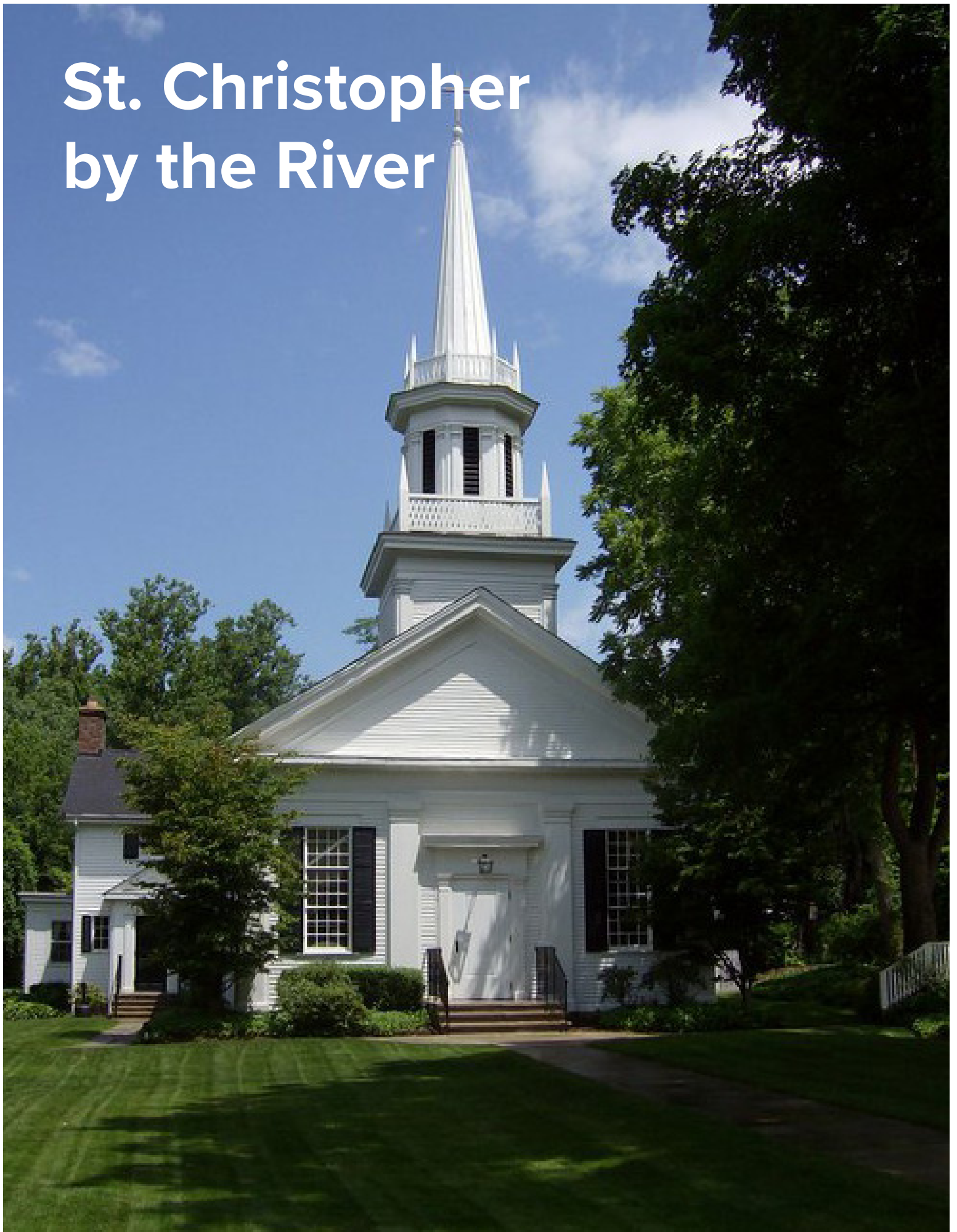


St. Christopher by the River







Our History

An historically commemorated building, the church was built on the property of Holsey Gates who, with his bride Lucy Ann Bradley, came to the Chagrin Valley in 1826. This area of Northeast Ohio had been known as the Connecticut Western Reserve. The Reserve had been granted to the Colony of Connecticut under the terms of its charter by King Charles II.

