



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD

The Episcopal Church in Central and Southern Illinois

St. James Chapel in Marion

An Appeal to the Diocesan Council of
The Episcopal Diocese of Springfield

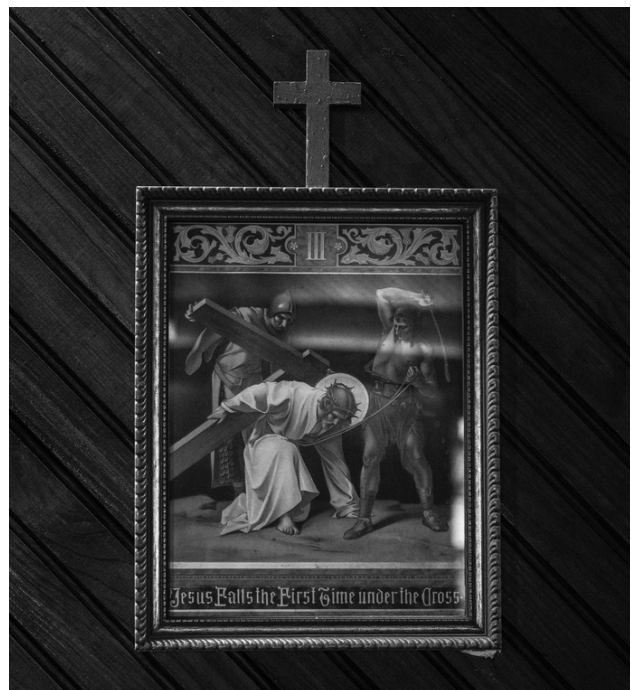
An Appeal from The Diocese of Springfield

Woodwork on communion rail, Fr. Parker Asplin

“*Turn now, O God of hosts, look down from heaven;
behold and tend this vine; *
preserve what your right hand has planted.*”

As I travel throughout our Diocese, I often offer words of thanksgiving for the great treasure of churches that have been left to us. Each in its own way is a brilliant diadem in the crown of our Diocese. Here is where we baptize our babies, catechize our youth, wed our sons and daughters, and where we bury our dead. To an Anglican of any stripe, our churches are sacramental statements. They stand out as invitations to come and be in the near presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

My prayer of thanksgiving often includes appreciation for how manageable these campuses are. Often seating only 50 to 75 communicants at a time, these gateways to Christ's Heavenly kingdom require our very best attention, but an attention that we are well-equipped to provide. We are not found to be maintaining many churches with six-ton HVAC systems, industrial grade kitchens, or multi-level education wings. More often than not, these are family-size churches where altars bear the weight of salvation history and beautiful front doors still communicate the invitation to “come and see.”



Printed and framed Station of The Cross, third station, Fr. Parker Asplin

A vertical stained glass window on the left side of the page. It depicts St. Joseph on the left, an older man with a white beard, wearing a blue robe over a yellow garment, holding a staff with white lilies. To his right is the Christ Child, a young boy with curly hair, wearing a white robe and holding a golden orb. The background of the window is dark with intricate patterns.

The Appeal

I ask that we come together in the combining of our spiritual, financial and human resources in interest of these immediate goals:

1. To resurrect one of our historic churches, placing a regional missionary (priest or deacon) in that place for a period of three years.
2. To establish a capital improvement fund for Diocesan churches to request matching grants in the interest of small to mid-level capital improvement needs.

With the support of Standing Committee, Finance Committee, and Diocesan Council, this Appeal is being extended with the target goal of raising \$500,000 from parishes, missions, communicants, and friends of this Diocese, to be gifted for the work that God in Christ is doing right here in Central and Southern Illinois. Meeting this goal will allow us to invest \$130,000 in the rehabilitation of St. James Memorial Chapel in Marion with an additional \$334,000 to support a missionary in that place for three years. The remaining (roughly) \$36,000 will be invested, allowing for a matching grant program to be established .

