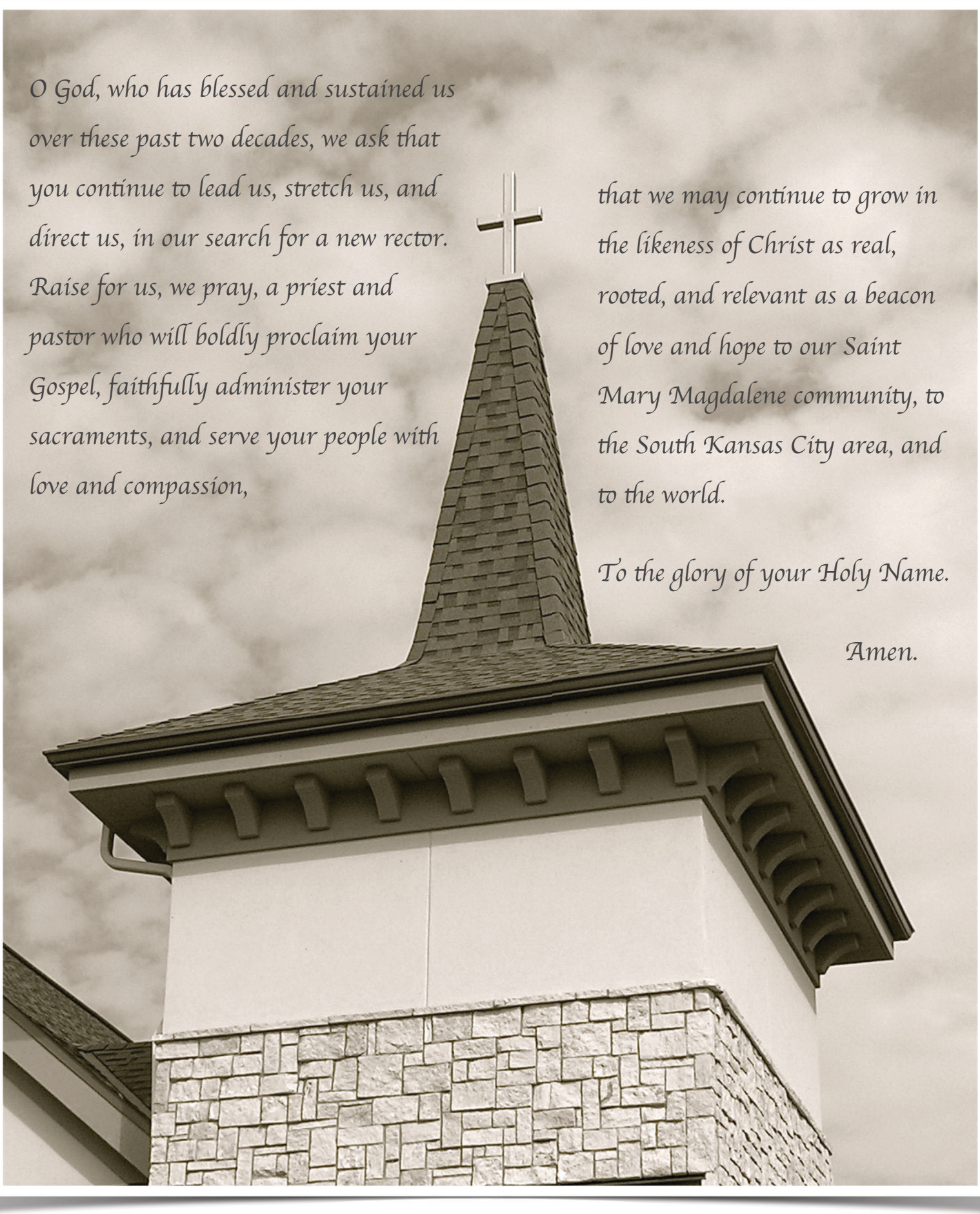


St. Mary Magdalene

Episcopal Church



16808 Holmes
Belton, Missouri
64012



O God, who has blessed and sustained us over these past two decades, we ask that you continue to lead us, stretch us, and direct us, in our search for a new rector. Raise for us, we pray, a priest and pastor who will boldly proclaim your Gospel, faithfully administer your sacraments, and serve your people with love and compassion,

that we may continue to grow in the likeness of Christ as real, rooted, and relevant as a beacon of love and hope to our Saint Mary Magdalene community, to the South Kansas City area, and to the world.