Looking for water, Mr. Gates and his wife settled on the banks of the Chagrin River and carved from the wilderness, with the help of his brothers, a log cabin, a mill race, a saw mill, and a grist mill. The Gates' mills were in full operation within months of their settling along the river. Many of the earliest settlers came from Connecticut and they brought with them their work ethic, their religious strength, and their architectural style, creating the village named Gates Mills, that still looks like many other villages that today line the Connecticut River Valley.

As other settlers came, the village grew and a proper place of worship was needed. In 1853, they built the Methodist Episcopal Church, across the road from the mills, following the tradition and the style of churches they had left behind in Connecticut. Holsey Gates led the effort by donating the building site and lumber from his mill for church construction.

In 1926, a survey of church preference by the local citizens of Gates Mills, led to the relinquishing of the church property by the Methodist trustees and the establishment of a mission of the Episcopal Church. Within a few years, this mission became St. Christopher by the River.





Our Village

While St Christopher by the River's congregation has many members who live as much as ten miles away, the beautiful and traditional nature of the Village of Gates Mills is noteworthy. Situated fifteen miles from downtown Cleveland, the village was created (1826) as a part of the Mayfield Township.

Holsey Gates began the Village by damming the scenic Chagrin River to power his eponymous mills. Beginning with the completion of an interurban railroad in 1889, the village the population shifted from a farm community to a residential community, attracting individuals seeking a more comfortable rural lifestyle. Pleasant hiking, bicycle riding and steelhead fishing are still common pastimes. A number of Cleveland's wealthy industrialists also were influential in visualizing and implementing a village characterized by traditional Connecticut Western Reserve architecture with a cozy downtown containing the elementary school, a community house, the town hall, a post office, a library, some office space, The Historical Society building and a private club and, of course, St Christopher by the River.



Protection of the natural beauty of the Chagrin River Valley has been an important concern. The Village was officially incorporated in 1927. There are about 980 homes within the 2½ by 4½ mile boundary. Since its inception, the village residents have been recognized by for their high level of volunteerism and community spirit. The Gates Mills Community Club reports monthly about village activities through its free publication "The Pink Sheet", which recently highlighted the following aspects of the village:

- An all-volunteer elected village administration.
- A Community Club (established 1930) organizing many fun activities and publishing.
- The Pink Sheet
- The Players (est. 1948) a performing arts group
- The Historical Society (est. 1946)
- Friends of the Gates Mills Library (est. 1974)
- A blue-ribbon Garden Club (est. 1931)
- The PTC supporting the elementary school- K through 5; a part of the five-star rated Mayfield School System
- The Land Conservancy protecting over 700 acres to eternity
- The Gates Mills Improvement Society (est. 1905)
- Many hard-working village employees with a powerful work ethic on display
- Three houses of worship filled with redeeming values.



Many events occur throughout the year. Two are especially noteworthy: The Gates Mills Improvement Society sponsors a classic July 4th parade attracting over 1000 spectators to hear the church carillon and watch the passing bands and floats.

On Christmas Eve, following the St. Christopher 3:30 pm Family Vespers service, the congregation crosses the street to join other villagers at a big bonfire to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and see Santa Claus.

Finally, as one of our members has been known to say “What God and mankind hath created here in this bucolic valley, there exists a terrific place to live and worship.”

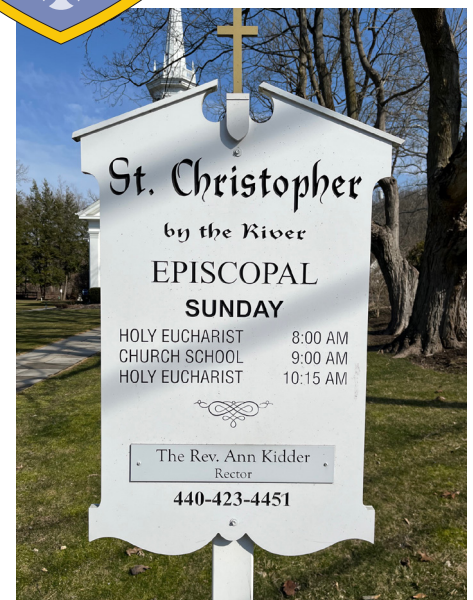
Our Diocese

The Diocese of Ohio is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion represented in the United States by The Episcopal Church. It was organized in 1818 and was the first diocese established outside of the original 13 colonies. The first bishop was Philander Chase. Since that time that Diocese has been served by 11 different bishops. The 12th and current bishop, the Right Reverend Anne B. Jolly, was ordained and consecrated as bishop on April 29, 2023. She is the first woman to hold that ecclesiastical post in Ohio.