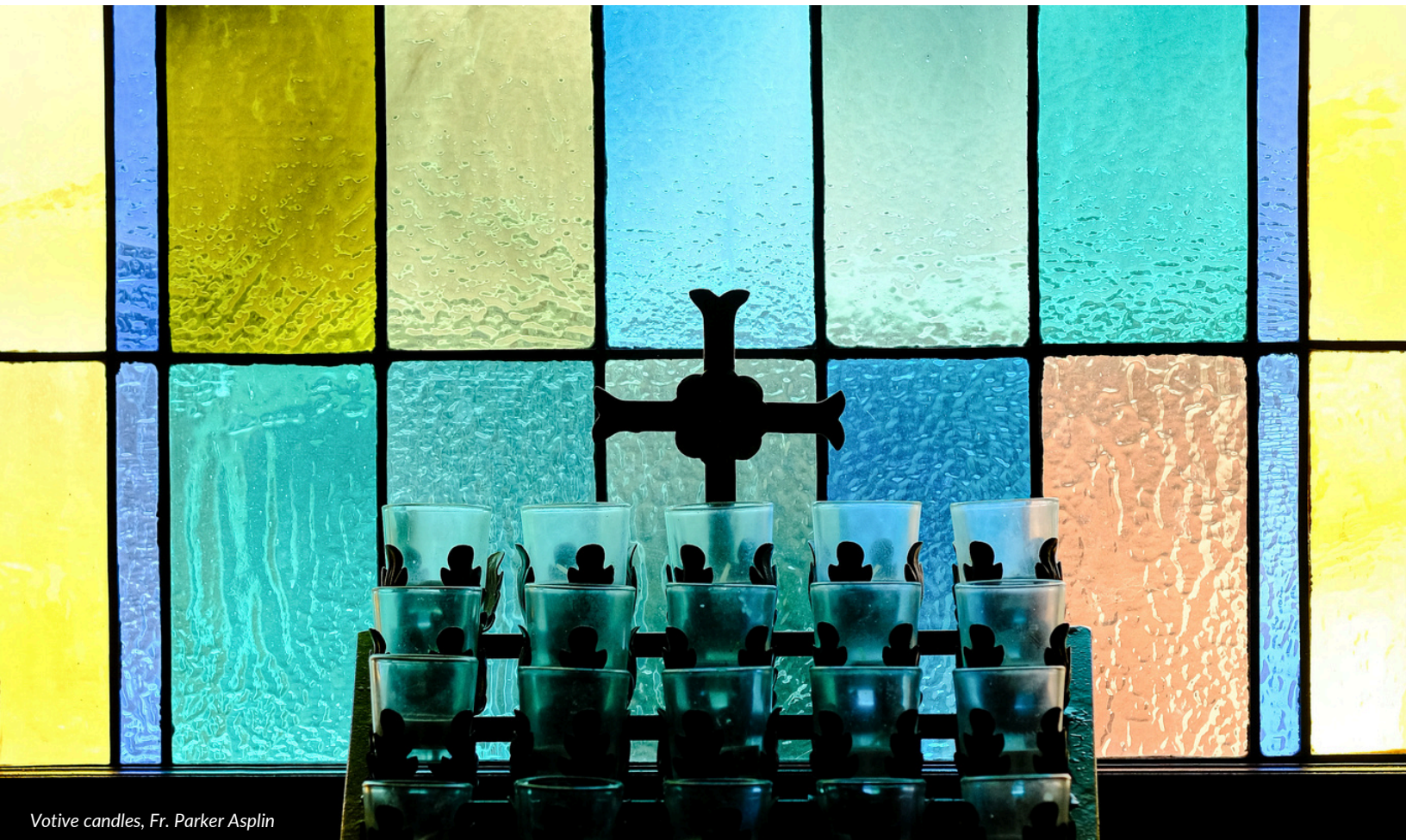
I receive regular requests from parishes and missions for financial assistance for repairs and maintenance concerns. The Diocese of Springfield does not have the designated funds for such requests. By reaching our target goal, we will be able to establish a capital improvement fund that invites not only requests from throughout our Diocese, but future gifts as well.

With Marion being identified as one of the five fastest growing counties in the State of Illinois today, a revitalized Episcopal Church and congregation would offer new life in Christ to those already investing much in community redevelopment. This is a community that has already been on an upward trajectory for many years. All of their downtown shops are filled with inviting commerce, and they are even ice-skating in the center of the town-square during Christmas.

Preliminary Plans

Preliminary plans call for the demolition of the two-bedroom vicarage to make off-street parking and a covered pavilion with restrooms available, general rehabilitation of the church's exterior, a focus on accessibility, refurbishing the floors in the small chapel, and improving the office/sacristy/bathroom wing that was added in the 1970s. We are also being given the opportunity to redesign the entrance to communicate outwardly the sanctity that resides within. Enhancing the presentation of the principal doors to a church is an act of evangelism as they communicate the continuous invitation to "come and see."

