St. Peter’s
Parish Profile
2020
Talladega, Alabama

A Prayer for St. Peter’s Church

Lord, we offer St. Peter’s to you. We are your people; this is your church. We come to you seeking your guidance, your purpose and your vision.

Align our will with yours, so that we will be willing to do whatever it takes to carry out your plan. We ask you to break through in new ways in our church. Show us the great ministry you have in store for us. Help us dream your dreams.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us, giving us the vision, boldness and confidence to do all that you call us to do. Amen.
Highlights of Our History

As early as 1836, it is recorded that a saintly group of Episcopalians existed in Talladega, Alabama, in great need of a church home. They apparently loved their Prayer Books so deeply, that the Methodists and Baptists gave up trying to proselytize them! Yet they were indeed a flock without a shepherd.

Nevertheless, it was to be their good fortune, that even without the agency of Facebook, emails, texting or tweeting, Bishop Nicholas Hamner Cobbs, the first bishop of Alabama, eventually heard about these hearty brethren in Talladega, and took action. By 1850 he called on Father Thomas Cook, challenging him to establish a parish church here.

To his credit, Father Cook had been quite busy in Talladega, establishing a school for girls, the White Chapel Female Seminary. However, he heeded the good bishop's request, and began holding Episcopal worship services in a storefront building on the town square in 1852. Remarkably, those arrangements endured for two decades, during which time several priests came and went.

Out of those humble beginnings, the first Episcopal church in east-central Alabama was born, and took the name of Grace Episcopal Church of Talladega.

Then came the Civil War. And hard times. But this faithful flock in Talladega endured.

By 1869, Father J.F. Smith had been called to serve as rector for the Talladega Episcopalians, fifty something in number. Early on, during his ambitious twenty year term, he lead the unusual effort to give the church a new name! (Perhaps his mother-in-law was named Grace?) So the church was given the new name of St. Peter's Episcopal Church (Yeah!), and in 1872, moved into its newly constructed wood framed building on North Street.

(Home...at last!)
Long before The Church of the Advent in Birmingham was a twinkle in the Bishop's eye, (or for that matter any other parish churches such as those in Anniston, Alexander City, Alpine, Sylacauga, etc.), St. Peter's was acknowledged as being the "Mother Church" of the region — a historical note worth highlighting.

Fast forward about fifty years to 1928. St. Peter's original church building was traded-in for a more permanent limestone structure, designed by the prominent architect, Frank Lockwood.

During the course of the 20th century, beautiful stained glass windows and a historic 1904 Hook and Hastings pipe organ were installed. The church purchased the organ from the First Baptist Church. It took a while to break in the organ to play Anglican hymns! Lawrence Hall and Bingham Hall were added during this period.

Enter the 21st century. St. Peter's Church underwent an extensive restoration project from 2015-2017, just eleven years shy of the structure's 100th anniversary. When the time came to dedicate the beautifully restored building, its opening was gratefully and proudly proclaimed to be debt free. No small accomplishment. Father Ben Turnage was priest-in-charge during this time.

Moving forward into yet another new chapter of its history, the St. Peter's family now extends outstretched arms to embrace and love its next priest, who will lead, inspire and challenge us to love God, care for one another, and serve the world. This will be a shared work, as we seek to deepen relationships.
Parish Life: Who We Are

Worship

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.
Psalm 95:2

Each Sunday morning at 10:30 we hold a service of Holy Communion Rite II. At times during penitential seasons, we use the Rite I service. Additionally, when a priest is not available, we may hold a deacon's mass or a parishioner may lead the congregation in morning prayer. We have a small choir, led by a volunteer choir mistress. We are currently without a full-time musician, after the retirement of our former organist, and the unexpected relocation of her part-time replacement. Music during the service is from the Episcopal Hymnal, with a processional, gospel, and recessional hymn, as well as service music throughout. The choir often sings a selection during the offertory. During communion, a pair of parishioners accompanies the congregation on guitar and piano as we sing praise music from the Alleluia III Songbook. In a parish survey, 75% of respondents cited worship as one of St. Peter's strong points.

Worship Ministries

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. 1 Peter 4:10

Although we are a small parish, St. Peter's has many members who are active before, during and after worship, serving as: altar and flower guild members, lay readers, chalice bearers, acolytes, ushers, and choir members. A reliable and industrious group of women, serving in six teams, sets up and takes down the altar for services. The flower guild prepares beautiful arrangements for all services and any special occasions, as well as leading volunteers to decorate the church for Christmas and Easter. Two ushers serve each Sunday greeting congregants at the door, handing out bulletins, and collecting the offering. Lay readers read the lessons, lead the congregation in responsive reading of the psalm, and read the prayers of the people. Chalice bearers and acolytes participate in each service. We have a small but dedicated choir that has been reinstituted in the last couple of years, after being without one for a number of years. Currently, we are in search of a consistent solution for organist (and/or pianist). We have a dedicated parishioner who is filling this important role two Sundays a month.
Leadership

*Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you.* 1 Peter 5:2

St. Peter’s church is led by a vestry made up of nine members, each of whom serves a three-year term. A senior warden and junior warden guide the work of this group. Parishioners are divided up among the members of the vestry in shepherding groups. The vestry member reaches out to its group to invite and encourage participation in all aspects of our church life.