The Diocese of Ohio consists of the 48 counties of northern Ohio, an area approximately 170 miles wide and 95 miles deep, encompassing roughly 15,000 square miles. We have approximately 75 active priests and 10 deacons serving in 79 parishes.

Our churches span the northern half of Ohio. We welcome everyone to our doors whether you are a lifelong Episcopalian or a seeker looking for God in your life, or a person who just feels something is missing in life. Please visit us. We’ll know you’ll find a warm welcome and we hope you find a home.

You will know us by a sign outside each church with our shield and the words, “The Episcopal Church Welcomes You.”





Our Church and Rectory

Our Church

The St. Christopher by the River Church building is a fine example of Western Reserve architecture. Built in 1853 it was originally a Methodist Church and became an Episcopal Church in 1927. The welcoming carillon bells can be heard throughout the year from the bell tower. St. Christopher is located directly across from the Chagrin Valley Hunt Club. The Blessing of the Hounds is one of the most glorious scenes in autumn. The Blessing of the Animals is also exciting, impressive and a special moment for those participating and observing.

Throughout the years many improvements have been made to our church to keep things running smoothly.

1. The entire exterior of the church was repainted the summer of 2023.
2. On an ongoing basis, the interior of our church has been receiving care and attention from our Sexton and Church Keeper.
3. A new boiler has been installed in Spring 2023 which controls our hot water heat.
4. In April we received a gift from the Figgie Foundation for a new furnace. This allows the remainder of the church facility to receive both heat and air conditioning by forced air.
5. Our septic grinder and pumps have been replaced 2024.



Our Rectory

Our Rectory adjacent and west of the church is a Century home built in 1854. It is located in the historic district of Gates Mills Village. This home is deceiving as it boasts 2,762 square feet. It has five bedrooms and three full baths. The first floor has a large master bedroom with an en suite, full bath and a walk-in shower. One of the bedrooms on the main floor could also be used as an office. This also has a bath and shower. The third bathroom is upstairs and is a full bath with tub and shower. The home uses public water/sewer boiler heat and then forced air for air conditioning. The large bright living room has the original wood floor and wood-burning fireplace with many windows surrounding this room overlooking Old Mill Rd. The openings between the living room, dining room and kitchen were enlarged to accommodate wheel chairs. The very large dining room has a wood burning fireplace, hearth and original wood floors. The kitchen has been renovated including stone countertops, new cabinetry and appliances.

The laundry room is also located on the first floor and is equipped with a new washer, dryer and sink tub. There is a beautiful three season porch with a glazed brick floor and surrounding windows that overlook a private patio in the courtyard. The backyard extends to the Chagrin River. A large single car garage includes extra storage.

The original hardwood floors in the living room, master bedroom, dining room and kitchen have been recently stained and polyurethaned. All three bathrooms have been recently updated. Throughout the home all trim, ceilings, doors and walls have been painted. New windows have been installed in the upstairs bedrooms. High-quality carpeting has been installed in all upstairs bedrooms, the downstairs bedroom/den, two staircases, one large upstairs hall and all closets throughout the home.





Our Mission

*"Seeing Christ in Everyone,
Knowing Christ in everything,
Doing All in Christ"*

In your faith journey, we invite you to join us in our spiritual adventure.



We are St. Christopher by the River, an historic community of worship, set in the Western Reserve style of the village of Gates Mills and situated next to the beautiful Chagrin River. Our mission is to be a community of not only a charming setting, but also of welcome in which all people experience the holy hospitality of God's Word and Sacraments. As our above mission suggests, we are a body that seeks to see Christ in all people and to grow as disciples of Christ by worship, prayer, and study of God's word.



Our community is important to us, and we support it in many ways. We build close relationships with one another through inspiring work and programs offered by the Women's Guild, social events such as coffee hour after the Sunday services, the Twelfth Night party, a pancake breakfast, picnics and Ice cream socials. Our semi-annual Bargain Box sale where the congregation helps with setting up, sorting and selling donated goods is an especially good example of how we work together and share fellowship. The money earned during Bargain Box goes to many local charities serving mostly women and children.



