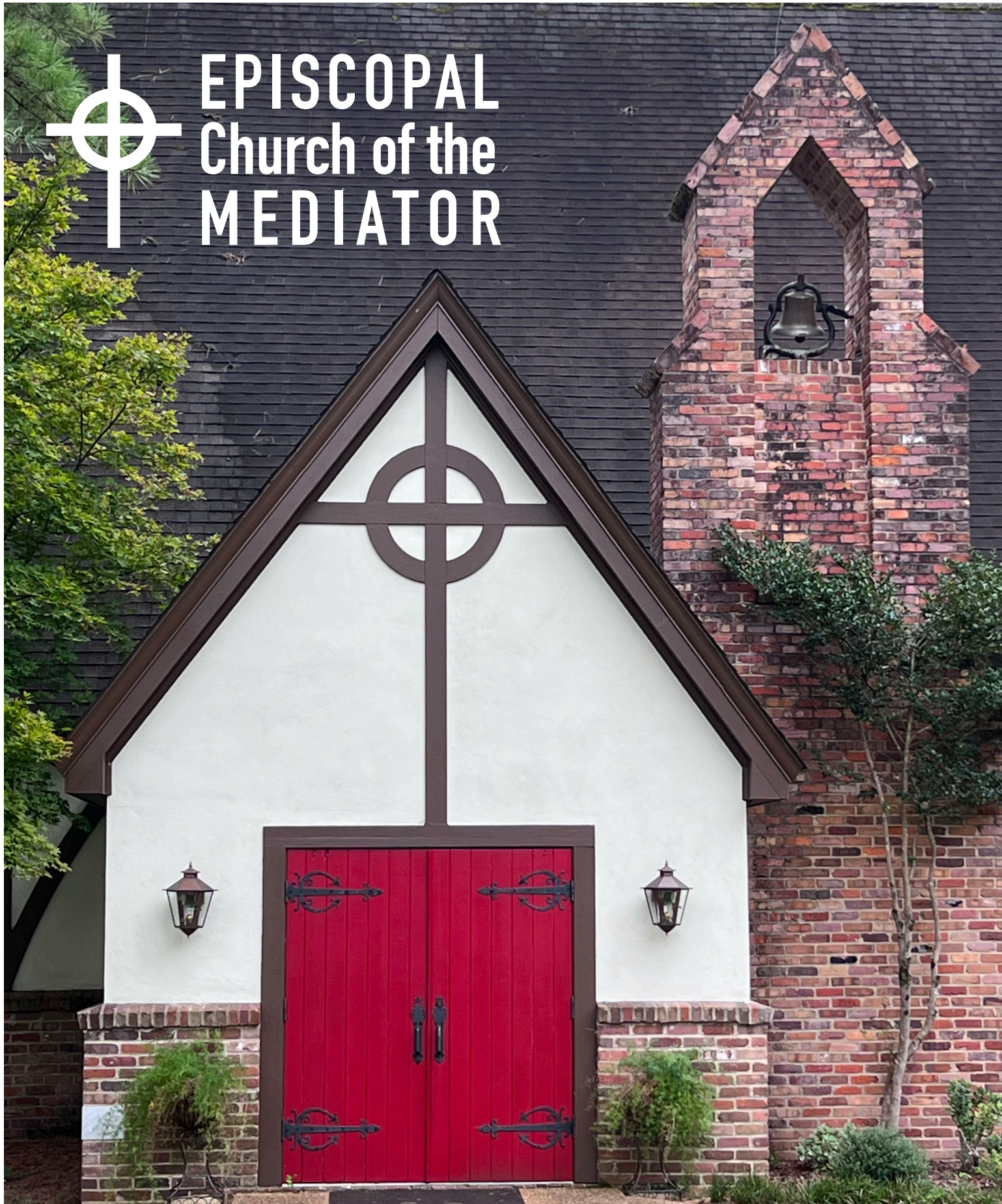




EPISCOPAL Church of the MEDIATOR



MISSION STATEMENT

*The Church of the Mediator's mission is
to share God's unconditional love with each other and the larger society.*

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Street address: 3825 35th Avenue
Meridian, MS 39305

