

DioMO Ministry Report: 2024 —Christ Episcopal Church, Cape Girardeau

Introduction:

As Bishop Deon often reminds us, we are an Easter people living in a Good Friday world. At the heart of our faith lie both the resurrection and the cross—two parts of the same story. And so, to embrace God’s hope for the future, Christ Episcopal Church - Cape (“CEC”) has continued to acknowledge the pains of the past.

In 2024, life at CEC has been shaped by this sacred pull: hope and challenge, growth and renewal. At present, CEC finds itself living into a new, joyful season of resurrection. And indeed, it is by acknowledging past pains that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit toward the brighter future God is unfolding.

Therefore, in this spirit of both challenge and joy—the cross and the resurrection—healing and hope, we present our 2024 report to our siblings in Christ throughout the Diocese of Missouri. Gathered in “*One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism,*” we believe God is now doing a new thing at Christ Church - Cape, in Jesus Christ our Savior.

Three Focus Areas:

In January 2024, the Rev. Ryan Missel (“Fr. Ryan”) became CEC’s new Priest-in-Charge. Together with the Vestry, we committed to three key Focus Areas that have guided our ministry:

- A.) ***Communion***, in worship that nourishes our faith.
- B.) ***Communication***, which connects us in fellowship.
- C.) ***Community***, that calls us to love one another and serve our neighbors.

By centering on these three Focus Areas, we have endeavored toward tangible, Gospel-centered goals.

Communion:

After the departure of CEC’s former Priest-in-Charge, CEC was in earnest need of pastoral and spiritual guidance. We are grateful to the priests who stepped in during this difficult time, the Rev. Edie Bird and the Rev. Jeff Goldone—both who offered their ministries of presence with love and dedication. Their transitional ministries laid the groundwork for CEC to begin the work of healing.

Now, as we move forward with the Rev. Ryan Missel as our new Priest-in-Charge, healing has meant honoring traditions in worship that are cherished by the congregation, while exploring new opportunities to expand our expressions of faith in worship.

For example, in honoring past traditions, Fr. Ryan continues to chant the Eucharist every Sunday, and our 8:00 AM service prays from the *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), which is spiritually meaningful for many who attend. Simultaneously, in exploring new expressions in worship, both our 8:00 and 10:30 AM services incorporate an inclusive language psalter, *The Psalter for the Christian People*, and our musical service incorporates hymns that are both familiar alongside hymns that are new, including hymns from *Lift Every Voice and Sing II* and *Voices Found*. Moreover, we've improved our church's internet to better connect those who are unable to join us in person, allowing all to participate more fully in our worship and community life.

Perhaps the most profound source of renewal at CEC has been our return to celebrating Holy Communion every Sunday. Being fed at Christ's Table in the Sacrament each week has offered us spiritual stability in this season of our life together. Many parishioners note how this consistent rhythm has deepened our sense of community and brought us all closer together. Weekly celebrations of Holy Communion, therefore, have become a vital part of our healing and renewal.

Finally, we are excited to share that our attendance has grown over the past year. In 2024, we welcomed new families, seen returning members, and met many new saints—all looking for a loving, inclusive church for all people. Currently, we are averaging between mid-40's-upper 50's in attendance between both Sunday services. God is doing something new beautiful here at CEC.

Communication:

Moving forward, a key focus for 2024 has been strengthening consistent, clear communication. We've made tangible efforts to streamline how we stay connected, with two main initiatives leading the way.

First, our weekly e-newsletter continues to be a vital resource, keeping church members informed and engaged in parish life. Our e-newsletters help us stay connected to upcoming events and ministry opportunities, while also celebrating the gifts and accomplishments of our parishioners. This ongoing rhythm of communication supports a deeper sense of gratitude and belonging within our church.

Second, starting in November, we will be introducing Quarterly Giving Statements for our parishioners. This initiative comes through the hard work and discernment of Fr. Ryan, Sheila our Treasurer, the Finance Committee, the Vestry, and Lisa & Mary, our new bookkeeping team. At the beginning of 2024, parishioners were not receiving any communication about their giving, which left a real disconnect in how we as a congregation recognized and reflected on our collective stewardship.

The introduction of Quarterly Giving Statements will not only enhance communication but also offer us better opportunities to express our gratitude for the generosity and love parishioners express through their stewardship. These regular statements will help us

care for our financial well-being at CEC while inviting us to reflect on our stewardship as a faithful response to God's grace and provision.

Community:

Our third focus area is all about community—both within our congregation and how we love our neighbors in the wider Cape Girardeau area. Just like our focus on 'Communion,' this involves building on the meaningful work the congregation has already been doing while actively seeking new opportunities to grow in love of God and one another.

One area which we have seen exciting growth is our weekly Sunday Bible study, led by members of our Care & Compassion Team, Gloria & Kent. Bible Study has become a spiritual anchor for many at CEC, and a way for us to bond more deeply in community.

As a proud Jubilee Center in our diocese, known as the Red Door Jubilee Center, one of CEC's greatest charism is our call to Hunger Ministries. We find a deep sense of call and connectedness to Christ by feeding our neighbors—many of whom are experiencing hunger, both physically and spiritually. This year, we expanded the hours of our Food Pantry to better serve our neighbors facing food insecurity, including many who are unhoused or in vulnerable situations. Our pantry is now open every Monday & Thursday from 10:00 to 11:30 AM, and thanks to more intentional outreach through social media, we are now discerning the possibility of adding Sunday hours after the 10:30 service. This may allow us to extend Christ's love even further, reaching those who are unable to visit us during weekdays.

Moreover, our monthly Community Meals, held on the last Sunday of each month remains a cherished part of our ministry. We are grateful to partner with other churches across Cape Girardeau to better serve our neighbors. These meals not only provide nourishment but also create a meaningful space for connection and fellowship, especially with our neighbors who are unhoused. Through these meals, we strive to build genuine relationships where we meet one another as equals—sharing in life's challenges and blessings together.

Finally, as part of our Episcopal Campus Ministry's outreach at Southeast Missouri State University ("SEMO"), we recently participated in our first two events of the fall semester: the SEMO LGBTQ+ Ally Events. It was inspiring to meet many college students who were genuinely curious about the warm inclusivity of the Episcopal Church. Further, we our Campus Ministry is leading the way in partnering with SEMO Pride, SEMO's Office of Equity Initiatives, SEMO's Resident Life, and our local PFLAG chapter to host a "Friendsgiving" in November. In Southeast Missouri, finding safe, affirming spiritual spaces can be difficult for LGBTQIA+ people, and we are proud to cultivate space where everyone is truly valued and loved as God's beloved. Our presence on campus is about creating a refuge where every student may experience the fullness of God's love and hope.

Conclusion:

As we look ahead at CEC, we trust that God will continue to guide us toward new and exciting possibilities. This past year has been filled with growth and healing, and though the journey is ongoing, we feel confident that Holy Spirit is at work in our midst, planting seeds of hope and transformation.

With hearts open to Jesus' leading, we ask, "What new things is God calling us to next?" While the path ahead may hold surprises, we trust that God's grace will continue to sustain us, and we remain committed to the journey—together.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Ryan Missel & Vestry of Christ Episcopal Church

Cape Girardeau, MO