We also reach out to the greater community by providing and serving lunch at the Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry's men's shelter in downtown Cleveland. We do this on a monthly basis. We also have had parishioners who do other volunteer work at the shelter such as being a listener, working in the computer lab, and participating in the poetry workshop and current affairs discussions with shelter residents. Another way we serve the greater community is to collect different food items each month for the local food bank.

Our vision for the future and what is important to us is preserving our history and continuing to grow into a church for all of God's people. The goal of our annual giving and capitol campaigns is to support this vision. Through the hiring of a new, dynamic priest for St. Christopher, we intend to increase the presence of our church in the community as a loving and welcoming place of worship and Christian faith.

Fellowship

The people of St. Christopher worship together and gather for volunteering and social events in community. Sunday services are followed by coffee hour inside in the winter and on the front lawn in the summer, enjoying treats, coffee, tea and conversation with each other. We welcome newcomers and visitors every week.

Our calendar year begins with a Twelfth Night celebration with delicious food, singing and socializing. The last Sunday before Lent is the Pancake Breakfast where the men cook and serve the delicious breakfast in the Fellowship Hall after the 10:15 service. After the Pentecost Service we gather at Marston Park across the Chagrin River for picnicking, enjoying fried chicken, side dishes and desserts prepared by our members. Games including pickle ball and bocce ball are a highlight of the afternoon. Rally day is the day marking the end of summer and the last picnic of the year on our church lawn. Our men cook hamburgers and hotdogs while we learn of the planned activities and opportunities to volunteer and enjoy the months to come. We hope to have a clambake this fall which is always well attended.

Bargain Box, our semi-annual church sale brings almost all the women and many men together sorting and cleaning clothes, housewares, linens, furniture and boutique items. It is our major fund raiser for the year bringing many people together. People have been coming to this sale for 40 years, and some have joined our congregation.

There is a small productive group of needleworkers meeting once a month for the Prayer Shawl Ministry. There is also a needlepoint group making a colorful Noah's Ark covering for a brick door stop for our Children's Chapel.

Many cook and serve lunch casseroles & dessert monthly for The Lutheran Men's Shelter. Members work in our church gardens planting, weeding, feeding and watering our flowers and plants.

Over the years we have taken social trips to the Cleveland Art Museum led by our Deacon, enjoyed trips to The Botanical Garden, visited the Porcelain Museum, taken a tour of Cleveland's many different denomination churches, and seen an art exhibit at Christmas of Creches made all over the world.





Our Worship and Christian Education

Worship is the center of church life at St. Christopher. Our church is the place where a community of the faithful gather together to worship God and glorify His name. While St. Christopher serves its congregation and its community in a variety of ways, with numerous programs, activities and outreach ministries, nevertheless, it is a gathering for worship that represents the focal point of St. Christopher.

Each Sunday two services are conducted. The 8 A.M. service follows Rite I as set forth in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. This is a spoken service in traditional Elizabethan language without music. It is a somber and reverent liturgy, a quiet and contemplative Sacrament of the Word and Sacrament of the Table.

The 10:15 A.M. service is a Rite II service with music and singing, and this service is generally attended by a larger number of parishioners than the early morning service. During the service, hymns are sung with the accompaniment of our magnificent Hradetsky organ, superbly played by our long-time, classically trained organist. Our adult choir stimulates the entire congregation to raise their voices in celebration.

Throughout the year, additional services are added to the calendar on special occasions, and, in particular, during Holy Week, a full program of services is offered. This begins with the Maundy Thursday service as prescribed in the Prayer Book. The service, itself, is followed by an agape meal in the Fellowship Hall during which a menu of Mediterranean food, reflective of what would have been typically available at the time of Christ, is shared by the congregation. Eucharist is also celebrated during the agape meal with each parishioner serving the Sacrament to the next person at the table. The service has been warmly and reverently received by many members of the parish and has, accordingly, grown in popularity and participation. The evening is concluded by the traditional stripping of the altar in anticipation of the Good Friday service which follows the next day. The Good Friday service is a quiet and solemn service in remembrance of Christ's death upon the cross. Finally, on Easter, two Rite II Festival Eucharist services are held, celebrating the joy of the resurrection.



