



St. Clare's Episcopal Church

Worship with Joy • Grow in Faith • Act for Justice

Church Profile



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Who Are We?

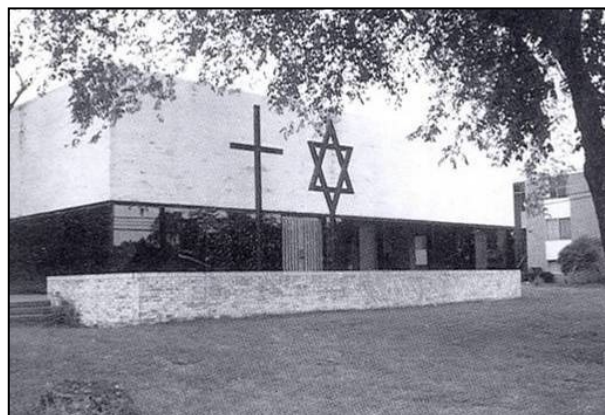
St. Clare of Assisi is a progressive Episcopal church in Ann Arbor, Michigan that shares its building with Temple Beth Emeth (TBE), a reformed Jewish congregation. The two congregations co-own the facility as equal partners in Genesis of Ann Arbor. The Sanctuary altar space is designed to convert easily between “church” and “temple” and each congregation’s religious artifacts are stored when not in use, to provide a neutral space for all. Two other long-term tenants in the building are the Ann Arbor Children’s House Montessori preschool and Blue Ocean Faith, an evangelical congregation that worships in the social hall on Sunday mornings.

In January 2019, our rector of 15 years, the Reverend James Rhodenhiser, left to lead a parish in Phoenix, Arizona. The Reverend Mary Jane Peck has been serving as the interim rector since June 1, 2019. In March 2020, the pandemic forced us to stop worshipping in person in our facility. Since that time, we have worshiped and gathered together via Zoom.

As of February 1, 2020, we had 274 members, We have 241 communicants over the age of 16, and 33 under the age of 16. We have 146 households represented, with 58 of them being single member households. Seventy-



Left to right: Jane Crighton, Marjory Luther, Susan Jones Draffen, and Judi Kleinman, the women who started the Back Door Food Pantry.



The cross and the Star of David in front of the social hall and as viewed from Packard Street.

nine of those households have people who are employed living there; 63 are retirees; and four are student households. Eleven children are in middle school or high school, and 22 are under age 11.

St. Clare’s takes its outreach programs seriously. Between 100-150 of our parishioners are active in some form of outreach. Outreach programs in which we provide both financial and volunteer support include:

- Back Door Food Pantry (BDFP) which was started by a group of church members in 2007, and has continued in partnership with Temple Beth Emeth and Muslim Social Services.
- County Rotating Men’s Shelter
- Dinner for Food Pantry patrons
- St. Clare’s Outreach Sunday (SOS)
- Wine tasting and auction to benefit Haiti Outreach Mission
- Friends in Deed Community Assistance
- Alpha House Family Shelter
- Christmas Eve Community Luncheon
- Refugee Sanctuary Support
- Providing financial support to other groups throughout Southeast Michigan

The congregation also takes part in “in-reach” programs, which include adult education, Bible study, cell groups, seeker groups, book clubs, knitting circles, and prayer groups. We



value each other's fellowship and are always looking for ways to share it.

The relationship St. Clare's has with its sister congregation, TBE, is a cherished one. We co-own and operate the facility in which both congregations worship. The 45+ year commitment to the Genesis Agreement is a testament to the fact that this is one of the church's most important covenants. Like a long-term marriage, this relationship takes constant effort, and can be very challenging. It is sometimes frustrating for both congregations that they each do not have sole control of their Sanctuary and the surrounding property. Also like a good marriage, the hard work has paid off, creating a fulfilling relationship both congregations value.

Brief History of St. Clare's

- 1952 St. Clare of Assisi Episcopal Church is designated as a mission church and the property for the church is donated by Dr. Inez Wisdom, a local physician and professor at the University.
- 1956 First sanctuary is built.
- 1965 Church qualifies as a parish church with the Rev. Colin Campbell as first rector.
- 1968 A larger sanctuary, social hall, and offices are built.
- 1970 Temple Beth Emeth, a new reformed Jewish congregation, begins to rent space from the church.
- 1972 The Rev. Campbell resigns and is replaced by the Rev. Douglas Evett.
- 1974 St. Clare's and TBE form a partnership called Genesis of Ann Arbor to co-own and manage the facility.
- 1989 The church calls its first assistant rector and first female clergy person, the Rev. Susan Bock.
- 1994 After a successful joint capital campaign with TBE, a new, larger sanctuary with additional education



Above: Inez Wisdom in front of the St. Francis Chapel that is still located in front of the current sanctuary.