Prayer, Fellowship, and Service Ministries

*For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* Matthew 18:20

St. Peter’s parishioners lead and participate in prayer, fellowship, and service beyond Sunday worship in multiple ways. For more than 30 years, a devoted group of four to six people has gathered for Morning Prayer every weekday at 7:00 in the kitchen of Bingham Hall. Part of their routine is to pray for those whose names are gathered at Beans and Rice. Every Tuesday morning at 6:15, for many years, an ecumenical group of men has gathered to share fellowship, a meal, bible study, and prayer. Average attendance is six to seven men, with Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, and Catholics participating. Three of the men arrive early to prepare breakfast for the group. Bible study and discussion focuses on the gospel lesson for the coming Sunday, and the session closes with prayer requests and the Lord’s Prayer. St. Peter’s also has an active Daughters of the King group of ten members. The St. Anne’s chapter meets the first Wednesday of each month and serves through involvement in a variety of charitable activities, as well as carrying out their oath to the Rule of Prayer.

Outreach Ministries

*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in.* Matthew 25:35

Outreach is another of the strong points mentioned by many of our parish survey respondents. We have a number of outreach ministries. Each Tuesday morning at 10:00 a parishioner opens the door to welcome members of the community who are in need of food or financial assistance. We keep a food pantry stocked, through parishioner donations, with a variety of nonperishable food items in the parish hall kitchen. Families are able to request financial assistance to pay bills, such as power, water, medications, and doctor visits. St. Peter’s partners with local
agencies to provide screening for this financial assistance. Last year, Tuesday outreach served 121 families. AA and Al-Anon groups hold multiple regular weekly meetings in St. Peter’s parish hall. St. Peter’s sponsors a monthly Beans and Rice Ministry every third Saturday. In 2019, this ministry gave out 950 pounds each of beans and rice. A faithful team of members prepares the bags of food and also provides hospitality to our guests, warmly greeting each visitor, adding names to the prayer list, and offering coffee, orange juice, cake, cookies, fruit, and other goodies. Additionally, visitors can get their blood pressure monitored. At Thanksgiving and Christmas, a ham or turkey, along with canned goods, are added to the food bags.

**Fellowship Gatherings**

*So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.* Galatians 6:10

There are a number of regular opportunities for fellowship for the members of St. Peter’s. Club 55 offers day trips, meals, and/or learning outings once a month for members 55 and older (although all ages are welcome). In the summer, vestry members host Wonderful Wednesdays of fun, good food, and fellowship. The same generous family has hosted an annual parish Christmas party for many years. On Shrove Tuesday, St. Peter’s hosts a Shrimp Feast that brings together parishioners who prepare the feast using a variety of different delicious recipes of fresh Gulf shrimp. Many members of the local community join us for this event each year. We have hosted a luncheon as part of the April in Talladega tour of historic buildings, which regularly includes a tour of our church. Members of the parish sponsor an annual Spaghetti Supper Fundraiser for the Episcopal Day School. In mid-September we hold an annual lake service hosted by parishioners with a home on Lake Logan Martin, followed by lunch. Over the past year, the parish life committee has prepared and hosted a lunch for all parishioners once per quarter. This group also provides delicious refreshments for special occasions, such as when the bishop visits.

**Education**

*To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.* Ephesians 4:12

For a number of years, St. Peter’s has held Christian Education classes on Wednesday evenings. Classes have been led by parishioners, as well as by the rector. Studies in the past year have used a video series on the development of the bible, a discussion by world spiritual leaders on happiness, and a study of Epiphany. St. Peter’s Episcopal Day School (EDS) is in its 43rd year. It is a morning preschool, plus an extended day program. Current enrollment is twenty 3- and 4-year old’s, who are taught and cared for by two preschool teachers. In the afternoon, nine of the children stay for the extended day program, with two caregivers. For a few years in the early 2000’s, EDS also included a middle school program for 6th-8th graders.
Membership

2019 Statistics from Parochial Report:
Active Baptized 88
Adult Communicants 74
Youth Communicants 1
Average Sunday attendance 45

Financial Information

A budget is approved for each calendar year based on pledges received and anticipated expenses. To minimize expenses, members sign up to provide the altar flowers each week and decorations for other holidays. In addition, support is given by members financially and by providing needed supplies to operate our various fundraisers and outreach projects throughout the year.

The church is debt free.