We have a number of lay ministries that are a central part of who we are. We are grateful to have Eucharistic Ministers who help the clergy at every service. We also have a dedicated group of lay readers, ushers, greeters, and altar guild members who help make worship possible. And if parishioners are unable to attend church in person, we have Eucharistic visitors who bring communion to them on a regular basis.

Our faith journey and worship extend beyond formal services to include the education of our members. The Adult Education hour from 9 am to 10 am, between the first and second services, has provided an opportunity for a number of book studies and conversation, led by our priest.

We believe that it is our obligation and joy to continue the ancient traditions of our faith and to do so in a reverent and knowledgeable fashion, to the glory of God.

The Stephen Ministry

The Stephen Ministry is a nonprofit Christian educational organization in St. Louis, Missouri founded in 1975. This organization has provided training and resources to thousands of congregations worldwide. The Stephen Minister Leader completes a weeklong training provided by the Stephen Ministry organization. Upon completion of the training the Leader oversees the ministry as the teacher, leader of a group that is trained in providing a confidential ministry: The identity of those receiving care and what takes place in each caring relationship remains private. The Stephen Ministry at St. Christopher was implemented in September of 2016 with 8 individuals having completed the 50-hour training. The Stephen Ministry equips lay people in a parish to provide one to one Christian care to individuals who are experiencing difficulties in their lives.

A Stephen Minister is:

- a member of the church who has completed 50 hours of training in providing emotional and spiritual care
- a member of the church with gifts for caregiving, who is selected to serve in this role
- A caring, Christian friend who listens, cares, prays, supports and encourages

The Stephen Ministry logo symbolizes that we are all broken people and it is the cross of Jesus that makes us whole





The Daughters of the King



The first Daughters of the King chapter was founded by Margaret J. Franklin, a Bible study leader, in 1885 in New York City. Today the Order is an international spiritual community. There are yearly dues, with aid provided to those who may be challenged to pay. Fundraising is prohibited by the by-laws.

The St. Christopher by the River Chapter was installed on March 10, 2019 and currently has five members. Members complete a Discernment process, take their vows and receive their crosses, which are blessed by the clergy. We select names from a variety of sources and pray daily from our prayer list. A Prayer Box is located in the back of St. Christopher for people who prefer to request prayers privately. Confidentiality is carefully maintained.

Our goal is to meet monthly to pray, study, affirm ministries, and support each other's Christian journey.

The Daughter of the Kings Motto is:

*For His Sake, I am but one, but I am one.
I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
What I can do, I ought to do.
What I ought to do, by the grace of God I will do.
Lord, what will you have me do?*

Our Vestry

The Vestry of St. Christopher has nine members. Each member serves for three consecutive years. Each year, three members of the Vestry are replaced by a vote of the congregation at its annual meeting held in March. The Vestry meets monthly via zoom and in person. The Priest chairs all vestry meetings. In the absence of the Priest, the Senior Warden assumes the responsibility. A quorum must be present for all votes. The Wardens are elected by the Vestry annually at a special meeting following the annual meeting of the congregation in March. Each has a one-year term. The Wardens offer the Priest support and guidance. Although each Warden has specified responsibilities, they and the Vestry often work together, especially during transition, to ensure the business of the church is successfully completed.



The Current Vestry Membership

Charlene Currutt, Junior Warden
Judy Holmes
John Irwin, Senior Warden
Ron Lee
Bruce Long
Rich Radis
Larry Richmond
Peter Thatcher
Kitty Thomas

Our Congregation

We are a congregation with a strong history and a combination of old, established Gates Mills families, and new members who are living in the Village or in greater Cleveland. They have found a church home.

We are a growing, diverse, and community minded congregation with a strong commitment to our church and its role and presence in the community. Our congregation includes members of all ages and backgrounds and we pride ourselves on being a welcoming faith community for any new member.





Music Ministry

Music has always been an important part of life at St. Christopher by the River and we are blessed to have some fine instruments. We have a beautiful Austrian mechanical-action pipe organ built by Gerhard Hradetzky in 1998. It is a two manual, 18 rank Baroque -style instrument. We also have a lovely 85-year-old English carillon of 23 bells in the bell tower. There are not many real carillons in operation today, so we are very lucky to have ours. One of our choir members serves as Carillonneur and usually plays the carillon before and after the 10:15am service on Sundays to welcome people to church. Our carillon has become part of Village community life. Finally, we also have a digital piano in the choir loft.

