

# St. John's Episcopal Church Parish Profile



## OUR PARISH

Founded in 1905, St. John's Episcopal Church of Bedford, Indiana, is "A Place to Be and Become." St. John's is a family friendly, open-minded Christian community. We welcome everyone to share in the blessings of the Kingdom of God.

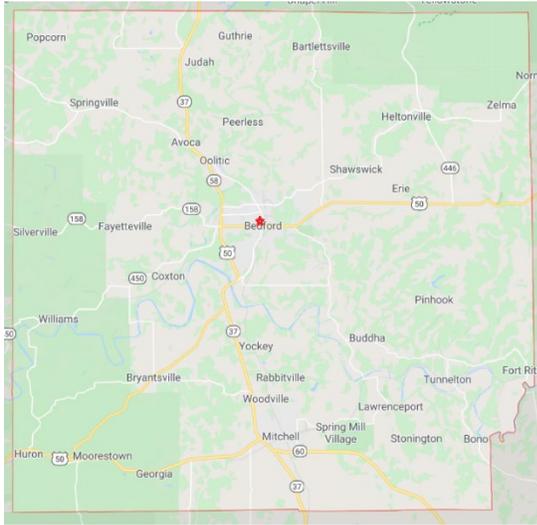
Our average Sunday attendance is around 25. Our congregation thrives when individuals have roles and responsibilities as part of our contribution to our community.

## ST. JOHN'S MISSION

"We, the family of St. John's Episcopal Church of Bedford, Indiana, believe we have been commissioned by our Savior, Jesus Christ, to reach out, aid, support, and unify the diverse families and individuals that make up our community and the world by preaching, teaching, and living the Good News of the Kingdom of God."

## OUR COMMUNITY

Bedford is a city of approximately 13,500 in Shawswick Township, Lawrence County, Indiana. Bedford is the county seat of Lawrence County (45,600 total population) and its largest city. St. John's is the only Episcopal Church in Lawrence County. We serve an even larger region as there are no Episcopal Churches further south until you get to the Ohio River cities – which means we do draw in people from French Lick, Paoli, and Brownstown.



*St John's is located in Bedford but serves all of Lawrence County and other surround counties as well*

Bedford was laid out as a town and the county seat of Lawrence County around 1825. The original county seat was in Palestine, four miles to the south, but was moved, at the urging of the legislature, to a new site -- the original location near the White River was deemed unhealthy as the result of malaria spread by mosquitoes. The new site was named Bedford at the suggestion of prominent local businessman, Joseph Rawlins, who relocated to the area from Bedford County, Tenn. It incorporated as a town in 1864 and received its city charter in 1889. Bedford was a stop on the Underground Railroad.

According to the 2010 census, Bedford has a total area of 12.16 square miles, all land. The city is known as the "Limestone Capital of the World" because of its large limestone quarries that are around the area. Bedford limestone was used to make the Empire State Building and The Pentagon, among other notable structures worldwide. Bedford is situated about 70 miles south of Indianapolis, 18 miles south of Bloomington and 70 miles north of Louisville, Ky.

Bedford was featured as the subject of an hour-long PBS special entitled *"Our Town: Bedford,"* first aired in May 2006. It was produced by PBS affiliate WTIU in Bloomington.

Bedford was recognized by the State of Indiana in 2013 by being named a Stellar Community. The Stellar Communities program was under the direction of Ind. Lt. Gov. Sue Ellspermann and is a multi-agency partnership among the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA), the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and the State Revolving Fund. Only two Indiana communities are designated as such each year; Richmond was the other 2013 winner. The award brought \$19 million in state, local and private funds to Bedford for planned improvements.

Bedford was also named the Indiana Chamber of Commerce's 2013 Community of the Year.

The Bedford Courthouse Square Historic District, the former Indiana Limestone Co. Building, Madden School, C.S. Norton Mansion, Otis Park and Golf Course, William A. Ragsdale House and Zahn Historic District are listed in the National and Indiana Register of Historic Places.

