



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE  
OF TENNESSEE

# PROFILE FOR THE TWELFTH BISHOP OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF TENNESSEE



Life Together



*An Easter egg hunt at Church of the Messiah, Pulaski*

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*On the cover: Procession at Christ Church Cathedral, Nashville*



# A Letter from the Search Committee

**T**he Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee has entered a sacred season—a time of waiting, listening, and discerning. With the upcoming departure of our bishop, the clergy and laity wait expectantly for another faithful and wise servant-leader. This process is more than an election, it is a spiritual journey, one in which we seek to discern the will of God and entrust ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In Matthew 24, Jesus asks His disciples, “Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom the Master will put in charge of his household to give his people their food at the proper time?” (Mt. 24:45). This Scripture has resonated with the Search Committee as we have navigated this search process. Jesus teaches us that leadership in the Church is not about status or ambition, but about faithfulness to the Apostolic message and keen discernment of how to nourish His people while He is away.

We may ask Jesus’ question in a more straightforward way. We ask: “Who then is the faithful and wise bishop whom Jesus will put in charge of His household to give His people their food at the proper time?”

This is the question the Search Committee has been mindful of during its search. We know the task is not simply to review résumés or conduct interviews, but to discern the heart of a faithful and wise shepherd—someone who is able to discern the various needs of the diocese and respond to each according to the particular need.

As the process has begun, many in the diocese have participated through listening sessions, surveys, and prayerful discernment. There is hopeful anticipation for the future of our life together, and a keen interest in maintaining our unity. Since the General Conventions of 2015 and 2018, The Episcopal Church has held two teachings on the sacrament of marriage; allowing for the use of same-sex marriage rites and protections for traditionalist clergy. A few parishes have made one or the other of these teachings central to their mission,



*Top to bottom: Celebration of the Rev. Olufunmilayo Fummi Odidi's first visit as supply priest at St. Bede's Church, Manchester; Soup kitchen at Church of the Redeemer, Shelbyville; Children gather at Church of the Holy Spirit, Nashville*



*Top to bottom: Children's Sunday at St. Paul's Church, Franklin; Chicken on the smoker at the Church of St. Joseph of Arimathea, Hendersonville; Community outreach at St. Mary Magdalene Church, Fayetteville*

while many parishes share life together in pastoral mindfulness of such differences. And overall, for the past twenty years, our diocese has exhibited a strong inclination to maintain communion across these differences.

We therefore seek a bishop rooted in the Faith, able to listen to the clergy and parishes of the diocese, acknowledging the local contexts of each, small and large, rural and urban, and to nourish them in patient wisdom. We are convinced that the Church's strength is not in reflecting the world in which she lives, but in being the One Body of Jesus Christ.

The day of the election of the Twelfth Bishop of Tennessee will arrive with solemn joy. And when the new bishop is chosen, we will rejoice—not because the waiting is over, but because the journey continues. St. Matthew's words will still guide us: "Blessed is that servant whom the Master will find at work when He arrives" (Mt. 24:46). In this season, may we remain open and awake as we pray for those discerning the call to be a bishop, as we pray for those candidates who are able to exercise discernment, especially as they prepare to offer themselves to this process, and as we pray for the one whom God will call.

May we also be found to be faithful and wise, attracting like by like, ready to follow our Savior, Jesus Christ, wherever He leads.

Faithfully in Christ,

The Rev'd Jacob Bottom and Monica Fawknorton  
Bishop Search Committee Co-Chairs  
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee



*Easter Sunrise Service at St. Agnes' Mission, Cowan*

## Who We Are as a Diocese

**O**ver the past several months, the bishop search committee has engaged in a diocesan-wide survey and a series of listening sessions to better understand the experiences and concerns of our clergy and laity. These efforts were designed to create space for honest reflection and faithful listening as we discern God's call for our next bishop.

The results summarized in these reports reflect the voices of those who participated, offering both affirmation of the diocese's strengths and insight into areas where growth and renewed focus are needed. Taken together, the survey responses and listening sessions provide a valuable snapshot of where we are as a diocesan community at this moment in time, and they will help inform prayerful decision-making and priorities in the seasons ahead.

### A Reflection upon the Diocesan Survey

The participation rate for our Holy Cow! survey was described as "incredible" by the consultant. Well over 1,000 surveys were tabulated, with participation by people from 95% of our congregations. The distribution of survey responses mirrors the distribution of congregations as measured by average Sunday attendance (ASA) categories.

The survey confirms healing of the divisions present in the diocese in the early 2000s and that has led to a demonstrable degree of collegiality and unity among our active clergy and diocesan leadership.

Our churches have enjoyed a degree of autonomy to address the needs and concerns of their respective

congregations. One challenge is that while parishioners are more connected to their own congregations, they tend to be less aware of the work of the diocese.

Our diocese does not buck the national trend of an older membership, but the majority of those surveyed reported their congregation is experiencing either steadiness or growth in membership. Some congregations are receiving new members with a hunger for the sacred who have no experience with a liturgical church.

Those surveyed are in agreement that our diocese has stayed close to the established way of doing things and have identified a need for change to make significant progress toward the vision for the diocese.



# Summary of Diocesan Survey Results

## Energy–Satisfaction Snapshot

The Energy–Satisfaction level reveals a mixed but overall encouraging picture across The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee. Diocesan leadership and clergy leadership report both high energy and high satisfaction, suggesting a strong sense of purpose, commitment, and engagement in their shared work. These groups appear generally aligned with the diocese’s current direction and feel supported in their leadership roles and ministries.

Lay leaders, by contrast, report high energy paired with lower satisfaction, indicating enthusiasm and willingness to engage alongside a desire for greater clarity and direction. This pattern suggests that while lay leaders remain deeply invested in the life of their congregations and the broader diocese, many are seeking clearer pathways, communication, and guidance to help translate that energy into sustained and effective ministry.

Taken together, these findings perhaps point to an opportunity for the diocese to strengthen formation, communication, and leadership development, particularly in ways that help clergy and diocesan leaders more clearly equip and guide lay leadership. Addressing this gap has the potential to deepen satisfaction while harnessing the strong energy already present throughout the diocese.