We have an adult choir and a hand chime choir at St. Christopher. In worship, we mostly perform traditional, classically based church music, with occasional contemporary pieces. Both choirs are small, but those who participate have lots of fun, and they are very dedicated. Our adult choir sings services September through May.

We have presented a number of concerts over the years. In addition to organ and carillon recitals, these musical events have showcased both vocal and instrumental artists to the delight of local audiences.



Youth Ministry

Nursery

Each Sunday we offer nursery care for all children from infants to older during the 10:15 a.m. worship service. Nursery care is also available, upon request, for special events throughout the year. Our nursery provides a safe, clean, and loving atmosphere for the children and the parents. All are welcome!

Church School

Currently we do not have any children in the church school program, as it has been challenging to get families to come to church on a regular basis. Over the past few years, we have attracted more families with young children, which is a blessing. We have a Godly Play classroom with the appropriate teaching/exploring materials, and we are ready to put this program into action as soon as we have a group of 3-5 young children attending church on a regular basis. We are also aware of the importance of meeting with our families to find out what they need from our church with regard to their children.

Children's Chapel

About ten years ago, we renovated some church space, which was used for various children's activities, to create a Children's Chapel. A number of items were donated by parishioners such as the cross, altar and candlesticks. This has been the perfect place for our youth to gather and discuss the Sunday readings as well as participate in activities that inspire religious thought and reflection as they enjoy finding their very own community. This chapel has also been used for Evening Prayer worship as well as other church related activities and meetings.

Children's Activities

The liturgical calendar includes opportunities to celebrate the highlights of our Christian community. Rally Sunday starts each year the Sunday after Labor Day and is a special welcome for all. Advent and Christmas offer the children their chance to tell the Christmas story in the Christmas Pageant and a special Children's Vespers service on Christmas Eve. The Easter season includes the always popular Egg Hunt after the 10:15 a.m. service. It is a dash where everyone wins!





Our Women's Guild

All women of St. Christopher, if they desire, are members of the Guild. An elected Board, consisting of officers and Committee Chairs, is responsible for carrying out the policy of the Guild. Its purpose is to further the work of the Guild through worship, service, and fellowship. The Guild's committees range from Bargain Box, in-reach, Library and Cookbooks & Stationery, to Coffee Hour Supplies, Tract Rack and Christmas Gifts.

Members of the Guild regularly send cards and letters to our shut-ins and parishioners who need support. The Guild also organizes a program in which parishioners purchase Christmas gifts for children who might, otherwise, not have much of a Christmas. The parishioners are always happy, and pleased, to be able to participate in this program, and always come through for these children in a big way!

Our largest work is done with our bi-annual Bargain Box Sale which raises twenty thousand dollars, or more, each year. Started in 1961, the funds raised are given to charities outside the church. Donations include household goods, jewelry, clothing and furniture which the ladies work year-round to collect, sort, and display at the sales.

The Guild also plans other programs such as field trips and lectures that are open to all members of the church. These are always very educational and interesting.

The Guild Board and its members give countless hours serving the church in many ways through their dedication and devotion to each other, the parish, and the community.



Our Altar Guild

St Christopher's Altar Guild is a group of dedicated parishioners who lovingly serve the Church by preparing the altar for all occasions. We meet at least once a year to review our duties and update our service.

The Guild sets the altar for all church services as well as weddings, funerals, baptisms and special services. Each member selects to serve either the eight o'clock, Rite One Service, or the ten o'clock, Rite Two Service and to volunteer for special services when they join the Guild. The Altar Guild Chair contacts our members to set the actual dates that we will serve each month.

Each member takes their turn in fulfilling our duties. We are responsible for washing and polishing the utensils to be used or stored, dusting the Sanctuary, changing the liturgical hangings depending upon the season and setting or clearing the altar, credence and foyer tables every week. Most altar linens and towels are laundered and ironed each week. Cloths for the Altar, Credence and Sacristy Tables are washed and ironed as needed.

We also prepare the Liturgical Boxes each week for the private communions for the parishioners unable to attend our Church services. On Sunday our Priest consecrates and presents the Box to one of the Lay Eucharistic Ministers commissioned to share the Communion with these members.