To the glory of your Holy Name.

Amen.

What's in a Name?



We believe strongly in the transformative power of Christ and that we all journey together toward a deep understanding of faith rooted in scripture and the church's teachings. Yet we also believe equally strongly in a faith that is real and relevant. A faith that cannot leave us unchanged, and that at times makes us feel a little uncomfortable. Faith that challenges us to live it out in ways that impact our own lives and the lives of those around us. To that end it has become a foundational statement for us to sum up our community in these three words:

REAL

ROOTED

RELEVANT

Real

Saint Mary Magdalene Church is real in being honest and sincere. It is not a pretentious place, but rather it is “laid-back”. It is not cliquish, information is shared freely, and communication among congregants and leadership is prioritized. Creative brainstorming is encouraged, and members can express new ideas freely. It is a place where we don’t claim to have all the answers, but we do desire to search for them in a welcoming multi-generational community. It is a place where there is a strong sense of community and where you feel free to come as you are.

This is where you will hear a contemporary praise chorus and a sixteenth century motet in the same service. Where one member will be in shorts and t-shirt and another in a suit and tie. Where traditional Anglican liturgy is recited alongside thought-provoking, scripturally-based, penetrating homilies.

While we take our faith seriously, we don’t take ourselves too seriously. We laugh a lot and enjoy each other’s company.

Rooted

Saint Mary Magdalene Church is rooted in a strong belief in the importance of liturgy as a foundation for effective personal and corporate worship. We are comfortable with the “rootedness” of the past, honoring tradition while not being bound by it.

We are not an agenda-driven church, pushing any one particular social or political trend or ideal, but rather a community that seeks to be led by Christ’s example in dealing with each other and the world around us, seeking first the Kingdom of God.

Here we are unafraid to deal with tough issues. This is a place that is rooted in liturgy, in its true meaning as “the work of the people”. There has been a strong sense that “we are all in this together” — from the priest to the newest infant member. We are a place in which talents and abilities may be offered and shared and where participation is welcomed.

There are opportunities to participate on many levels. As the church has become more rooted, it has developed a number of vibrant programs. At last count there were more than 25 ministry groups in the church. Where there has been need, there have been many who have risen up to meet that need, giving of time and talents, as much as treasure, to the service of others.

Relevant

Being relevant is about having an effective voice in our contemporary world. It is about not being so mindful of the past that we are irrelevant to the present. It is about seeking to have a faith that, while rooted in the past, is not stuck in the past but is rather an effective motivating force for action in the world today.

Saint Mary Magdalene Church is therefore a place where service is important and opportunities to serve are prevalent. We have ministries to local organizations such as The Single Mom KC and the Giving Tree, which provide clothing and toiletry items to those in need. Our community garden takes fresh produce to the food kitchen at Heart-N-Hand in downtown Belton all summer long. There are also connections with missions farther afield. We regularly support Maison de Naissance, a birthing home in Haiti, and many of our members have made mission trips to Haiti and to the Gulf Coast to help with the aftermath of hurricanes.

We believe that commitment to mission at home and abroad is an important part of being relevant. We offer the lower level of the House of Grace as a resource center and storage space for the KC for Refugees organization.



Taking Stock of Who We Are

As part of the process of discerning whom it might be that God is leading to be our next priest, we have felt it right to prayerfully consider our current strengths and challenges. Below we list the strengths and challenges, in ranked order, that have been most consistently voiced by the congregation in both a professional survey conducted by Holy Cow Consulting, and an all parish meeting.