*Children gather to hear about the baptismal covenant at St. Mark & St. Paul, Sewanee*



*Thanksgiving Food Boxes for Families in Need, St. Michael’s, Cookeville*

## Drivers of Success

A key insight emerging from the survey is a widespread desire for the diocese to grow in its ability to recognize broader societal trends and adapt ministry strategies accordingly. Many respondents see cultural awareness, responsiveness, and innovation as essential for future vitality. This includes:

- Strengthening the diocese’s capacity to read social, demographic, and cultural shifts
- Equipping churches to engage more effectively with these changes
- Developing adaptive leadership practices that keep congregations connected to the world around them

This suggests a firm anchoring in our tradition in order to be creative in adaptation.



## ***Future Priorities: What We Heard***

Across the diocese, survey respondents and listening-session participants consistently named areas where additional energy, clarity, and support are needed. Two priorities rose to the top. These themes emerged repeatedly in respondents' own words, reflecting both shared hopes and honest concern for the future health of our congregations.

### **Congregational Leadership**

Many of the respondents expressed a desire for our next bishop to take a more active and visible leadership role, particularly in continuing to support congregations that are struggling or in transition. This included calls for more direct engagement, coaching, strategic planning support, and clearer guidance during times of change. Respondents emphasized that such leadership would help build trust, provide stability, and ensure congregations do not feel isolated during difficult seasons.

### **Congregational Growth**

There was also a strong call for the diocese to equip clergy and laity with effective strategies for reaching new parishioners. Respondents frequently named the need for practical training, shared tools, and accessible best practices to support growth in mission, outreach, and community presence. Many expressed hope that the diocese could play a more active role in helping congregations adapt to changing contexts while remaining grounded in their core identity.

Together, these priorities reflect a diocesan community that is seeking both stability and expansion—strengthening the health of existing congregations while also learning new ways to invite, welcome, and engage others.



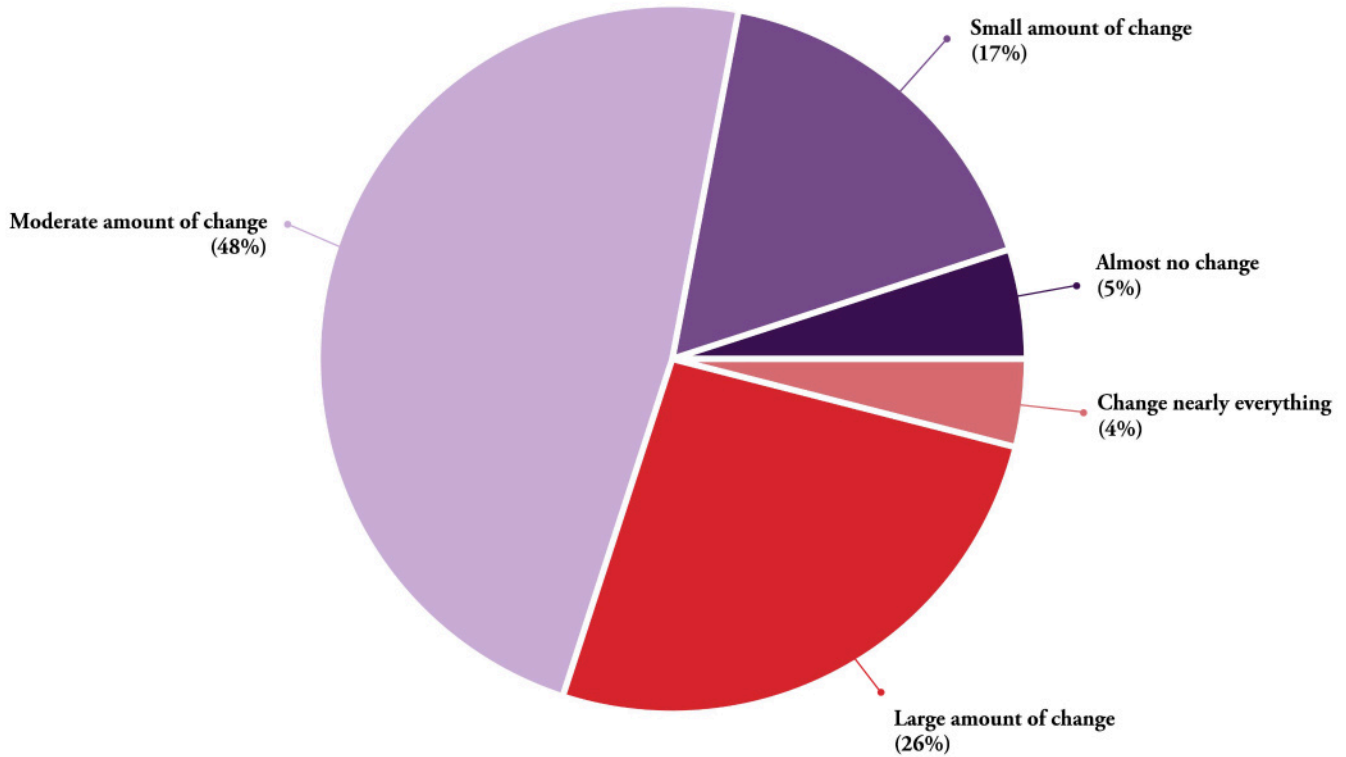
*Gospel procession from the liturgy at Grace Chapel, Clarksville*



*Food and fellowship at Church of the Epiphany, Lebanon*



Q: In order to make significant progress toward your vision for our diocese, how much change will be required?



## Comparisons to Other Dioceses: Where We See Differences

When respondents compared our diocese to similar dioceses, two notable areas of difference emerged. These observations were not framed as criticism, but as opportunities for growth.

### Awareness

Respondents perceived a need for greater awareness of the diocese’s mission, resources, and accomplishments. Many indicated that improved communication and visibility would help members better understand the diocese’s ongoing work and impact, and foster a stronger sense of shared purpose.

### Flexibility

Respondents also noted that the diocese is often experienced as closely tied to established ways of doing things. While there is deep appreciation for tradition and structure, this feedback reflects a desire for greater openness to new practices and adaptive approaches that respond to current realities.