Lawrence County has the distinction of being the only county in the United States that is home to three NASA astronauts: Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom, Kenneth Bowersox and Charles Walker.

Other notables from Bedford include:

- Claude Akins, actor
- Marie Louise Andrews, writer and journalist
- Damon Bailey, basketball player
- Craig Bowden, PGA Tour golfer
- Thomas J. Box, medal of honor recipient
- Donald Brashear, NHL player
- James Samuel Coleman, sociologist
- Bessie De Voie, vaudeville performer, dancer
- Carl Graf, artist
- A. B. Guthrie Jr, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer
- William Jenner, U.S. senator
- Becky Muncy, musician, elementary school teacher
- Becky Skillman, Indiana lieutenant governor
- Fred Wampler, PGA Tour golfer
- Bob Wicker, MLB pitcher
- William T. Wiley, artist

Nearby points of interest include:

- Bluespring Caverns
- Nashville, Indiana
- Spring Mill State Park
- West Baden Springs Hotel

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH



We are known as the "Parade Church" in Bedford – there are two annual parades that happen (one in July for the Limestone Heritage Festival and one in December for the Parade of Lights). Our church happens to be right along the float-staging and line-up area, so church members have taken the opportunity to grill hotdogs and have hot/cold beverages ready for anyone interested. We have a donation jar, but we do not expect payment from anyone. The funds we collect are typically split among community organizations such as Bertha's Mission, Red's House, or Becky's Place. Beyond providing food and drinks, these are the moments that our community members really engage with us and provide us with new opportunities to experiment with faithful innovation practices.

*Bertha's Mission* – A community kitchen serving the county. We have assisted in securing grant support for Bertha's from the Episcopal Funds for Human Need in the past as well.

*Becky's Place* – A women and children's shelter for those experiencing homelessness and helping them move toward self-sufficiency.

*Red's House* – A new men's shelter recovery center and sober living facility that help men transition out of old habits.

### *United Thank Offering*

We regularly prioritize and commit to contributions to the United Thank Offering campaign.

### *LIFE Food Pantry*

Each month we fill our "little red wagon" with non-perishable goods to help support the Lawrence InterFaith Endeavor (LIFE) Food Pantry serving Lawrence County. This central food pantry serves the county and meets the needs of a wide range of community members.



### *Little Free Library*



We recently joined the Little Free Library movement and had members build and paint our library that is along 14<sup>th</sup> Street. We have received many donated books to keep the library well stocked. There are many of the little libraries in our community so our neighbors are accustomed to finding these libraries throughout the area.

## LAY LEADERSHIP AND TRADITIONS

As a congregation, we have many traditional experiences, many of which are led or coordinated by the lay leadership. Our lay-leaders regularly lead initiatives like our adult education on Sunday before services, Sunday school in the parish hall for young people, and nursery services (when required). We have dedicated members who transport our monthly food donations to the local food pantry. Speaking of food, we like to eat – our Coffee Hour is more like a brunch and we frequently host pitch-ins for special occasions and members take turns hosting. We may come for the food but it is the conversation and community that keep us spending time together week after week.



We participate in unique opportunities that arise from time to time such as blessing a new home, baptism for children or new members, hosting special musical performances, and providing neighborhood tours of our church and its stained-glass windows.



We are the caretakers for our physical space, which includes our outside space with a playground (Jungle Gym, slides, playhouse, and climbing wall and spacious lawn), exterior seating, and parishioner maintained landscaping on all sides of the church. Our interior space includes a quiet library and reading room, our spacious parish hall that is great for social gatherings, and a glorious pipe-organ. We

have the advantage of being 30 miles from Indiana University, which means we have benefitted from the organists who work and study at the university. Our organ has benefitted from regular tunings, repair work, and has been played many excellent musicians.