Strengths

1) Our Music Program

The music program is, indeed, a great strength. There is an advantage in being able to build some aspects of a church from the ground up. At Saint Mary Magdalene Church the worship music team is built on two main pillars: first, quality, and second, variety. From the outset, the director of music has worked within the budget available to hire the best possible musicians. Currently the team has both paid and volunteer members of the Kansas City Symphony, the Kansas City Youth Symphony, the Kansas City Opera Chorus and other local choral ensembles, and departments of music from many of the well-established local universities and colleges.

At Saint Mary Magdalene Church there is a commitment to doing many styles of music well. However, we also have a great commitment to honoring the great history of music that has supported church worship through the ages. On a typical Sunday you may hear a church hymn, a praise chorus, an ancient motet and a spiritual, all done to a high standard, and because the text is relevant and connected to the liturgy and scripture readings for that day.



2) Friendly and Welcoming

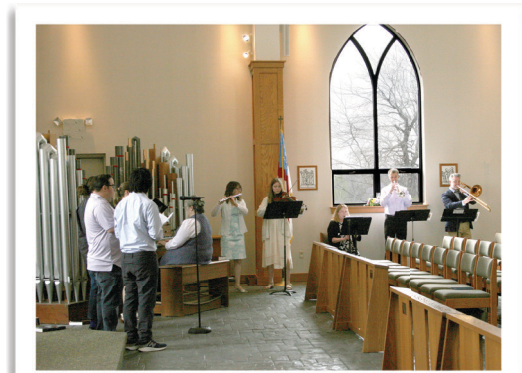
The congregation of Saint Mary Magdalene Church is very open and welcoming. In addition to having a welcoming team ministry, we are as a whole, instinctively quick to talk to newcomers and then quick to connect them with other members who may have similar interests. The atmosphere on any given Sunday morning can be described as warm and inviting. Every attempt is made to make first-time visitors feel at ease.

The booklet that we publish for each week's service — of the liturgy, music and prayers, and announcements — enables newcomers to feel comfortable engaging fully in the service without the distraction of having to navigate a “small library” of Episcopal literature.

3) Mission and Ministries

At last count, Saint Mary Magdalene Church had more than 25 ministries and missions. These ministries cover a wide range of interests. Some are mainly Sunday morning ministries while others involve weekly meetings. Still others meet semi-regularly. Some are overtly spiritual in nature, others seek to offer opportunities for fellowship.

There was strong encouragement from the founding leadership that if you see a need and feel that you can fill that need, then you should feel empowered to take a lead in doing so.



Alongside programs which support, encourage and develop the membership, there has also always been a strong commitment to mission work both in our local community and around the world. The church is currently involved in a number of local, national and international mission opportunities.



4) Facilities and Church Property

Our church was built in 2010. It has a striking contemporary nave, with clear glass windows that allow views of the treed property and the sky. We have oaken, cushioned chairs with kneelers for the congregation. Artisan banners, designed and handmade by artists from the congregation, adorn the white walls, altar, and pulpit for each season of the church year.



Also within the church building are two large teaching or meeting rooms, a nursery, a fully functioning kitchen and meeting space for coffee hour or church dinners, a soundproof room for parents to listen to the service while comforting their children, a sound system control room, and various small storage spaces.

The church is surrounded by eight acres of property. Behind the church is our columbarium, which sits in a “remembrance” garden with a labyrinth, designed and created by parishioners. The Palm Sunday “Hosanna” procession commences from here. The rest of the church property affords our church the opportunity to gather for cookouts, campouts, youth events, church socials, and other special celebrations.

We have a community garden behind the church house. In the summer we send fresh produce, harvested from our garden, to a food bank in Belton.

We feel that our property is a great resource, and one that could be utilized and managed even more effectively in the future.

When the church acquired its land there was already a large two-story house with a finished basement sitting on it. This building has been used in the past for church office space, additional meeting rooms, a retreat center and housing for visiting clergy. At one time we rented part of the house to a group that provided daily care and assistance to adults with special needs. Currently the lower level is used as a resource space for the non-profit ministry Kansas City for Refugees.