## *Economic Diversity and Shared Mission*

We seek to serve Christ in others, meeting the needs of those around us, and caring for those who often have no voice. Members of our diocese can regularly be found feeding our neighbors, providing a night of warm shelter for the unhoused, helping the refugee/immigrant, and serving the downtrodden. Our diocese includes members from all walks of life—those with abundant resources and those facing financial challenges. We believe that every person has a place in the Church. Through outreach programs, food ministries, and educational initiatives, we work together to ensure that no one is left behind. Generosity and compassion flow freely, reminding us that true wealth lies in community and faith.



*Pentecost picnic at All Saints Episcopal Church, Smyrna*

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## *Additional Areas Lifted Up by the Diocese*

In addition to these core themes, respondents named several other areas they believe the diocese should continue to consider in its ministries and work. These included:

- Outreach and collaboration with other denominations
- Support for smaller churches
- Meaningful and sustainable youth ministries

These priorities further underscore the diversity of voices within the diocese and the shared hope that our common life can reflect both compassion and courage.



*A baptism at Church of the Good Shepherd, Brentwood*

Today, the Diocese includes over 16,000 baptized members in 43 cathedral, parish, mission, and chaplaincy churches, as well as two mission stations and other affiliated ministries.



*A blessing at St. Bartholomew's Church, Nashville*

# Our Common Life in Christ

*A portrait of our identity, faith, and practice*

**T**he Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee stands as a vibrant testimony to the beauty of the differences and similarities of God's people. Rooted in the Gospel's call to love and serve all people, our diocese embraces individuals from every race, region, and financial background, creating a community that reflects the richness of God's creation.

## ***The Many Facets of Cultures and Traditions***

Our parishes are home to people of varied racial and ethnic identities, each bringing unique perspectives and gifts. Our differences strengthen our worship, enrich our ministries, and remind us that the Body of Christ is not uniform but wonderfully varied. Through liturgy

and shared fellowship, we celebrate the cultures that shape our common life together.

## ***Unity Across Regions***

From bustling urban centers, to lively suburbs, to quiet rural communities, the diocese spans a wide geographic area. Each parish contributes its own character and style, yet we remain united in the mission of Christ to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth as we exist to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. This shared purpose is rooted in the Baptismal Covenant and expressed through worship, ministry, and service. These regional differences allow us to learn from one another, bridging differences and fostering mutual understanding.

“ The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. ”

*—The Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer, p. 855*



*Clockwise starting from the top left: St. Peter's Church, Columbia; St. Michael's Church, Cookeville, Church of Our Saviour, Gallatin; Christ Church Cathedral, Nashville; Church of the Holy Trinity, Nashville; Church of the Holy Cross, Murfreesboro; Community of St. Mary, Sewanee; St. James' Church, Sewanee*

## Unity Across a Wide Theological Breadth

The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee reflects the broader Episcopal Church's wide theological breadth—from evangelical-minded to progressive congregations. Unity—in particular enabling multiple theological perspectives—is to coexist in a spirit of mutual forbearance, charity, and continuity in the mission of Christ's church.

The diocese has sought a moderate position on stances of ethics and sexuality, seeking a balanced leadership, working to foster "communion across difference" and through this, we have seen unity across the diocese, working to avoid polarization. Mutual support and unity continues to be the path forward for the diocese as we seek to recognize differing beliefs

about marriage under the Episcopal Church's canons.

The diocese aligns with broader Episcopal Church policies that acknowledge two understandings of marriage and fully include LGBTQ+ persons in sacraments and leadership, supporting ordination and full ministerial participation regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. The diocese embraces a model articulated in General Convention resolutions (A091 & A092, 2024), affirming respect for differing views on marriage within the same canonical framework. This approach encourages unity amid theological plurality, ensuring access to leadership and ministry and empowering each parish to discern what is right for their own context and mission.



## ***Living Out our Baptismal Covenant***

We look for a Bishop who will be able to come alongside parishes with a discerning mind, to help them thrive in their local contexts. The focus of the diocese seeks to reflect multiple theological perspectives and to coexist in a spirit of mutual forbearance and unity. Much of life in middle Tennessee is defined by rapid growth, evolving communities, and a strong sense of place. Middle Tennessee unfolds with striking beauty, from rolling hills and rivers to vibrant cities shaped by history and place.

Its colleges and universities—anchored by institutions like Vanderbilt, the University of the South at Sewanee, and Middle Tennessee State University—fuel intellectual life and form leaders rooted in both scholarship and service. Within this landscape, the diocese seeks a bishop who will envision new church plants that respond faithfully to spiritual growth and community needs. Furthermore, the region’s creative soul thrives in music, art, and innovation—propelling middle Tennessee to rank among the fastest-growing areas in the nation. That growth, however, reveals stark contrasts, with Williamson County recognized as Tennessee’s wealthiest and Grundy County remaining its poorest, underscoring both opportunity and calling.

As the region attracts new residents and industries, it faces challenges around infrastructure and affordability. Middle Tennessee is an exciting place to live—the region reflects booming Nashville skylines alongside rural farmland, thriving tech and healthcare industries contrasted with infrastructure strain, and luxury developments rising amid ongoing challenges with housing affordability and economic inequality.

*Top: After the Listening Session with the Sudanese community at St. Bartholomew’s Church, Nashville; The peace is exchanged after baptisms at St. David’s, Nashville. Bottom: Baptism at St. Barnabas’ Church, Tullahoma; Fellowship at St. Paul’s Church, Murfreesboro; St. Matthew’s Church, McMinnville, at the Barren Fork River Cleanup*





# The Mission We Share

## Youth Ministry

**I**n The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee, youth ministry is an essential part of how our congregations walk alongside young people as they grow in faith. Across the diocese, parishes vary widely in size and resources. Some have established youth programs; others rely on a handful of committed volunteers or parents who step in when they can. Despite these differences, the shared goal remains steady: to offer young people a place where they feel known, valued, and connected to the life of the church.

Clergy, mentors, Sunday school teachers, and parents try to work together—often balancing tight schedules and limited time—to provide meaningful opportunities for youth to worship, learn, and serve. Many young people take part as acolytes, help with parish events, or join local outreach efforts. Youth ministers and volunteers do their best to create spaces where teenagers can ask honest questions, build relationships, and explore Scripture, whether through retreats, Bible studies, or simple gatherings that fit within the realities of busy families and small teams.