- rooms in the lower level is built and dedicated.
- 2001 A period of upheaval in the church begins with the removal of the rector due to impropriety and the departure of the assistant rector, whose spouse accepts a job in Minnesota. This is followed by two years of interim rectors.
- 2003 The Rev. James Rhodenhiser is called as the new rector.
- 2007 The Back Door Food Pantry is started.
- 2015 Genesis signs a new lease with Blue Ocean Faith congregation to hold worship services in our social hall on Sunday mornings.
- 2016-17 Staff issues lead to the departure of the Director of Children's Ministry and the assistant rector. Membership declines as a result of these departures.
- 2019 The Rev. James Rhodenhiser leaves to take a position with a new parish and the Rev. Mary Jane Peck is called as the interim rector.

2020 The church is forced to stop meeting in person due to a global pandemic. Services resume online via Zoom.

Strengths

At St. Clare's we really do believe in and live out our mission to "Worship with Joy, Grow in Faith, and Act for Justice."

Worship and Music

We work joyfully to meet the many worship needs and styles of our diverse congregation. We are open to trying new and different things but also value the long-held traditions of the church. Music has always been an important part of our worship experience. We have been, and are, blessed with staff and laity that are very gifted musically. We treasure their contribution to worship.

Outreach/Mission

We express our faith and gratitude to God through service to others. Each year our congregation plans and participates in a variety of programs that support the local community as well as world missions. We passionately strive for social justice in the world. Whether it is serving food to the hungry or co-hosting a mayoral forum on addressing the need for affordable housing in our community, we take our role for positive change seriously.



Katie Oppenheim, parishioner and nurse, serves at a free health clinic in Mirebalais, Haiti supported by St. Clare's.



The children of the church perform "Jonah" for their annual musical.

Friendly and Welcoming

People who visit St. Clare's for the first time will find us friendly and warm. We aren't afraid to reach out and strike up a conversation. We believe that our faith grows when we build bonds within the church community and so have a wide variety of groups that meet to socialize and support one another. We value each other's fellowship and are always looking for ways to share it.

Skilled Lay Involvement

We are blessed with an active, educated, engaged, accomplished group of members and lay leaders who are committed to supporting the church's vision as a vibrant and welcoming place of worship. When we identify what needs to be done, there is plenty of skillful leadership to make it happen. The membership of St. Clare's has a wide range of gifts and abilities. They are doers and want to be involved. They put their time and talent where their mouths are.

Resilient

Through the ups and downs we have experienced over our history, we have learned that our strength lies in the commitment we have to God, our church, and our mission. Our response to the current pandemic restrictions illustrates our determination to maintain our engagement with the congregation. Following the



Diocesan directives, we have held our Morning Prayer via Zoom, occasional outdoor services, and posted a recorded children's Gospel reflection on Facebook. The music and stories have been well received and attendance has been gratifying and steady. Regardless of the barriers and struggles we have faced, we are firm in our conviction to move forward and bring about God's kingdom here on earth.

Challenges/Opportunities

In the past five years, St. Clare's membership has dropped by 40%. Prior to this time, we boasted over 100 children in our church school and youth groups. Currently we have around 35-40 children. There is a strong



St. Clare's altar set for Epiphany and Feast of Lights.

desire to attract back young families to St. Clare's and to reenergize our youth program. We would also like our congregation to be more diverse and reflective of the community in which we live. Our current Director of Children's Ministry will leave the position at the end of May. Filling this position with the right person will be key to achieving these goals.

The Genesis partnership with TBE is a relationship that is important to us and at times requires more nurturing. TBE is a larger congregation that uses the facility more than St. Clare's does. As a result, they pay a greater share of the operating expenses, but we still split the capital expenditures evenly. This means that 30% of St. Clare's annual budget goes to Genesis and it is the Genesis Board that determines how these funds are used. Each congregation holds half of the board positions and alternates the leadership position so the needs of both are represented.

Balancing the needs of each congregation is a constant challenge. For example, the



The bema set for Temple Shabbat services.

members of TBE have always felt the need for greater security in the building. While we are sensitive to the climate that drives these fears, we also want the building to be a welcoming place that is used by many groups in the community. Issues can arise when major congregational events conflict, such as when Christmas Eve falls on a Friday or when Passover and Holy Week coincide.



Outdoor eucharist service held during the pandemic.

Clear communication and a willingness to compromise and find creative solutions is the key to an equitable relationship. Our goal is to work cooperatively with TBE on use of the building while not losing sight of our mission and goals. The Genesis relationship is over 45 years old and we have affirmed our commitment to it many times over the years, but this has come about only through hard work, understanding, and flexibility.

What We Seek in a Rector

We want our next rector to help us create a joy-filled space with worship that inspires community and commitment; one whose faith compels them to be a servant leader. The ideal candidate will be a skilled preacher whose message is approachable and yet still challenges us to grow in our faith and understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

We will thrive with a rector who is pastoral in their approach; someone who cares for us deeply and strives to nurture our faith and minister to our emotional and spiritual needs so that we can achieve all that God has called us to do.