5) Volunteer Involvement

Saint Mary Magdalene Church has relied on volunteers throughout its short history. There is little in the way of territorial claims to church ministries. Those who wish to help are welcomed. This gives our congregants a sense of ownership in their community. Perhaps that is why we have been able to rely on volunteers to do things for which most churches hire. We rely on volunteers to clean the buildings, mow our grass, and tend our gardens. Those who bring a skill to the table can find ways to fully engage with our church community, just as do those who bring a willing heart and a desire to learn.



6) Open to Experimenting with New Ideas

Building a church from the ground up means that “ground” has to be a fertile place for new ideas to take shape and grow. Saint Mary Magdalene Church has always been open to new ways of doing things. We are too young to be able to say “we’ve always done it that way” and in many respects we hope we will never find ourselves saying that. This strength, in combination with the next, in many ways speaks in a visionary way about our future.

7) Members Can Overcome Challenges

There is a belief that God is working amongst us and will continue to do so in the future. We have been faced with great challenges — the economic downturn just as we began to build our church, the very large mortgage in the face of rising interest rates, the loss of two beloved clergy and the challenge of leadership which followed, and the COVID pandemic. We realize that there always will be challenges, but we have found God to be faithful as we too are faithful. We believe that God will continue to lead us into a bright and exciting future as God has done in the past.

Challenges

As our congregation talked about the many challenges we face, it became apparent that these challenges are interconnected with one big challenge: our need for growth. We would like to grow an active, participative, and committed membership. Our next leader needs to understand how important our need for growth is, both in membership numbers and in the depth of our spirituality. Only if we experience real and meaningful growth will the challenges we face now recede.

1) Need for Growth

Despite having at one time been a thriving congregation and then suffering the set-backs of the last few years, we are optimistic we can again thrive. We now know that having a beautiful church building strategically placed in a growing part of the city does not guarantee success. We need to realize our full potential by utilizing the strengths listed above to connect with people in the local area. We also want everyone to know that Saint Mary Magdalene Church is a place where they can grow with spiritual renewal. Our next leader will need to be able to not only cast a vision for the growth and diversity of our community, but work intentionally and methodically with the vestry, congregants, and ministries to realize this vision.

2) Finances and Mortgage

We have a considerable mortgage. Extraordinary negotiations with our bank (Central Bank) by our treasurer, key congregants, and the Diocese, have led to a reduction in the amount of interest we pay at least until 2025, when the loan terms need to be renegotiated. We are also actively paying down the principal with special donations from parishioners. However, it remains a reality that we do still have this considerable debt. We are mindful of this as we budget and plan for the future. The Diocese has given us a Letter of Credit and a low interest 20-year loan with which we paid off much of the mortgage principle, which has enabled us to increase our cash flow.

We realize that with increased membership, our debt would become more manageable. Nevertheless, Saint Mary Magdalene Church has operated within its budget for its entire existence.

3) Isolated Location of the Church

Our church was built in an area that was expecting significant growth at the beginning of this century. However, because of the economic recession in 2010, growth in south Kansas City stalled and is only just now recovering. Regardless of this fact, it remains true that our church is not located in the heart of any one community. There are several communities nearby, and these are the communities from which we would like to draw membership. Currently much of our membership travels a considerable distance to attend Saint Mary Magdalene Church. In this way we are considered by many to be a destination church.