While not every parish has youth in their congregation, those who do may not be able to offer every kind of program. Congregations are encouraged to collaborate so youth can participate in diocesan-wide events and mission experiences. These include short-term service efforts throughout Tennessee, as well as occasional mission trips in other parts of the U.S. and abroad. These shared experiences help young people understand how faith meets the needs of their communities and the wider world.



*In the heart of Vanderbilt's campus, St. Augustine's Chapel provides community and space for students to gather.*



### SERVICE & OUTREACH

Youth across the diocese participate in practical service projects, from food pantries and neighborhood cleanups to diocesan initiatives that rely on volunteer coordination.

Even small projects offer real opportunities for young people to learn empathy, responsibility, and what it means to live out their baptismal promises in achievable, hands-on ways.

*Above: Youth at St. George's, Nashville, serve at Church in the Yard  
At right: A musical moment at the Episcopal School of Nashville*



### LIFELONG CONNECTIONS & DISCIPLESHIP

- Camps, retreats, Bible studies, and diocesan gatherings give youth the chance to form lasting friendships and build relationships with adult mentors who accompany them through both everyday life and more difficult seasons.
- Many adults—including some clergy—point to time spent in youth groups, mission trips, or summer camp as moments when they first experienced Christian community deeply or began discerning a call to ministry or service.



## Models of Collaborative Ministry Within the Diocese

### *Room in the Inn*

The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee has a long-standing and deeply rooted relationship with Room in the Inn (RITI), a Nashville-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing homelessness through hospitality, shelter, education, and community support. While Room in the Inn operates independently, Episcopal congregations across the diocese have been among its most consistent and active partners for decades. Numerous churches within the diocese actively participate in Room in the Inn’s Winter Shelter Program, hosting guests overnight, providing meals, transportation, and fellowship during the coldest months of the year. These efforts place diocesan churches at the heart of a city-wide collaboration involving nearly 100 congregations across middle Tennessee. While the diocese does not centrally operate Room in the Inn, it actively encourages and supports congregational engagement as an expression of faith in action, particularly in ministries serving people who are unhoused or otherwise marginalized. Room in the Inn itself provides structured congregational support, including training, coordination, and logistical assistance for churches participating in shelter, meal, and outreach programs—further strengthening the partnership between diocesan congregations and the nonprofit.



*Volunteers serve and socialize at Room in the Inn, Nashville  
(Photo: Room in the Inn)*

### *St. Luke’s Community House*



*Ministry in action at St. Luke’s Community House*

St. Luke’s Community House is one of the most enduring expressions of the diocese’s commitment to serving the most vulnerable neighbors in middle Tennessee. Founded in 1913 by The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee, St. Luke’s represents more than a century of faith-based engagement in community-centered ministry. St. Luke’s Community House was established as a diocesan initiative in West Nashville to respond to the growing needs of families, children, and seniors affected by poverty and limited access to basic resources. Although it now operates as an independent nonprofit organization, its identity and mission remain deeply rooted in values of dignity, hospitality, and

partnership. The diocese continues to recognize St. Luke’s Community House as a key affiliated ministry, listing it among its core institutional relationships and partner organizations.



## Thistle Farms



*A moment of laughter at Thistle Farms (Photo: Laura Schneider)*

Thistle Farms is a nationally recognized ministry and stands as a powerful expression of the diocese’s long-standing commitment to healing and restoration. Founded in 1997 by the Rev. Becca Stevens, an Episcopal priest, Thistle Farms began as a small residential program in Nashville and has grown into an internationally respected model for survivor-centered healing and social enterprise. Thistle Farms originated as Magdalene, a two-year residential community offering free housing and support to women survivors of trafficking, prostitution, and addiction.

The ministry was founded while the Rev. Stevens served as chaplain at St. Augustine’s Chapel in Nashville, and it was nurtured through the support of Episcopal congregations and individuals within the diocese. Although Thistle Farms now operates as an independent nonprofit organization with a global reach, its theological foundation and ethos remain deeply shaped by Episcopal tradition—particularly its emphasis on dignity, radical hospitality, and the belief that love heals.

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## The School of Theology at Sewanee

The School of Theology at Sewanee (The University of the South) is a central institution in the life of The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee and a foundational resource for the formation of clergy and lay leaders across the Church. Located in Sewanee, Tennessee, the School of Theology is a residential seminary of the Episcopal Church, committed to forming leaders who are devout, learned, and useful for the Church and the world. The diocese is one of the owning and governing dioceses of the University of the South, which was founded in the mid-19th century by Episcopal bishops to establish a theological and educational center for the region. The School of Theology operates as an integral part of the University and is governed by the collective stewardship of more than two dozen Episcopal dioceses, including Tennessee. This relationship reflects not merely historical affiliation, but an ongoing commitment by the diocese to support the education and formation of future leaders for ordained and lay ministry.



*Graduates of the School of Theology*



## Formation and Education within the Diocese

Formation ministries nurture faith, leadership, and discipleship across The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee. Our educational opportunities in middle Tennessee offer children and adults spiritual growth and leadership skills for lifelong faith formation and meaningful engagement in community life.

### *Episcopal School of Nashville*

The Episcopal School of Nashville is an independent, faith-rooted day school serving children in a nurturing environment. Grounded in the Episcopal tradition, the school emphasizes academic excellence, character development, service, and lifelong learning, encouraging curiosity, compassion, and confidence in every student through meaningful relationships and teaching.



### *St. Andrew's-Sewanee School*

St. Andrew's-Sewanee School is a coeducational, independent boarding and day school in Tennessee serving grades six through twelve. Rooted in the Episcopal tradition, the school emphasizes academic rigor, character, community, and outdoor education, preparing students for college, leadership, and thoughtful global citizenship within a residential learning environment.

### *The Community of St. Mary's Southern Province*

St. Mary's at Sewanee is an Episcopal community dedicated to prayer, hospitality, and service. The community supports reflection, worship, and spiritual formation, welcoming students and visitors seeking growth, discernment, and deeper connection within a faith-centered environment. The Bishop acts as the Episcopal Visitor to the Community of St. Mary.