Seasonal celebrations provide a regular flow to our year. Our spring celebrations include Shrove Tuesday's Pancake supper, Lenten soup suppers, and an Easter Egg Hunt. During the summer, we participate in the Limestone Festival parade with our hot dogs and soda sidewalk stand. As we head into the fall we look forward to our annual worship and barbeque picnic at Spring Mill State Park and "Blessing of the Animals" in October on the church lawn. Trick or Treat in downtown



Bedford is a spectacle all on its own with thousands of people in town for the night. We prepare a month in advance by bringing in tons of candy and then dress up to welcome thousands through the back of the church. We then look forward to the Christmas Parade with our concession stand, Advent Soup suppers, and our Christmas Eve Candlelight service.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

We are a diocesan-aided congregation that is working towards financial independence. Through a previous interim period, we were able to conduct some deferred maintenance projects and build a reserve fund balance to allow us more financial stability. In the last 20 years, we had serious financial hardship and at one point, were using a credit card to pay for utilities – we are in a much better place; however, church members have this recent memory, which is helpful in ensuring we are being good financial stewards not to have that experience again. We are currently setup with a reserve that would cover our full operating expenses for the church for a year without any additional funds coming in to our account. During the current COVID-19 crisis, we recognize the importance of having this buffer in our accounts to allow us to keep up with our expenses. Even more encouraging is seeing the envelopes continue to stream into the church with members continuing with their pledge commitments because they too understand the importance of our pledges in fulfilling God's work through our parish.

## OUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Naturally, St. John's wants to grow its congregation. We have a beautiful, historic facility we hope to more actively share with the local community for a myriad of uses, such as community and youth club meetings, parties, wedding/baby showers and a wide variety of events.

Ultimately, while we can brainstorm ideas to bring in more people to our church, we know that we are best served if we focus on doing God’s work and helping the community. If we are to grow because we are showing the community members what God is truly like, then we know that is the most impactful growth we can experience.

Like many other congregations, we are adapting our practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are beginning to explore our online service options and are finding a new appreciation in the traditions that we have as a church family but are missing lately. We understand the necessity of our closure but are looking forward to the time when we get to return to see and hug one another yet again.



## OUR NEXT PRIEST

We value fellowship among our church members and we see our time together as refueling us for the world outside the church. We seek to create a sense of belonging with everyone who attends – whether a one-time visitor, vacation regulars, or lifelong members of the church.

We seek a leader who provides strong spiritual knowledge and fosters our natural curiosity. We see the importance of sharing the work of the church as a congregation and hope to find a leader who values but can provide guidance in that spirit. Overall, we are hoping to find a leader who leads with a positive, hopeful, and courageous philosophy.

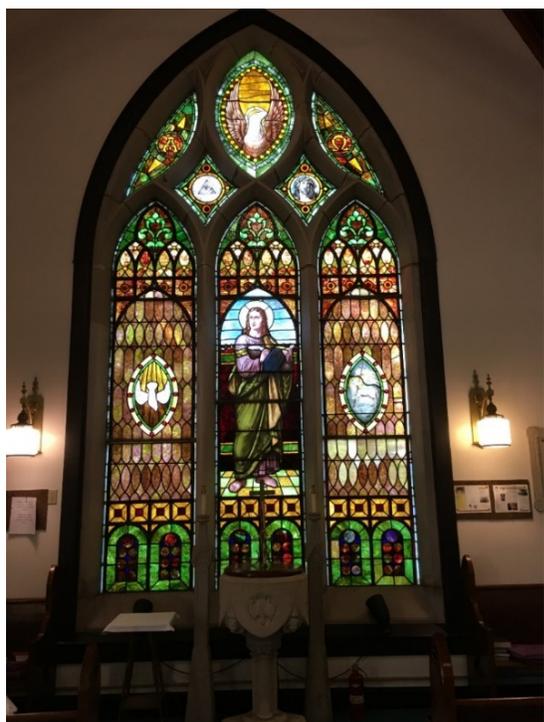
We are a congregation willing to experiment and try new things to achieve these goals, whether it is chanting gospel passages across the aisle at each other as part of the sermon, or wearing construction paper Mitre hats. We are hopeful there will be a leader willing to experiment and play with a congregation like ours. We strike the balance of craving serious inquiry into our faith while also enjoying a hearty laugh (and not taking ourselves too seriously).