Our congregation is full of highly educated and energetic people. We have a lot of ideas and perspectives, and we seek a rector who can keep a clear and tranquil head in the

middle of all that brainstorming. There is a great hunger and thirst for justice in our congregation; we are zealous to meet the needs of our neighbors. Our ideal rector will help us to discern the path of Jesus among all our ideas and energies, and shepherd us along the way.

Lastly but not least, we are looking for a rector who can step lightly into the existing marriage between temple and church, sowing seeds of mutual affection and respect that can bear fruit of collaboration and cooperation when decisions need to be made. Much of the success of the partnership has come through building relationships among lay leadership. Our past rectors have had success when they have worked to build relationships with Temple staff and members.

Area/Region Description

St. Clare's is located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a small midwestern city, with a major research university at its center, both literally and figuratively. The current population is approximately 120,000, with another 30,000 undergraduate students at the University. Ann Arbor combines the social life of a larger city with the community feel of a small town. St. Clare's sits in south-central Ann Arbor, on Packard Street, one and a half miles from Central Campus and two miles from downtown. It is nestled between an



The Michigan Union building on the University of Michigan campus.



apartment complex, an elementary school, a small office building, and a residential neighborhood. Congregants come primarily from Ann Arbor, although many live in nearby communities like Dexter to the West, Saline to the south, Ypsilanti to the east, and South Lyon to the north.

Ann Arbor is a quick 30-minute drive to Detroit, which shares a border with Windsor, Ontario across the Detroit River. A little farther drive away are Chicago, to the west (4 hours) and Toronto, to the east (4.5 hours). Detroit-Wayne International Airport—a Delta Airlines hub for the Midwest and Northeast—is an easy 25 minutes away, so you can quickly get anywhere you want to go.

Ann Arbor punches above its weight in the visual and performing arts arena, attracting experiences normally found in much larger coastal cities. There is a deep and vibrant local arts and performance scene, in addition to more structured and formal programs hosted by the university and others. Food is also a popular pastime for Ann Arborites, who enjoy a plethora of top-notch local restaurants.

College sports teams from the university and professional teams from Detroit provide a wide range of opportunities for attending sporting events.

Higher education, healthcare, automotive manufacturing, and a burgeoning tech

industry are the area's major economic players. In 2018, Washtenaw County had more doctors, dentists, and mental health providers per capita than anywhere else in the State of Michigan. Michigan's deep manufacturing roots and several educational institutions have created a pipeline of engineers of all sorts, many of whom are connected to auto manufacturing.

St. Clare's Financial Position

St. Clare's is a financially stable congregation with a long history of meeting its financial obligations. We currently have an operating budget of \$513,000. We have consistently been able to meet our operating needs through individual giving and operating reserves. Our reserves are presently at a level that would cover operating expenses for two to three months. Nearly 30% of our operating budget goes to support the Genesis staff and maintenance expenses.

St. Clare's has consistently paid its apportionment to the Episcopal Dioceses of Michigan and is in good financial standing with them. We negotiated a reduction in the apportionment for the past two years.

In addition to pledge giving, St. Clare's has several funds which receive donations, memorial gifts and transfers of property on



behalf of the congregation. Among them a general Endowment Fund which is available for non-operating related special projects; the ARK Fund was established to cover capital improvements to the facility; and the Bailey Fund provides fees for outside speakers.

Members Giving

According to the Congregational Assessment Tool used to survey the members at the end of 2019, two-thirds of the members have income above \$70,000 per year. On average, they give 2.7% of their income to the church. The average annual contribution per member is \$3,336.

In addition to their financial support of the church, St. Clarians are amazingly generous with their time and talents. A recent project utilized the design gifts of our resident fabric artist, the sewing skills of several congregants, and the assistance of numerous members, young and old, to create beautiful new banners which are now hung in the Sanctuary during worship to proclaim to all our church's mission:

**Worship for Joy,
Grow in Faith,
Act for Justice**



Top left page 6: the banners hanging in the sanctuary, Bottom right page 6 two of our acolytes, Middle left this page: The youth group visits the Underground Railroad Museum in Detroit. Middle right this page: Members participating in a Genesis work day on the landscaping around the building. Lower left this page: a group photo on the Sunday of Service/Mitzvah Day, a joint outreach with TBE and Blue Ocean Faith, Lower right this page: A group of women from St. Clare's attend the Women's March on Washington in 2017.



Episcopal Diocese of Michigan Statement

Guided by our newly elected bishop the Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry, we are a diocese that values collegiality, creativity, and openness. We offer community organizing training, the College of Congregational Development, and ongoing collegiality and support. We invite you to come and join us as we embody the Gospel both inside and outside our church doors. Please send your Cover Letter, Resume, and OTM Profile to the Rev. Canon Ellen Ekevag, eekevag@edomi.org.