### *St. Mary's Sewanee: Ayres Center for Spiritual Development*

St. Mary's Sewanee is dedicated to providing spiritual hospitality to persons of diverse religious and spiritual backgrounds through retreats, renewal, and learning. This independent organization grew out of The Community of St. Mary's but is no longer affiliated with the Community. The Bishop serves on the Board of St. Mary's Sewanee.

*Top to bottom: A parent and child enter the Episcopal School of Nashville; a studious moment at St. Andrew's-Sewanee School; spiritual direction at The Community of St. Mary's Southern Province*



*A moment of joy at St. Anselm's Church, Nashville, a mission church with a rich history from the Civil Rights Era*

## ***Beloved Community: Commission for Racial Reconciliation***

The Beloved Community Commission was established by the Bishop of Tennessee as a Task Force in the summer of 2016 and became a Commission late in the inaugural year of 2017. A professionally facilitated discernment process was conducted in 2017 through which the following mission statement was developed:

“To live out our Baptismal covenant; to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves and to strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being.”

To this end, the commission strives to:

- Work toward full inclusivity, both racially and ethnically, of the staff of the diocese, elected lay and clergy leaders, clergy and bishops
- Take the necessary steps in the healing of the wounds of our Church, its members, and our communities
- Educate members about the effects of racism on people of color and white people and to convey the understanding that racism hurts everyone



## The Dandridge Trust

The Dandridge Trust is the main outreach of the diocese. This fund supports seniors and those in need, facilitates accessibility, and funds general outreach programs for nonprofit organizations within the boundaries of The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee. Since its founding in 1986, the Dandridge Trust has made grants totaling in excess of \$3.4 million. The Trust has a long and interesting history in the diocese. It continues its good work of balancing annual funding with preservation of an asset which will continue into the future.

### *Grant Spotlight: Insight Counseling Center*



The Dandridge Trust is pleased to support the not-for-profit Insight Counseling Center for 2025. Funds provided through the grant will be directed to the Older Adult Care Program, which focuses on the unique needs of those sixty years of age and older. Since its founding in 1985 at Vine Street Christian Church, Insight has steadily grown and now provides individual,

couple, and family counseling across ten locations throughout middle Tennessee.

The need for these services is in high demand. Adults aged 65 and older are the fastest growing demographic in Tennessee and are projected to represent nearly one quarter of the state’s population by 2030. While there are many things to celebrate in later life such as marriages and grandchildren, many seniors encounter very real mental health challenges such as depression, grief after the death of loved ones, caregiver burden, chronic pain, financial stress, retirement adjustment, and relocation.

Thankfully, many of these issues are treatable with timely and accessible care. Unfortunately, barriers such as stigma, cost, and rural isolation often prevent older adults from seeking support. Recognizing this, Insight opened counseling offices in 2023 within the Ashland City Senior Center and the St. Clair Senior Center in Murfreesboro, bringing care directly into trusted community spaces. The Dandridge Trust will expand this vital work by subsidizing individual counseling, group therapy sessions, workshops, and webinars—ensuring that older Tennesseans have compassionate, professional support when they need it most.

### *Grant Spotlight: East Nashville Hope Exchange*

The East Nashville Hope Exchange (ENHE) was started by St. Ann’s Episcopal Church in 2004 as a summer youth literacy outreach program for underprivileged children and became an independent nonprofit in 2010. They continue in their mission to affirm

the right to read for all by building relationships with children, caregivers, teachers, and the community, delivering high-quality programming, and championing a life of success for each child.

ENHE held their 21st summer program in 2025



and continues their year-round program which provides monthly workshops aimed at training families to support their children's learning. The summer program consistently demonstrates excellent results with 94% of the 66 students who enrolled in 2024 maintaining or exceeding their reading level during the six-week program.

Due to generous donors, each child took home a book each day to build their at-home libraries resulting in each child having 23 new books when they start school in the fall.



## *Grant Spotlight: Barnabas Vision*



Barnabas Vision is unique in its service to the community through its efforts to prevent homelessness, which is much more cost efficient and less disruptive than combatting homelessness once a person loses shelter.

The program provides emergency financial assistance to qualified applicants who experience inability to pay

certain basic housing costs due to short-term interruption of income or wages. The specific financial assistance funded through a Dandridge Grant allocation in 2024 is in the form of rent assistance averaging \$280.00 to 125 Barnabas clients, and an average of \$200.00 in utility assistance to approximately 150 clients.

Due to the steep rise in housing costs and decrease of affordable housing, the population at risk for need from Barnabas Vision has increased by almost 70% since 2019. Support for those in perpetual homelessness is 150% higher than the cost of assistance from Barnabas Vision that allows people to remain in their homes.

By offering emergency financial assistance to those unable to pay their rent or utility bills due to a temporary income shortage, Barnabas Vision protects neighbors in the community from the threat of eviction and the instability that comes with it. The efforts of Barnabas Vision are contributing to great results:

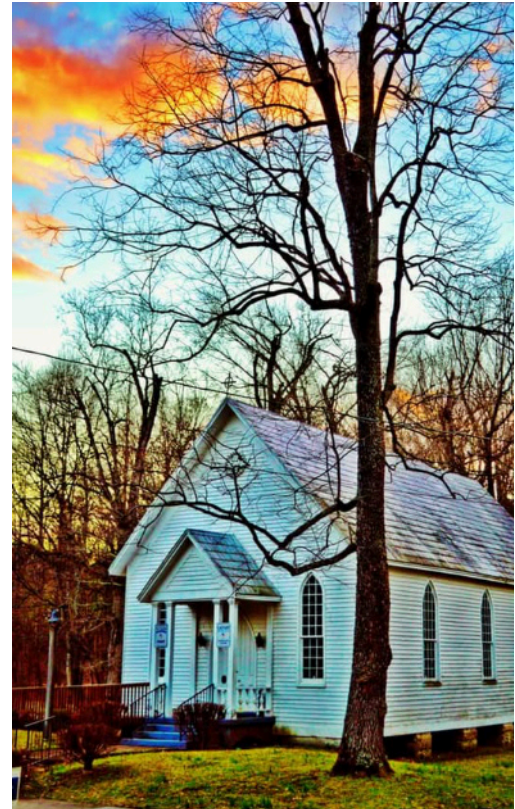
- Between 2019 and 2023, Tennessee's homeless population increased 23% and the unsheltered homeless population increased by 74%.
- Between 2019 and 2023, in Murfreesboro and Rutherford County, the community served by Barnabas Vision, the total homeless population dropped by 12%, and the unsheltered homeless population dropped by 4%.