	Compensation:
<b>Gross earnings</b>	
Salary/Clergy	\$32,513
Clergy Salaries: Housing	\$0
Clergy Salaries: SECA	\$2,487
Clergy Salaries: Utilities	\$0
	<u>\$35,000</u>
Pension	\$6,300
Total Compensation	<u><u>\$41,300</u></u>

## OUR HISTORY

Beginning in 1868, Bedford had a supporting, on-again, off-again, Episcopalian presence; sometimes, small groups met at homes, at the Presbyterian Church, at the Lawrence County Courthouse until Archdeacon William Walton arrived in Bedford in 1903. With his leadership, his flock grew from eight people to 21 families to a congregation of 48 people.

From the prominent Fell family, two elderly sisters donated a half-lot at 14<sup>th</sup> and M streets for the church building, with the understanding the church would be named St. John's. Architect Areli Jones designed and donated the plans for the church, which is designed in the English Gothic style.



In 1905, various limestone companies donated the grey limestone, cut to specification. Building funds came from dedicated congregants, local donors and other churches. In December 1905, Bishop Joseph Marshall Francis, D.D., laid the cornerstone, carved by member William S. Whyte. What followed was the completion of the nave.

John W. and Emmeline Quayle were among the first members of St. John's; both were born on the Isle of Man in the British Isles. John was a master stone carver and came with others to Bedford at the height of the limestone industry. In 1905 when St. John's was built, he created and

donated the carving above the courtyard door. An awning has protected the carving from the elements and deterioration for years. Recently when the awnings at St. John's were being replaced, the carving was briefly exposed to the sunlight in all of its beauty.

Bishop Francis appointed the Rev. William Crossman Otte as the first Vicar of St. John's. Otte was a Civil War veteran, who served in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He and his brother had been partners in a successful furniture business in Cincinnati. After graduating from seminary, Otte served Episcopal churches in Ohio, then in Connersville, where he retired. Called out of retirement to serve at St. John's, Otte stayed for 11 years until 1917, when St. John's membership had grown to 142.

Emmeline Quayle died in 1917 and her husband bought a stained-glass window, which is in the chancel next to the altar, in her memory. The window is one of 15 in St. John's, donated

by parishioners in memory of loved ones. Emmeline's husband also carved their family gravestone, which is at Greenhill Cemetery in Bedford.

Moses Fell Dunn donated the second half-lot to the church when he died in 1915. His will stipulated a large donation to the church, which the membership constructed the addition of the chancel and the transepts.

Post-WW I saw the slowing of the limestone economy in Bedford, which resulted in a number of members moving out of the area. The exodus was followed by the 1918 lethal influenza "Spanish Flu" epidemic, forcing the closure of the church for a brief period. Membership improved in the 1920s, with an upswing in the economy.

The entire church was completed in 1919.

These beginnings that highlight the contributions of individual families working in community for the greater benefit has continued on through the decades at St John's. A review of our archives would find that many names of changed over time with there have always being a strong dedicated core that are members of this church and willing to be courageous in doing what is right as members of the Episcopal faith.



*Emmeline Quayle window*

Now in 2020, St John's has once again closed due to a pandemic, this time COVID-19. We know that this closure of the physical structure is merely a brief period in the overall life of the church. But we are paying attention to the lessons being learned – the building may be closed but our church is not. We find ourselves in organic phone trees to check on one another because we simply miss that time we had to visit weekly. We are practicing our faith and exploring liturgy in a different way that we hope to learn from as we rejoin in person. We do not know that the future holds for us but we do plan to move forward together as a community of God's faithful followers and temporary stewards of the legacy that have been share with us.

## Contact St. John's

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Instagram: [www.instagram.com/stjohnsofbedford/](https://www.instagram.com/stjohnsofbedford/)