Our Flower Chairman organizes and orders the flowers for Easter and Christmas and with members of our Guild decorate the Church at Christmas and Easter with wreaths, fir trees, poinsettias and lilies. We also order and prepare the palms and palm crosses for Palm Sunday.

We are always looking for more dedicated parishioners and welcome any member of the church who wishes to be a part of our Guild and service to the Church.



Our Finances

St. Christopher is in a strong financial position. Pledge and plate receipts consistently represent 60% of our total receipts, and we have the benefit of ongoing income from the St. Christopher Fund plus the church's own investment income to make up the balance. As such, we have operated at a surplus for the last 3 years. Our balance sheet remains strong and liquid.

At approximately \$244,000 for the full year 2024, contributions, excluding plate receipts and those one-time gifts, have been consistent over the last 3 years and compare favorably with pre-pandemic levels. With respect to support from the Fund, which we discuss and set annually, we had been taking 5.5% of Fund assets from the years after the financial crisis and through the pandemic. We were able to reduce that to 5.25% several years ago and expect to be at a more sustainable 5% in 2025.

We have managed expenses closely. Staff headcount was reduced in 2023, with remaining employees given 5% raises. A 5% increase was approved for 2025 as well. Total salary and benefits expense reductions in 2024 primarily reflect the retirement of our Priest, and this also affected other operating expense line items.

While full year financial reporting is not yet available, we had liquid cash and investments on hand at the end of November totaling \$847,000 and no debt.

A summary of St. Christopher's operating statements is shown below.

	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Budget	2024 11 Mos
Pledges and Plate	\$ 218,581	\$ 233,059	\$ 256,988	\$ 277,461	\$ 250,500	\$ 236,226
St. Christopher's Fund	\$ 131,706	\$ 130,942	\$ 139,240	\$ 138,922	\$ 141,096	\$ 129,338
Other Income	\$ 19,217	\$ 61,374	\$ 23,956	\$ 31,278	\$ 30,000	\$ 26,388
Total Receipts	\$ 369,504	\$ 425,375	\$ 420,184	\$ 447,661	\$ 421,596	\$ 391,952
Outside Parish Expenses	\$ 54,559	\$ 53,581	\$ 54,884	\$ 55,731	\$ 58,452	\$ 44,745
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 272,231	\$ 265,816	\$ 270,073	\$ 275,598	\$ 279,616	\$ 205,002
Operating Expenses	\$ 77,932	\$ 71,377	\$ 77,132	\$ 78,329	\$ 88,550	\$ 78,324
Total Expenses	\$ 404,722	\$ 390,774	\$ 402,089	\$ 410,017	\$ 426,618	\$ 328,071
Surplus/Deficit	\$ (35,218)	\$ 34,601	\$ 18,095	\$ 37,644	\$ (5,022)	\$ 63,881
Surplus/Deficit Excluding PPP Loan			(\$ 8,199)			



Our Next Priest

2025 represents an exciting time for St. Christopher by the River. With a very healthy congregation, we look to grow our congregation even more and follow the example set by Christ in living lives of charity and love for one another. With our supply minister, we maintain well attended Sunday services, special events and financial support from our members. This is a great opportunity for an energetic and passionate Priest to take a strong and committed congregation to the next level in fulfilling the mission of the church.

The ideal candidate to lead St. Christopher would be a passionate and empathetic spiritual leader who communicates openly and with clarity and also possesses sound consensus building skills. Combined with the self-confidence to work closely with and lead a strong Vestry, this candidate should be ready to guide the church to reach its fullest potential as a community resource and presence.

For a Priest, the St. Christopher congregation strongly desires a Priest who, within the traditional Anglican faith, passionately preaches Biblically based sermons that directly apply the word of God to our lives and mission as a church and as individuals. We expect a spiritual leader who challenges the congregation to examine and strengthen its faith through self-study, fellowship and a strong program of Christian education for both adults and youth.

Empathetic and strong pastoral care to include, home, hospital and shut-in calls, combined with continuing to foster a climate of making St. Christopher a welcoming spiritual community for current and potential parishioners would be paramount. Personal warmth, interpersonal skills, superior listening abilities, and natural friendliness would be critical to further strengthening the bonds within the congregation and to reach out to former parishioners who in recent years have become less active in the life of the church.



*Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of
the least of these brothers and sisters
of mine, you did it to me.*

Matthew 25:40