# Financial & Administrative

**T**he Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee demonstrates strong financial stewardship and transparency through annual audited reports and detailed budget presentations, publicly available on [edtn.org](http://edtn.org). These documents provide a comprehensive view of revenue streams, expenditure priorities, and the diocese's commitment to supporting clergy, congregations, and mission initiatives. Financials detail parish assessments, investment income, and expenses for operations, clergy benefits (including minimum pay/housing), and mission/outreach, funded by member contributions and endowment assets, with specific documents including the annual Audit and budget presentations outlining revenue streams (commitments, endowments) and expenditure areas (office, clergy, development). Funding is primarily from parish contributions, assessments based on income and investment/endowment earnings.

Reporting is based on audited financial statements such as the 2024 report and annual budgets (e.g., 2025, 2026) are available for review upon request. Parish assessments pay a percentage of their income to support diocesan operations and priest benefits (medical, pension, etc.). The budget includes diocesan general, office, clergy support, congregational development, youth ministries, and outreach.



*Above: Calvary Church, Cumberland Furnace  
(Credit: Willie Speight, Charlotte, TN)  
Below: Conversation at the Dec. 2025 listening session at Church of the Epiphany, Lebanon*





## Geography

- Region: Middle Tennessee (41 counties)
- Area: ~17,000 square miles
- Major Cities: Nashville, Franklin, Columbia, Clarksville, Murfreesboro

## Congregations

- Number of Congregations: 43 cathedral, parish, mission, and chaplaincy churches, as well as two mission stations and other affiliated ministries.
- Historic Churches: Includes Christ Church Cathedral (Nashville), St. Paul's (Franklin), Trinity (Clarksville)

## Clergy

- Bishop: Serves as chief pastor and overseer of diocesan ministries

## Laity

- Membership: 16,000+ baptized members
- The average Sunday attendance is 4,298, according to General Convention's 2024 Parochial Report Summary by Province and Diocese.

## Demographics

- Age Distribution: Predominantly adult membership, with growing family and youth ministries
- Urban ministries—particularly in cities like Nashville—tend to be more concentrated and diverse, while rural parishes often maintain longstanding, traditional community ties.

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*A moment of contemplation at St. Philip's Church, Nashville*

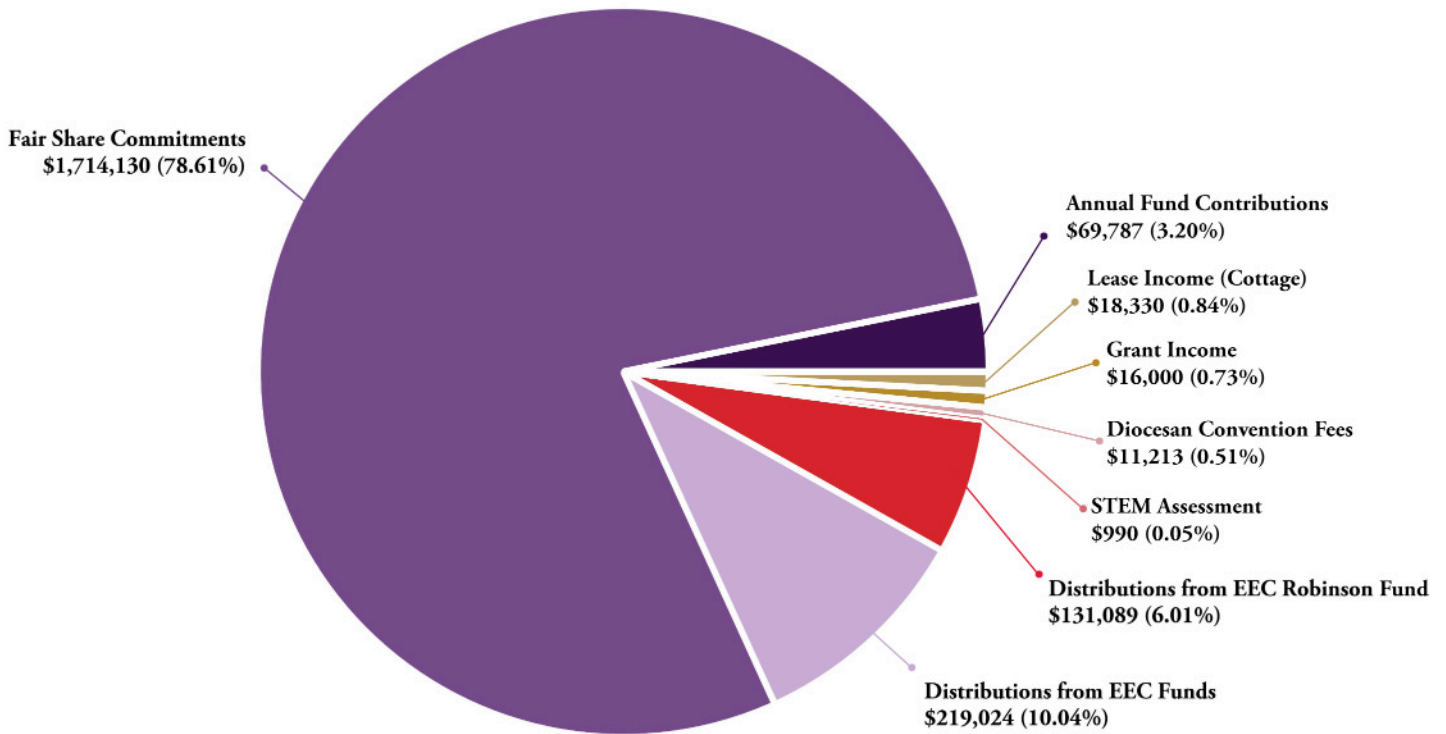


Figure 1: Diocesan Revenue

## Revenue



Volunteers prepare gifts for a Christmas toy drive at Christ Church, Tracy City

Fair Share Commitments are the primary source of income for the diocese. The “Ask” of congregations is equal to 10% of their operating income, calculated on a three year average.