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2019 Income

136,024
12,500
14,611

2019 Expenses

97,579
14,526
20,948
7,320
11,778

$163,135 Total
$152,151 Total
We are seeking a priest who:

- Will collaborate with us to chart a new path for our future
- Brings scripture alive by relating it to our daily lives
- Is a spiritual leader
- Ministers to all members, especially those who are aged, infirm, or troubled
- Connects with and forms strong bonds with and listens to concerns of parishioners
- Develops informative and educational programs
- Welcomes all members of the community
Strengths

- **Worship** is at the center of parish life and survey respondents cited this as St. Peter’s primary strength.

- **Fellowship** at St. Peter’s offers many uplifting and fulfilling opportunities for shared interests beyond the Sunday service and helps to strengthen parishioners’ relationships with each other and with God.

- The **Episcopal Day School (EDS)** has for many years offered a successful preschool for the community and is widely recognized as providing excellent preparation for children before they enter kindergarten.

- **Outreach** to the wider community beyond the walls of St. Peter’s takes several forms as the congregation answers the call to love one another and care for those in need.

Opportunities for Growth

- **Music** is a crucial element of worship whose importance was noted by many participants in the parish survey; the next leader, with the vestry, needs to explore a creative solution to the current lack of a permanent, full-time organist/pianist who can support the efforts of the choir.

- **Pastoral Care** was cited as one of the most valued qualities for a rector; the next priest needs to actively attend to the needs of *all* parishioners, especially when struggling, ill, or homebound.

- **Christian Education** is a vital part of a healthy parish and worshipping community; classes on Wednesday evenings should be expanded and diversified and should help parishioners discern their own spiritual gifts.

- **Stewardship** education is critical to helping all members understand and fully embrace the centrality of sharing not just treasure, but also time and talents in thanksgiving to God for all we have been given; a renewed emphasis needs to be placed on developing a comprehensive, effective stewardship approach.
Our Community:
Opportunity Knocks

Incorporated in 1835, Talladega is widely recognized as being one of Alabama's most beautiful and historic small towns, truly an authentic treasure of antebellum homes, churches and unique institutions.

At the heart of the city is its prominent town square, with the oldest working courthouse in the state, a majestic columned building with marble floors, topped with 4 clocks. Surrounding the town square, numerous buildings are being carefully renovated to their original designs. An anchor for the square is the historic Ritz Theatre which annually brings in artists from all venues, from the Russian Ballet to Dolly Parton. On the east side of the square is the newly created Hall of Heroes, a tribute to regional veterans already attracting visitors from 38 states. Just two blocks away is Heritage Hall Museum, located in the gorgeous and impressive historic Silk Stocking District. The museum hosts exhibitions by local and regional artists as well as art classes for children, youth, and adults of all ages.

Educationally, Talladega is home to the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB), founded in 1865. AIDB is a premier agency that educates, trains and employs individuals who are deaf, blind, or multi disabled. Talladega College, founded in 1867, is the oldest historically black college in the state and has just opened the William R. Harvey Museum of Art, new home to the historic Amistad Murals. Ascension Leadership Academy is a relatively new private school (K-12) associated with the First Presbyterian Church and the local Presbyterian Home for Children. The Academy allows students to work at their own pace online with the opportunity to complete an associate's degree while in high school. Talladega has its own public school system as well, and won the state basketball tournament in 2019.

Recreationally, the Talladega area offers the Top Trails Outdoor Park with a popular campground and over 47 miles of ATV riding trails, which brings in over 30,000 visitors annually. Within 20 minutes of the town square is Logan Martin
Lake, home of great fishing tournaments and boating activities. The Talladega International Motor Speedway is NASCAR's most competitive track hosting two major races per year, as well as offering driving schools and social events throughout the year. Cheaha State Park, within the Talladega National Forest, provides camping, fishing, hiking, and swimming at the top of Cheaha Mountain, the highest point in the state.

Demographically, 15,300 people live in Talladega with the following ethnic makeup: 47% white, 48% African American, and approximately 7% Asian, Hispanic, and Indian. The median age is 39, with a median income of $28,000. Talladega is located only 55 miles southeast of Birmingham, the largest city in the state, and 20 miles west of Oxford’s Quintard Mall and the Oxford Exchange where there is an abundance of stores and restaurants.

As is the case with many small towns across Alabama, Talladega is a community in transition. The textile industry, once our dominant economic force, gradually moved away, leaving a gap in the town's economy. The public schools face an ongoing challenge, partly due to a shifting population. Despite these changes and challenges, new opportunities for growth and development continue to present themselves. Many positive efforts are underway which focus on the very desirable and underlying strengths of the area: namely, its geography, history, recreational attractions, the arts, entertainment and tourism. Much of the city center is undergoing beautiful restoration projects, with new eateries and other venues being added. Investors are purchasing real estate to be renovated and developed. Talladega College is growing with new student housing and its new museum.

