Christians are “the church” in the world. Church is more than a place.

For many people, being part of a specific tradition - like the Episcopal Church – is very important to living out their faith.

Episcopalian coming together to worship and minister out into the world make up a congregation – also know as a faith community. Most of the time congregations are connected to a specific building, but not always.

Each Episcopal congregation is part of a diocese.
A diocese is a geographical region and in our case that covers the western half of Missouri. We have three deaneries – the Metro-Northwest, Central and Southern.

Our diocese (Diocese of West Missouri) consists of 13,000 members in 51 congregations (parishes and missions). There is also a hospital, a day school, a college chaplaincy, a retirement community and a nursing center.

Then, each diocese is also part of bigger Episcopal Church - in the United States and beyond. There are 111 dioceses in the Episcopal Church, located throughout the United States and in Taiwan, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Europe. The Episcopal Church is split into nine provinces. The Diocese of West Missouri is in Province VII.

One way that people think of how The Episcopal Church is structured is to think of our political system. We have (generally) three levels of government: local (city/county), state, and federal. Our local congregations are like our local government. Our diocese is like a state government. The national church is like our federal government. This similarity is not surprising, as many of the people who set up our governance structure for our nation after the Revolutionary War were also involved in setting up the governance of the Episcopal Church.

And, the Episcopal Church is also part of the Anglican Communion. The Anglican Communion is a group of national churches that share historical ties with the Church of England. There are 38 national churches (also called “provinces,”) that comprise the Anglican Communion.