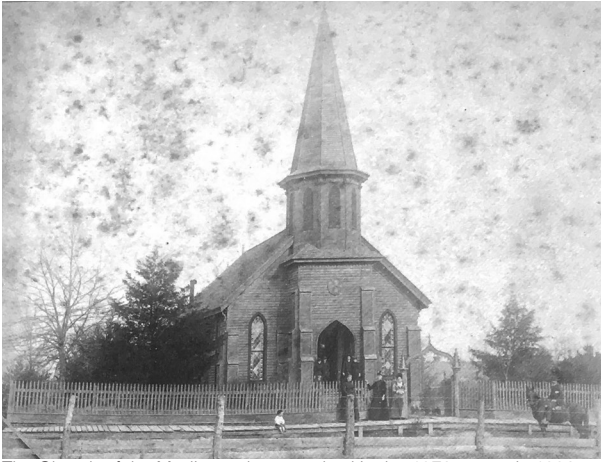
Mailing address: PO Box 3400, 39303

Phone: 601.483.3959

Email: admin@mediatormeridian.org

A BRIEF HISTORY

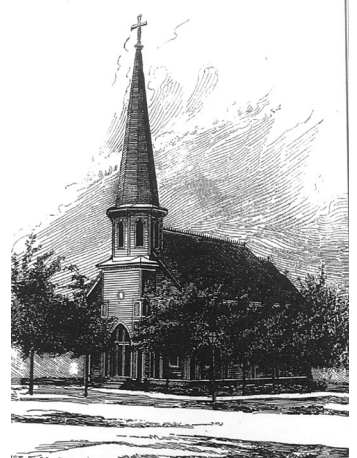
Information in this document was assembled from the history of the Church of the Mediator, written in the 1980s by Bob Harrison, a long-time parishioner, and from other materials from the parish archives.



The Church of the Mediator photographed in the 1870s or early 1880s.

The Episcopal Church has been a presence in Meridian, Mississippi, since the 1850s. The original Church of the Mediator, established in 1858, was the sole Episcopal church until 1902, when the “St. Paul’s” mission was established. The two parishes served the community until 1911, when the Mediator’s long-time rector, the Reverend Waddell retired. At that time, the Mediator liquidated its assets, and many in the congregation transferred memberships to St. Paul’s. Thus, St. Paul’s operated as the only Episcopal church in Meridian until the late 1940s, when the

Diocese of Mississippi authorized the establishment of a mission.



The Church of the Mediator as pictured in the Meridian City Directory of 1888.



The mission, which met in an Army Air Force Chapel at the local airfield, was named “Church of the Mediator” in honor of the original church. It remained in that location from 1949 until 1952, when- following the acquisition of a three-acre wooded lot in a residential neighborhood and the purchase and donation of the Chapel by a parishioner at St. Paul’s-the building was moved to the site of the present church. The history of the Mediator is full of stories of the support

received from St. Paul’s parishioners and others who donated furnishings and appointments and supported needed renovations.

On April 3, 1961 (Easter Monday), the new church building-a simple A-frame structure with English Tudor accents- was dedicated by the Right Reverend Duncan M. Gray, Sr. The building had been designed by the rector, the Reverend Howard B. Kishpaugh. The architect, Durwood May, and the contractor, Bobby Culpepper, were parishioners. The interior of the church is a mid-century design with modern furnishings and frosted mullioned lead-glass windows. The focal points of the interior are the free-standing altar and the Christus Rex. The choir loft and the baptismal font are located at the end of the nave nearest the narthex. The seating capacity is three hundred.



Church of the Mediator, 35th Avenue, Meridian, MS, circa 1955.

The sacristy, which adjoins the nave, connects to a chapel that seats thirty-five. The second floor has two offices, one of which was used during the Covid-19 pandemic as a studio to allow on-line worship services via Facebook.



The campus has evolved since the 1960s. When the present church building was completed in 1961, the old building continued to serve as a Parish Hall until a new one was built in 1988. A fire in 1968 seriously damaged the Chapel, necessitating extensive repairs. An Education Building was completed in 1979. In 1998 a walled memorial garden was built to include both a columbarium and a permanent labyrinth. The garden provides an outdoor space for worship services (well-used during the pandemic), a private space for contemplation and meditation, and a place of interment or scattering of ashes. In 2015, campus improvements included renovation of the choir loft, addition of a second parking lot, and addition of another entrance to the Parish Hall.