Estimates preceding a formal bid come in around \$130,000. The pictures that accompany this appeal demonstrate visually why our attention is needed in the face of holiness and hurt, cobwebs and crosses, benediction and brokenness. It is my intention to give sacramental and administrative oversight of this mission area to an industrious priest or deacon which would include a shared relationship with St. Stephen's in Harrisburg. I propose that we go all in for three years and see what an attitude of abundance can do in Marion and in Harrisburg.



Votive candles, Fr. Parker Asplin



Community Development in Progress

- Marion's new mayor is a business owner of great vision (Michael Absher of Watermark Autogroup and Software Development) and a "historian at heart."
- Major employers in the area include the school system, Deaconess Health Care, and Isen Car Manufacturing (door handles and other components for cars).
- The surrounding neighborhood on E. Thorn Street is a TIF District striving for redevelopment and greater curb appeal, matching up to \$5,000 for exterior improvements, and is within walking distance to the town square.
- People are moving to Marion in interest of increased property values, a reduction in crime, and the opportunity to live near but not in a college town.
- There is an increase in veterans moving in, with people coming from Kentucky to be closer to the VA Hospital (built in the 1940s), which is the only VA hospital in the entire region.



All photos: City of Marion, IL <https://cityofmarionil.gov/>

A Brief History of St. James Chapel

On December 15, 1923, a congregational meeting organized an Episcopal Church. Most of the interested people had recently moved to Marion, and there remained a few old families who had held to the Faith. On May 14, 1924, the Mission was admitted into union with the Synod of the Diocese and called "All Saints'." Services were held in homes, the Masonic Hall, and the Presbyterian Church. A storeroom was eventually rented, and fixed up with chairs, an altar, an old organ, and a coal stove. Services were held once a month by priests from surrounding communities.

Then a benefactor, Mrs. Charlotte Boardman of New York City (a friend of John Chanler White, fourth Bishop of Springfield), offered \$3,500 toward a Church edifice to be built in memory of her father in 1928. A lot was purchased by then-members, and a neat Church was consecrated by Bishop White on October 26, 1930. About the same time, the Synod gave its consent to rename the Mission "St. James' Memorial". Pews, an altar, a cross, chalice, paten, and other items were given to the Mission by Bishop White from churches no longer open, and a Parish Hall was built in 1940.



Front door of the parish church



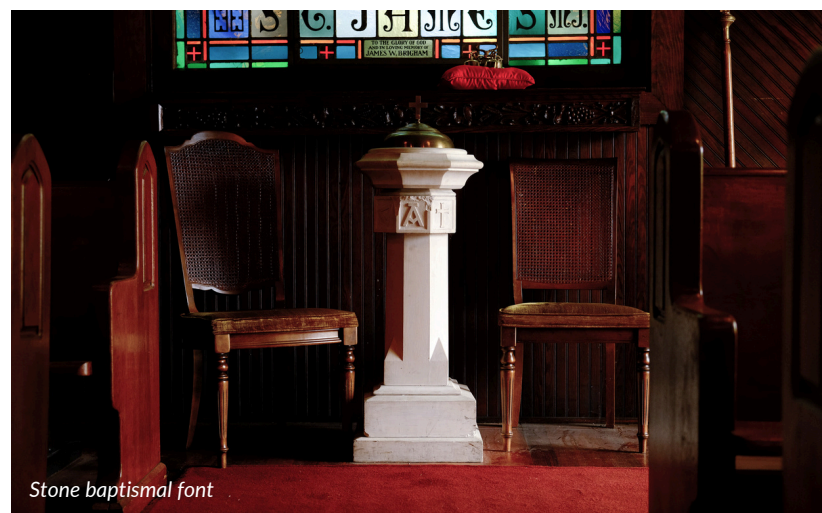
Church and adjoining sacristy/fellowship/office space