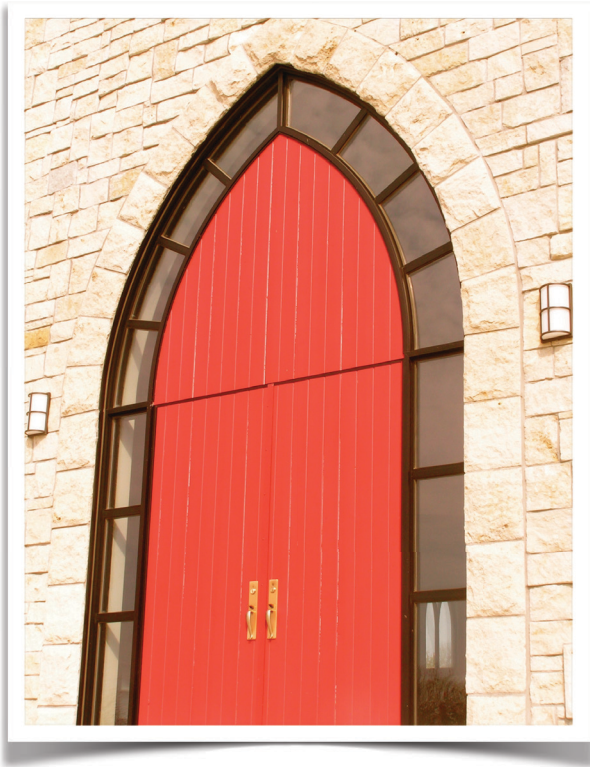
Gaining more members from the immediate communities — especially Loch Lloyd, Raymore and Belton — will help our church membership feel more a part of the surrounding community. We have had the most success in connecting with nearby residents when one of our priests and his family (with young children, who attended the public school) lived in Belton. We feel that a priest who has personal ties to one of these communities could aid Saint Mary Magdalene Church in being better known in the area.



Our History

In what can only be described as a visionary move, the Diocese of West Missouri realized, in the

first years of this century that as Kansas City began to expand to the south, there would be a need for a new parish to serve the growing community in that area. Under the leadership of Bishop Barry Howe, the vision was cast and steps were taken to establish a new parish in anticipation of new growth and development.



Saint Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church is that vision realized. Over the 22 years between 2002 and 2024, our congregation met, first in a funeral home, then in a store front, and finally in our new building, which sits on eight acres of land. We were granted full parish status in 2012.

At that time, Saint Mary Magdalene Church was poised to become one of the larger churches in the Diocese. With a vibrant music program, effective mission work in the surrounding community and around the world, engaging children's ministries and growing youth programs, a retreat house on church grounds, and fellowship and teaching

ministries for every age group in the congregation, the potential impact of this new parish was immense.

Unfortunately, a perfect storm of challenging personnel, the recession (resulting in the relocation of many of our professional families to other cities), and the impact of the COVID pandemic on in-person church (we had none during COVID) reduced our membership by two-thirds.

We remain an optimistic and engaged congregation, but we need the help of a dynamic and visionary leader to help us revitalize our parish so that we can at last realize our full potential.

Whom is God Calling?

There is a strong desire that whoever becomes Rector of Saint Mary Magdalene Church should be Christ-centered and be an excellent preacher and teacher: someone who can understand and interpret scripture in the context of church history and make it applicable to us today.

We want to feel inspired and challenged, be made to think, and to gain new insights into familiar stories. We want to understand the word of God, rooted in history, and made relevant to us today in a vibrant and real way.

Our congregation first and foremost prioritizes this: to have a deep desire to know God through God's word and, by fully knowing and understanding God's word, to see a vision for the future which we can effectively manifest in the world.

We also feel deeply that it is important our new priest be dedicated to the Episcopal tradition, committed to excellence in liturgy and music while also being comfortable interacting and connecting with people of differing backgrounds, ages, genders, and economic and social statuses. Our new priest needs to be a pastoral leader who is amenable to accepting lay leadership in ministries and missions. Our new rector needs to be willing to listen and respond to the needs of the congregation.

We know that we have the capacity to grow, so it is important that the new priest be able to cast a vision for growth, practically understand how to grow a church like ours, then lead us as we, together, seek to make that vision a reality. Our priest needs to be able to reliably and consistently embrace advance planning for all services and church events.

We have a strong tradition of volunteer leadership and a growing number of ministries and missions. We need a rector who can oversee our church's growth and further development of our ministries. We would like this person to champion volunteer leadership among our members by inspiring and developing leadership within the congregation. Our future priest needs to be able to support those who are already faithful leaders of ministries, and be able to see and capitalize on new and different ministry opportunities as they arise.



We need someone who can see when time is being well spent and who is not afraid to challenge us if we are putting time and effort into activities which do not help to bring about our shared vision for the church. We do not need a micro-manager, but we do need someone who has experience positively managing and inspiring a multi-ministry and mission-minded congregation.