Funds held at the Episcopal Endowment Corporation (EEC)<sup>1</sup> generate quarterly distributions, which is represented in the investment income. Lease income represents rent from the cottage located on the property of the Diocesan House. The income is transferred to the EEC annually.

<sup>1</sup> The Episcopal Endowment Corporation was created by a gift from Mrs. Delia Baxter Robinson of Nashville upon her death on June 15, 1932. It paved the way for the dioceses of Tennessee and East Tennessee as well as many congregations to invest and hold long term funds. The EEC ended 2023 with a market value of \$52.5 million. The Fund’s performance continues to be a most attractive long term investment vehicle for both dioceses and their individual congregations. The EEC Board voted to continue the 4% spending rate into 2025. The amount available for distribution is based on the average of the previous three years year-end market value.

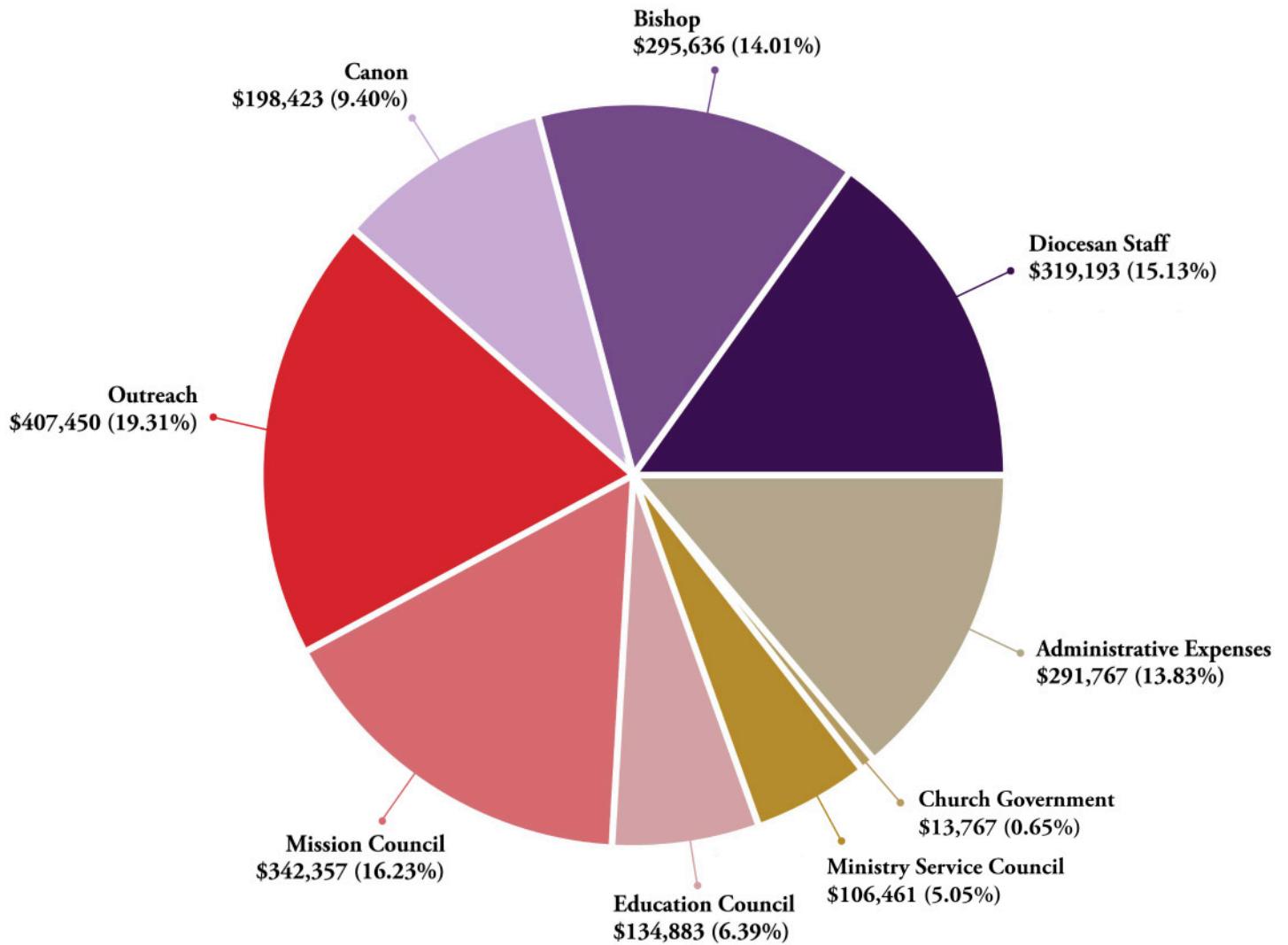


Figure 2: Diocesan Expenses

## Expenses

### Compensation and Benefits

Figures include compensation for the Bishop, Canon to the Ordinary, Finance Administrator, Diocesan Administrator and Administrative Assistant. Canon for Ministry and Archdeacon (½ year) are also shown

above. Clergy pension is calculated at 18%, lay is 9%. Medical premiums increased an average of 10% across plans. A 2.5% cost of living adjustment is reflected in the figures for 2025.



*Second Harvest delivers to the Body & Soul Food Pantry at Church of the Advent, Nashville*

## **Outreach Expenses**

Overseas Evangelism and Mid Cumberland Mountain Ministry (MCOMM) are diocesan outreach programs. MCOMM is no longer lending low interest housing loans, but does employ a bookkeeper for outstanding loans. The other line items reflect outreach entities related to the diocese.

The Dandridge Trust is a part of Diocesan outreach. In 2025 The Dandridge Trust will provide \$106,000 of outreach support. These figures are not recorded as part of the diocesan operating budget. The National Church Pledge shown is 15% of the 2023 diocesan income, after deducting a \$200,000 exemption.

## **Education Council**

Higher Education items include support for college campus ministry for St. Augustine's, as well as at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, to include: Fisk, Meharry, and Tennessee State University through St. Anselm's Church, Nashville. Youth support includes funds for

youth programming for diocesan youth. Funds for a staff youth position has also been included.