Hanging Presence candle and chair

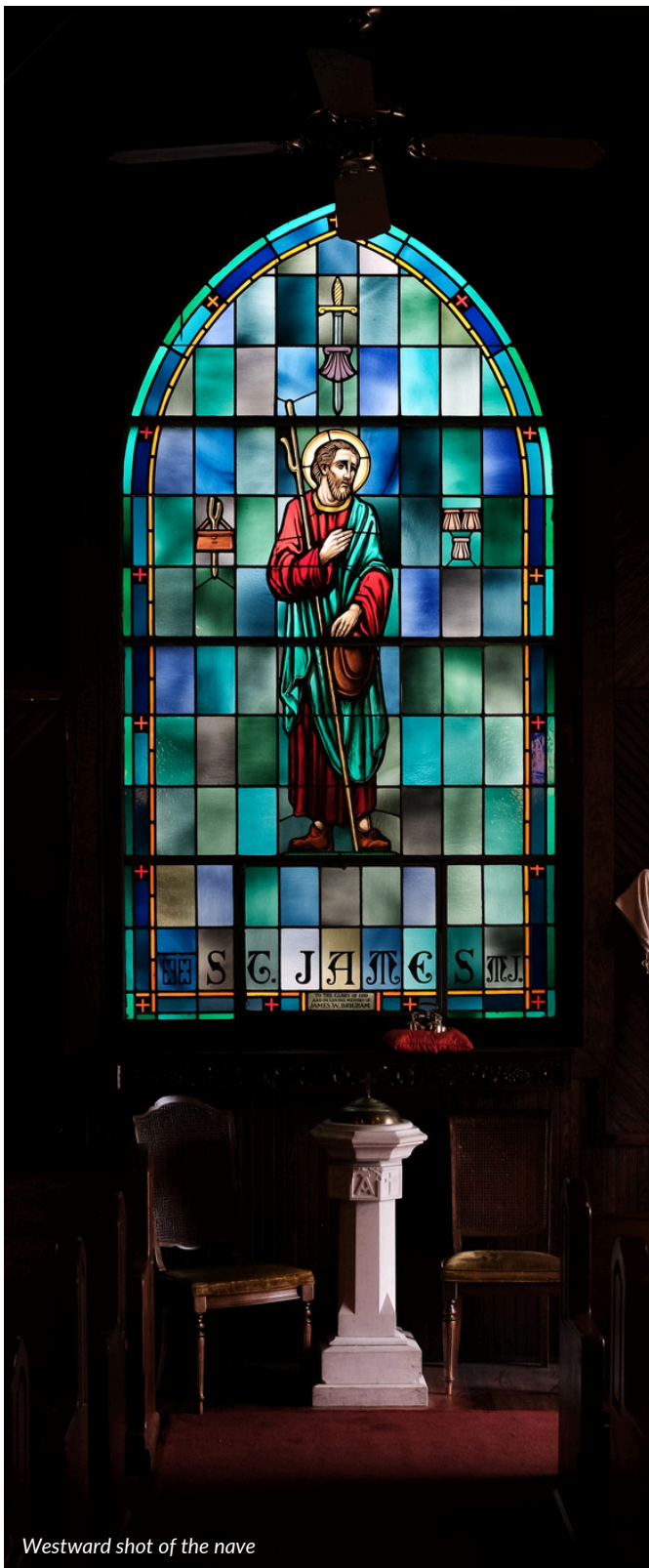


Tabernacle

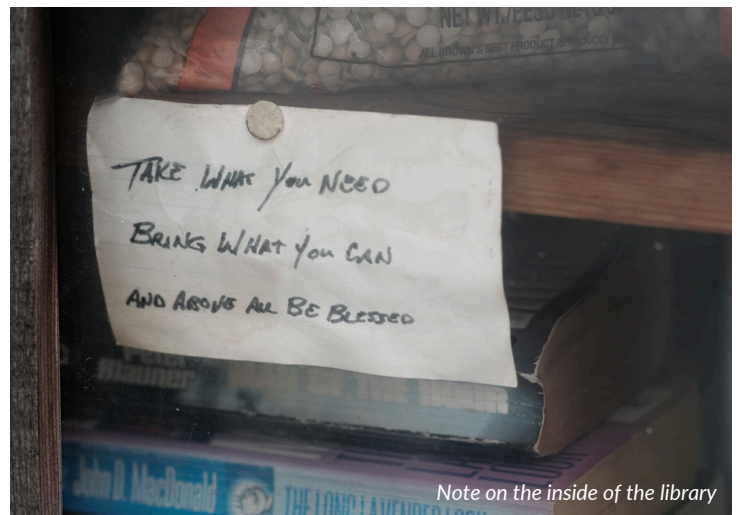


Stone baptismal font

All photos on page credited to Fr. Parker Asplin



Left: Lending Library on the accessibility ramp / Right: St. James banner in office



All photos on page credited to Fr. Parker Asplin

Front: Communion stack - St. James Chapel, Marion, IL - Fr. Parker Asplin
Back: Eastward shot of nave in St. James Chapel, Marion, IL - Fr. Parker Asplin