A parishioner who lived next door to the church bequeathed her home to the Mediator and later, the church bought an adjacent house to complete the footprint of the property. One of the houses served as the administrative office until 2023, when the office was moved to the Education Building and the house was razed. The other house is now used for storage.



Unique to the campus are the two barbecue pits with covered fire-pit, used annually during the Mediator's most important fund-raising, fellowship, and community building event—a barbecue that began fifty years ago and that feeds the community, builds fellowship, and represents an integral part of the Mediator's identity as a church that (in the words of a former rector), "goes out into the world in unconventional ways."



The 2022 Annual Parochial Report shows active membership of 229. The age demographics are as follows. Breakdown by sex is not available but it appears that membership is predominantly female.

- **0-17: 14.0%**
- **18-34: 9.0%**
- **35-64: 23.0%**
- **65 and over: 54.0%**

Average Sunday attendance is 83 (two services), and the average weekly attendance-including the one midweek service- is 101.

Mediator is a giving parish. Below reflected the pledges, plate giving and outreach for the years 2021-2023.





MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The mission of the Church of the Mediator is to “...share God’s unconditional love with each other and the larger society.” This mission statement is rooted in the core values of acceptance, nourishment, empowerment, and action. To fulfill our mission and offer opportunities for all members to discover and exercise their personal ministries, Mediator uses a framework of “ministry assets” made up of the individuals, committees, and work groups on the graphic below.

During the pandemic, some of these ministry groups were either unable to conduct their work or were required to find new ways of doing ministry. One of the current challenges is to re-invigorate these groups, identify and empower leadership, encourage participation, seek new ways of doing ministry, and use the lessons learned during the pandemic to strengthen and support these efforts.

CHURCH OF THE MEDIATOR Ministry Assets



Financial Stewardship

Day-to-day stewardship of financial resources is monitored by the Parish Treasurer and the Bookkeeper with monthly reporting to the vestry. Committees led by laity develop the annual budget, lead the annual stewardship campaign, monitor endowments and investments, review compensation packages for paid staff, and make recommendations to the vestry as part of the budget process.

Property Stewardship

With leadership of the Junior Warden and vestry oversight, committees and work groups monitor the physical condition of buildings and grounds, maintain the beauty of the Memorial Garden, set guidelines for use of the church bus for parish functions, and use of the facilities and grounds by parishioners and community members for special events or programs. Currently, a Boy Scout troop meets on campus weekly during the school year and two organizations for individuals with special needs meet regularly for socialization and support.

Children/Youth Formation



Dedicated volunteers provide Sunday School activities weekly during the school year for children from pre-K through fifth grade with nursery space being provided for younger children.

During the year, multi-generational events such as the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday; the annual Easter Egg Hunt on Easter morning; Breakfast with St. Nicholas during Advent; a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, complete with Mardi Gras parade and bead toss; and youth-led worship services allow children and youth to play an important role in the significant events of the liturgical year.

Children's Chapel is offered each Sunday during the school year for children who are at least three years old. Mediator and St. Paul's Episcopal Church offer Vacation Bible School each summer, alternating the location between the two parishes.

Children and youth are active in attending summer camp at Bratton-Green as well as Happening and DOY weekends, which gives them a wider view of the Episcopal Church in Mississippi.

Mediator and St. Paul's also offer a combined Episcopal Youth Community (EYC) program that has strengthened the bonds between the two parishes and offers a wider range of opportunities for youth. The group plans and raises funds to go on pilgrimage

every two years to experience the Christian community at work by working on relevant service projects, learning to respect nature and the environment, and learning about other cultures.

The rector and volunteers offer confirmation classes for adults and youth in preparation for the Bishop's visit every two years.



Adult Formation

Since 1981, Mediator has offered an Education for Ministry (EfM) group for parishioners and others in the community. Since then, at least 80 people have completed this course and, hopefully, have found opportunities to practice their own unique ministries. Throughout the year, educational and spiritual formation groups- including Bible and Book of Common Prayer study groups, and book clubs- are offered on Sunday mornings and during the week.