The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama

The Diocese of Alabama is a community of 89 congregations with more than 32,000 members within the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Communion. The congregations, worshipping communities, campus ministry centers, and outreach ministries are located throughout central and northern Alabama. We have recently elected a Bishop Coadjutor, the Reverend Dr. Glenda Curry. She will begin serving as diocesan bishop on January 1, 2021 upon the retirement of the current Bishop, the Rt. Reverend John McKee Sloan, in December 2020. For more information on the diocese, visit the diocesan website:

www.dioala.org
Narrative for Portfolio Questions:

1. Describe a moment in your worshipping community’s recent ministry that you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.

Confirmation this past year was very special due to the four persons being confirmed. One of our longtime members had been dealing with deteriorating health issues. He wasn’t the easiest of patients for his wife or staff to deal with in the nursing home. Somehow his faith and visits by our rector awakened an interest in our church by one of his caregivers. She began attending services on Sunday with his wife. As she became more comfortable, she started coming on her own accord. It’s a lasting legacy to our now deceased member that she was confirmed this past year. She attends services regularly and has now brought a member’s son back to the church for services. We also confirmed three members’ spouses/significant others that day. It is always a great experience when we see whole families being able to share our faith and worship together. Confirmation at our church is always celebrated with cards and/or gifts to welcome the new members to St. Peters.

2. Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship in your community.

St. Peter’s has a broad church liturgical style using Rite II on Sundays (except on occasion we may hold a Deacon’s Mass or Morning Prayer). During penitential seasons we may use Rite I. Many members actively participate before, during, and after worship, as altar and flower guild members, lay readers, chalice bearers, acolytes, ushers, and choir members led by a volunteer choir mistress. Right now we only have music two Sundays a month since we do not have a full-time musician. The congregation sings processional, gospel, and recessional hymns. We also have service music, sometimes an offertory anthem, and Communion music from The Alleluia III Songbook accompanied by guitar and piano. Other worship includes small group parishioner-led Morning Prayer every week day and Compline on Wednesdays after Christian Ed. Throughout the year, there are several special services, including a lakeside service in early fall, Blessing of the Animals in October, Christmas Eve service, two or three Ash Wednesday services, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter.

5. How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?

Each Tuesday morning food items are distributed from our food pantry which is stocked and funded through parishioner donations. Financial assistance with bills is also a part of this ministry. Last year, St. Peter’s served 121 families through its Tuesday morning food pantry. AA and Al-Anon groups hold multiple regular meetings in our parish hall. Our Beans and Rice ministry is held every third Saturday of the month and is hosted by members of the parish. This is not only a time of meeting the physical needs of our community with food, but is also a time of fellowship for us to visit with our Beans and Rice family, learn of their needs and the needs of their families, and to add them to our prayer list as requested. In 2019, we shared 950 pounds of beans and rice as well as adding canned vegetables and meat for Thanksgiving and Christmas. In 1985, St. Peter’s founded the Red Door Kitchen, an ecumenical ministry serving 135 hot lunches a day, 5 days a week throughout the year. We continue our financial support of the Red Door Kitchen to this day.
6. Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider church or geographical community.

We have operated the Episcopal Day School for over 40 years. Our 3- and 4-year-old students come from across the county to participate in this nurturing, learning environment. An Extended Day Program was added several years back to accommodate working parents in the area. Scholarships are available for qualified students. Weekly chapel and music sessions provide students an introduction to our Episcopal tradition. Two programs during the school year give parents the opportunity to participate at St. Peters. Our church also reaches out to the community with our Shrimp Feast and April in Talladega luncheons. Both fundraisers support church outreach projects while providing fellowship amongst our members and the community. Each activity gives the church a chance to include new or potential members in the various areas of preparation. Great fellowship occurs while planning and executing these worthwhile projects.

8. How are you preparing yourself for the church of the future?

We are a diverse community of worshippers. Each one has enriched the congregation with their own gifts and talents. Being a small parish requires some members to serve in several roles. Sometimes we must learn as we grow! By participation in these experiences, we build relationships through the fellowship of need and sharing. Our aging, but beautiful, building underwent a much needed restoration from 2015 to 2017. Our updated facility reflects 21st century technology. Our leadership is committed to new ways of communicating with present and future members. We seek to call a priest who will assist us in discerning our future as a church.

Words Describing what we are seeking in a priest after changes:

1. Will collaborate with us to chart a new path for our future
2. Preaches strong sermon by bringing scripture alive by relating it to our daily lives
3. Has administrative skills to partner with vestry and staff
4. Is a spiritual leader
5. Ministers to all members, especially those who are aged, infirm, or troubled
6. Connects with and forms strong bonds with parishioners and listens to concerns of parishioners
7. Develops informative and educational programs
8. Welcomes all members of the community