth of the parish, and compassionate. It’s also important that the priest have some history of successfully managing the operations of past parishes.”

“Oh...I want a priest who is filled with the wisdom of God; a good preacher.”

“I hope a priest would focus on Episcopal services which are about love and forgiveness, and that we would continue to use the modern version of the Lord’s Prayer. Also, because time will be an issue, I hope we’d get a priest that focuses on taking care of the members and supporting us.”

“I like a priest who has liturgical skills to make worship engaging, biblical knowledge to provide inspiring and educational sermons, and the musical depth to know there is a wide world of music beyond the 1982 Hymnal.”

“I want a priest who will laugh with us, care about us, listen to us, and encourage us. I also think it’s important that he or she understands that this community of believers is both strong and vulnerable but also that we have a lot of love to give to that person who comes to lead us.”

“I want a priest with a “Wideness of God’s love” that encompasses us all, sustains and nourishes the parish, and strives to bring us closer to God and one another.”

“I want a priest who engages in outreach in an active way; one who excels in teaching and preaching; a parish care-focused person who also has the capability and track record to lead our parish into the next part of our journey.”

What can CC offer a priest:

- ✓ Beautiful mountain views and opportunities to explore the area,
- ✓ An active music, art, culinary, and reading community,
- ✓ A bright, open sanctuary for worship services,
- ✓ Welcoming, loving members & friends,
- ✓ Musicians who bring their talents to each service,
- ✓ A private office for small meetings and/or spiritual counseling,
- ✓ A large Parish Hall for larger meetings, teaching, and/or luncheons,
- ✓ A strong Vestry and dedicated Team Leaders,
- ✓ Assistance in finding appropriate housing for our part-time position, and
- ✓ A competitive salary and coverage of all reimbursable expenses.