Saint Mary Magdalene Church offers a unique opportunity for the right, gifted person. We are a small congregation now, but one with dedicated and tireless members. There is great potential in our congregation that includes an exciting energy that can be tapped as it has been before.

We are ready to be led anew on our walk with God. We are looking for someone called to help us cast a vision for what God would have us be, and then partner with us as we all work together to bring about our part of God's Kingdom here in south Kansas City.



Who are we? A Snapshot of our Parish

1. Saint Mary Magdalene Church is located in the southern area of the Kansas City Metro that includes the fast-growing Cass County (MO) and Johnson County (KS). This is roughly the area between I-35 and I-49.
2. Saint Mary Magdalene Church is a 22-year-old congregation in the Diocese of West Missouri that serves both Kansans and Missourians. After 10 years as a mission church, located in the south end of the Kansas City metro area, it became a parish in 2012. The closest other parishes in the Kansas City metro area are 8 and 14 miles away.
3. In 2010 the church moved to a new location near the Village of Loch Lloyd, about 3 miles west of Belton and five miles south of the southern limits of Kansas City. It is located near the junction of two Missouri state highways (D and 58). On that property it built a new church building on eight acres of land, which also contains a separate former house that has been renovated to provide parish offices, additional meeting spaces, and currently, a storage center for donations for the organization KC for Refugees. We have a large garden from which we harvest produce for local food banks and kitchens, a labyrinth and columbarium, and memorial garden behind the church, and an orchard (not currently maintained) on the property.
4. The parish draws from about a 10-mile radius that encompasses areas in both Kansas and Missouri (the state line is one mile west of the church). This area includes the nearby cities of Belton, Raymore, Peculiar, and Martin City and the southern areas of the Kansas City metro and its suburbs.

While there is constant turnover in the parish due to the fact that the Belton-Raymore area, in particular, sees people moving in and out as they follow employment opportunities, there is also longevity of our parish community, with some current members being founding members of the parish, and others commencing their association with Saint Mary Magdalene Church while it was still a mission church in southern Kansas City.

5. The parish enrolls about 76 members. Although the parish could be considered multi-generational, including retirees, those in the work force, and families with older children, it is currently challenged with attracting families with young children.
6. Average Sunday attendance is about 40 at the single Rite II service (10:30 am). We have facilities and people waiting to welcome children to our nursery and Sunday School.
7. The 2024 expense budget for the parish is \$204,691, of which \$62,776 is personnel costs and \$141,915 is associated with the facilities (mortgage, utilities, maintenance). We have about 28 pledging units.
8. Members are very loyal to this parish as evidenced by their tenacity and commitment in following the various geographic moves from several mission locations to the newly constructed parish church building. Despite our small congregation size, most members are involved in a wide variety of volunteer and outreach activities.

Kansas City Community

Kansas City is a vibrant city, with several major professional sports teams including recent two-time winners of both the Super Bowl and the World Series. We also have a championship men's soccer team. Most recently, we are home to the first women's soccer stadium built in this country.

The arts flourish in Kansas City with the world-famous Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Kansas City Symphony, the Harriman-Jewell Series, the Grammy award-winning Kansas City Chorale, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and a wealth of community semi-professional and professional music and theater ensembles and choral groups.

The area is rich in educational opportunities as well, with the University of Missouri-Kansas City, William Jewell College, Avila University, Rockhurst University and Park University within the greater metropolitan area. The University of Kansas is a short drive west and the University of Central Missouri just to the East.

Ministries

- Acolyte
- Altar Guild
- Banners & Vestments
- Blessing of the Animals
- Buildings & Grounds
- Bulletin Publication
- The Call Newsletter
- Chalice Bearers
- Cleaning Crew
- Coffee Hour
- Community Garden
- Daughters of the King
- Evening Prayer Group
- Events/Weddings Coordinator
- God & Guinness Dinner
- Group Greening of the Church
- Lay Readers
- Lay Preachers
- Mowing/Landscaping
- Music Team
- Live-Streaming of Services
- Tellers/Accounting
- Ushers
- Website
- Welcoming Committee
- Women's Book Club