Since 1994, with initial leadership from the EfM group, Mediator has sponsored a series of Seeds of Faith conferences with noted speakers and theologians including Bob Haden, Jack and Christine Spong, Barbara Crafton, Barbara Brown Taylor, Steven Charleton, Marcus Borg, Amy-Jill Levine (with co-sponsorship from the local synagogue), and John Dominick Crosson, among others. The conferences draw participants from within the Episcopal community as well as those from other faith traditions.



Seeds of Faith - Growing up Jewish in a Small Southern Town, Jan. 2023

Bob Haden's Seeds of Faith conference in 1995 generated interest in creating a labyrinth ministry at Mediator. The result was not only a portable canvas labyrinth which has been taken to other churches for their use but also a permanent labyrinth in the Memorial Garden, which also houses the columbarium and space for ashes to be scattered.



Worship

Mediator holds fast to the beauty of the Anglican worship tradition. Volunteers with myriad talents and gifts use them for the glory of God and serve as vergers, licensed worship leaders and readers, acolytes, ushers, Altar Guild, and choir members, as well as making bread for communion. Members of the Flower Guild enhance the beauty of the worship space through their talents and are also responsible for decorating the church for special services throughout the year. Volunteers also serve as members of a Wedding Guild to assist families with decisions that recognize wedding-related Episcopal traditions and customs.

Pastoral Care

Mediator has teams of volunteers to either visit in-person or otherwise contact parishioners who are ill, hospitalized, or home-bound due to illness or disability or who have experienced the death of a loved one to determine how the parish can best serve them and their families with dignity and respect. Information is relayed to the church office so a coordinated response can be developed, including regular visits, phone contacts, meals, errands, etc.

The purpose of the Prayer Shawl Ministry is to provide knitted shawls or blankets for those who are ill themselves or facing difficult circumstances and need to be reminded that they are loved and prayed for and to be wrapped in a tangible reminder of God's ever-present love. The group also knits crosses for the newly baptized to remind them of their membership in God's family.



Outreach

Mediator takes seriously its responsibility for sharing God's unconditional love with the community, and many of our members volunteer with schools and social programs in the community to improve quality of life for everyone. The ECW chapter maintains an on-going relationship with the local domestic violence shelter with support at Christmas as well as providing supplies throughout the year for items that are not covered by the shelter's budget.

For more than fifty years, the Mediator has held a barbecue that has become an integral part of our identity by promoting fellowship, sharing Mediator's love with the community, and raising funds that are used entirely to support community programs that improve quality of life. Since its inception, the barbecue has returned more than half a million dollars to local programs!

With approval from the rector, a Boy Scout troop and two community-based programs that serve individuals with special needs and their families meet regularly on the Mediator campus.



Fellowship

Restrictions created by the Covid pandemic interrupted our ability to worship and experience fellowship together. Overcoming these barriers presents some of the most difficult challenges for our community. We were reminded just how much we need to be with each other, and since in-person worship and fellowship opportunities have resumed, we look for more ways to maintain connections with each other.

As Wednesday evening meals and activities have resumed, so have opportunities to serve in the kitchen by preparing meals and by leading study groups and youth activities. It is a joy to hear our children racing around the Parish Hall again while their parents have a chance to sit with a cup of coffee and visit!

Episcopal Churchwomen (ECW) and the Men's Group offer opportunities for service and support for the parish as well as education and spiritual growth programs. Both groups welcome all comers.

The Wayfarers and the Lunch Bunch use the church bus to take short day trips to interesting places and special programs and exhibits across the state and to take short trips to try interesting new restaurants. The bus is also used to transport the youth to exciting events: football games, Camp Bratton-Green, Happening and DOY events,

Our Community

Meridian is in East Central Mississippi, Lauderdale County. As of the 2020 Census, Lauderdale County had approximately 72,984 residents. Approximately 35,052 of those live in Meridian. Meridian is known as the “Queen City,” a nod to the Queen of the Gypsies, who once lived here and is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery. The Meridian area’s location and proximity to major transportation routes are important for business logistics and have earned it the title “Strategic Center of the South.” Two Interstate Highways- I-20 and I-59- intersect at Meridian, as do three US highways and three railways. Additionally, Meridian



is a hub for the trucking industry. Meridian is only a short drive to three major US cities (and easy on the gas tank).