## **Ministry/Service Council**

Aid to Seminarians includes scholarships and fees for the GOE exam. Curacy Program includes funds to support Church of the Messiah in Pulaski as well as the potential placement of a new curate in 2025. Ministry Leadership and Management (MLM) provides formation for clergy in transition. The Vocational Diaconate line items reflects programming expenses for Deacon School and conference fees for the Archdeacon.

## **Administrative Expenses**

Administrative expenses including continuing education, travel, for the Bishop, Canon to the Ordinary, and Diocesan Staff. The printing of Faithful and Focused material is also included. Professional fees and services are for audit preparation by Blankenship CPA group, and contracted accounting services with Crosslin.

# Challenges and Opportunities on the Path Ahead



*Above: Procession, Church of the Resurrection, Franklin  
At bottom: Flowering the cross at Grace Church, Spring Hill*

In recent years, The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee has largely experienced unity, stability, and steady leadership through theological disagreements, financial pressures, and the pandemic. Many in our diocese value episcopal leadership with a moderate tone, pastoral care, and tradition, alongside growth in outreach, diaconal ministry, and formation. At the same time, it became clear during our listening sessions that our convictions on human sexuality and gender differ greatly, that different cultural contexts exist within our one diocese, and that the perspectives and needs of small and large parishes differ.

The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee emphasizes three core priorities:

## UNITY

Maintaining cohesion and harmony within the diocese, across diverse theological and social perspectives.

## DISCIPLESHIP

Fostering spiritual growth, formation, and commitment to following Christ.

## EVANGELISM

Actively sharing the Gospel and engaging with communities beyond the church walls.



- **Deepening Discipleship:** Formation and mutual support.
- **Authentic Interaction:** Embrace the effective use of communication and connection.
- **Unity & Fidelity to Tradition:** Collegiality among clergy; support for small parishes; steady, non-divisive leadership; commitment to creeds and liturgy.
- **Ministry Growth:** Reactivated diaconate; outreach partnerships (e.g., Thistle Farms); Episcopal School of Nashville; spiritual formation programs; disaster response.
- **Financial Stewardship:** Resilience and sound decisions during crisis.
- **Local Belonging:** Parish-level care, meal trains, and supportive congregational life.
- **Justice and Reconciliation:** Continuing in steps in dismantling racism.

*At right: Worship at Trinity Church, Clarksville*



- **Community Outreach & Ecumenism:** Care for marginalized; strong collaboration across congregations and denominations.
- **Formation & Mutual Support:** Prayer, racial reconciliation, and formation; larger churches supporting smaller ones.
- **Quiet, Faithful Service:** Ministries to seniors, youth, and the vulnerable operating with humility and love.

*At left: Food pantry at Trinity Church, Winchester*



*Holy Eucharist at St. George's Church, Nashville*

## Life and Ministry of the Bishop We Seek

**T**he Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee seeks a bishop who combines theological depth, spiritual maturity, and practical leadership with a pastor's heart. Our survey and listening sessions revealed a clear and consistent hope for a leader whose life reflects humility, integrity, sound judgment, and a deep love for God, the Church, and all people.

Scripture describes an overseer who is intentional in cultivating virtue—blameless, self-controlled, discerning, faithful, holy, and a lover of good. The Book of Common Prayer echoes this vision: a bishop must hold a clear and deep conviction in the gospel handed down by the Apostles, be immersed in Scripture and prayer, guard the faith and unity of the Church, and teach and nourish God's people through Word and Sacrament. Our next bishop must honor the tradition we have received while discerning how to adapt it faithfully to the realities of our present moment.

A bishop for EDTN must also be a bridge-builder—someone who can hold together a wide range of contexts,

perspectives, and communities with grace and authority. We seek a leader with compassion for the poor, the unhoused, the vulnerable, and the marginalized. We seek a shepherd whose heart is devoted to nurturing the spiritual life of our clergy, trusting that when clergy are rooted and grounded in God, their congregations flourish as well. Nominees should also carry a compassionate and informed understanding of the struggles surrounding substance use disorders, guided by the wisdom and expectations of the National Church.

Given the needs of our diocese, our next bishop should be committed to the vitality of small congregations, to ministries that strengthen youth and families, and to ministries that serve those in need. The role also requires theological sophistication paired with the practical ability to fundraise and cultivate generous stewardship.

We look for someone flexible and open-minded, wise in discernment, rich in prayer, and steadfast in faith—someone who can lead us with courage, compassion, and integrity into a future of unity and flourishing.



*A pet blessing at St. Luke's Church, Springfield*

## DESIRED QUALITIES FOR THE NEXT BISHOP:

- High regard for scripture
- Theological depth and sophistication
- Resource development and fundraising
- Belief in sharing the Gospel with all
- Prayerful discernment
- Disciplined way of life
- Emphasis on unity and mediation between divisions
- Valuing tradition with adaptation
- Strategic leadership

## Diocesan Numbers at a Glance

In 2015, The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee saw an Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) of 5,489, aligning proportionally with national averages. Through 2016–2019, attendance declined gradually, reflecting broader church patterns. The pandemic years (2020–2021) introduced a sharp drop, followed by a gradual increase in subsequent years. By 2023–2024, the diocese stabilized near 4,300–4,400 ASA, with the official 2024 number being 4,298. This stabilization mirrors the national Episcopal trend of returning to projected attendance levels in the aftermath of the pandemic, suggesting that middle Tennessee congregations have generally navigated the pandemic's challenges and returned to a healthier in-person attendance.

The broader Episcopal Church in the United States saw a total ASA of about 410,912 across 6,754 congregations in 2023.

- Active priests: 108
- Active deacons: 21
- Retired priests: 55
- Active baptized members: 16,000+ (2024)
- Average Sunday Attendance (ASA): 4,298 (2024)
- 43 cathedral, parish, mission, and chaplaincy churches
- 2024 plate and pledge income of over \$17.9 million for reporting congregations
- Giving per member: \$1,119 (2024)



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# How to apply

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Thank you for participating in the search for the Twelfth Diocesan Bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee. The application process opens on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. CDT and closes on Monday, April 20, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. CDT.

[Please click this link to begin the application process.](#)