- Nashville, TN: 335 miles
- Atlanta, GA: 290 miles
- New Orleans, LA: 198 miles

Transportation

No problem if you want to take a trip without having to drive. Meridian Regional Airport is served by United Airlines, with bus and train service available at Union Station downtown.



Business

Meridian’s largest employer is Meridian Naval Air Station, followed by the health care industry, manufacturing, and retail. Four hospitals and nearly 900 physicians employ thousands of residents. A revitalized and thriving economy and a thriving downtown area ensure a diverse economy.

Education

In addition to the Meridian and the Lauderdale County public school systems, there are four private schools. There are two institutions of higher learning, Meridian Community College, and Mississippi State University (MSU) -Meridian Campus.

Entertainment and Culture

There is always something happening and plenty of things to do in Meridian, the MAX, MS Children’s Museum - Meridian, MSU Riley Center, Meridian Little Theatre, Meridian Museum of Art, and the Temple Theatre. Check out our upcoming events and book a night at the Threefoot Hotel, steps from all the action, or one of many other hotels just minutes away.



Brunch at Weidmann’s Mississippi’s oldest restaurant, sip on craft brews in a 1920’s bank turned brewpub, and take in amazing sunsets atop a rooftop bar — it’s all possible in the heart of historic downtown Meridian.

Health Care

Meridian has two acute care hospitals totaling over 600 beds, a Level III Trauma Emergency Room, and a Regional Cancer Center. East Mississippi State Hospital provides behavioral health and chemical dependency treatment for adults and Alliance Health Center provides behavioral health and chemical dependency treatment for adults and adolescents. Weems Community Mental Health Center and private clinics and practitioners provide outpatient behavioral health and chemical dependency treatment.



Priest Listening Session Results

CHALLENGES

- ❖ Waning participation: choir, altar guild, acolytes, Sunday school
- ❖ Innovate how we re-engage existing members and attract more young members and families
- ❖ Location: need higher sense of security

STRENGTHS

- ❖ Welcoming and accepting community
- ❖ Value learning and spiritual growth
- ❖ Outreach
- ❖ Financially responsible

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

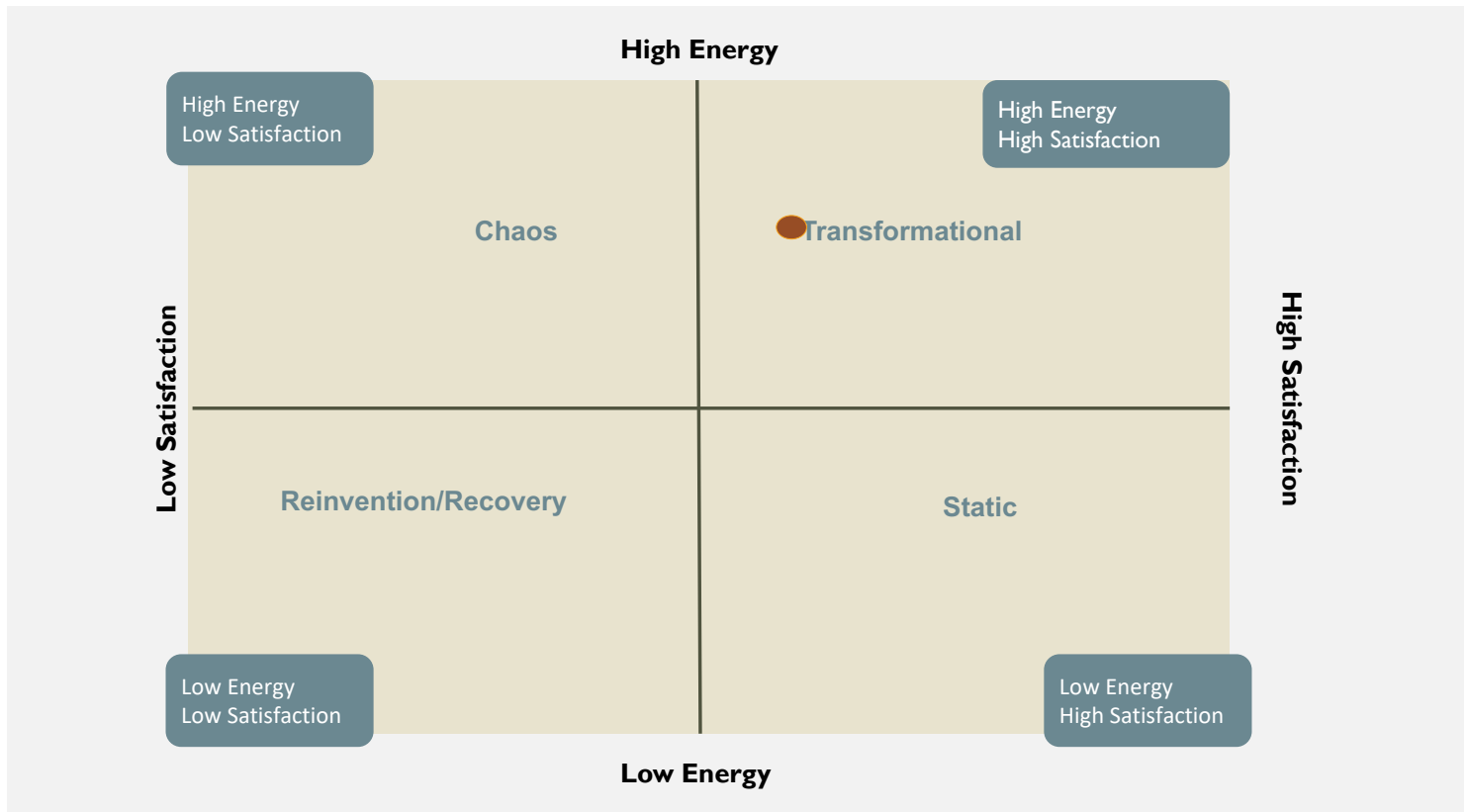
- ❖ Transition of leadership to younger members
- ❖ Offer more structure to how we welcome new members and how to become involved
- ❖ Self promotion & communication
- ❖ Young Adult & Adult Christian formation
- ❖ Pastoral Care

TOP QUALITIES WE WANT IN A NEW PRIEST

- ❖ Strong Children and Youth Leader
- ❖ Accessible and personable
- ❖ Strong sermons & pastoral care

Mediator Parishioner's Survey Results.

We learned from our self-reflective survey that the Mediator is a thriving church with above average satisfaction and high energy. A clear area of improvement that emerged was to improve our worship through music and a clear strength is our value of shared activities beyond worship. The Mediator creates opportunities for members to form meaningful relationships through small groups, nurtured friends, and shared meals which are critical during the current loneliness epidemic.



Top priorities during our current transition: The Mediator wants to balance growth with nurturing current membership through strong pastoral care.

Growth: Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth to our church.

Growth: Comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church

Ministry: Develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.

Our survey revealed to us that our strengths include hospitality, conflict management, governance, readiness for ministry and engagement in education. Growth opportunities include spiritual vitality and worship and music. We seek a new priest who could help us see how our spiritual life impacts our life outside the church and see our faith in all aspects of life.

CLERGY NEEDS

- Missional alignment and clarity
- Guidance and leadership in assessing the effectiveness of programming and ministries
- Help people feel comfortable sharing their faith stories while deepening their spiritual walk









Vestry

Winky Glover

Sr. Warden

Sarah Neville Darsey

Jr. Warden

Keith Logan

Treasurer

Ann Glazar

Clerk of the Vestry

Elizabeth Honeycutt

Keith Logan

John Mutziger

Eddie Ott

Diane Quick

Barbara Thomas

Katy Watkins

Spike Watts

Anna Wile

Search Committee

Anna Wile - Chair

Winky Glover

Beth Calderon

Paige Brooks

Brenda Easterwood

Ross Goodin

Jimmy Smith

Staff

Keith Logan

Treasurer

Jim Quick

Bookkeeper

Ann Glazar

Registrar

Dana VanVeckhoven

Children & Youth Coordinator

Paige Brooks

Parish Administrator

Lora Tucker

Organist & Choirmaster

Michael Barney

Sexton

Vergers

Jimmy Smith

Lou Rawson

Ann Glazar





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3825 35th Avenue | Meridian, MS 39305 | 601.483.3959