

Episcopal Church of the Incarnation

Ann Arbor MI

The Church of the Incarnation is a progressive, creatively experimental Episcopal congregation and Interfaith Community that strives to live out the vision of the Beloved Community by being multi-racial, inclusive, and centered around the teachings and practices of Jesus, while working for the day when all will know themselves and one another as beloved.



Our Members

Our members are diverse. We have cradle Episcopalians and folks from other Christian backgrounds who are drawn to our inclusive message. Our membership also includes folks from other faith traditions, atheists, and agnostics. We share a commitment to social justice, a desire for community, and an openness to challenging ideas. We welcome and learn from people of all backgrounds as we engage in our individual and communal spiritual journeys.

Our congregation's numbers have fluctuated since COVID and the retirement of our longtime pastor, and now stand at 143 members. We support ECI generously with our time and out tithes; while tithing has fluctuated some, our \$136K in pledges for 2025 is our highest since before the pandemic.





Church History

ECI was founded in 1984 by a small group of socially-conscious Episcopalians – all women – who wanted to make community service and advocacy the central focus of their spiritual commitment. This group chose prison service and advocacy as their first mission, and since then ECI members have gone on to be involved in many criminal justice reform and restorative justice efforts in Washtenaw County.

Since those first years, ECI has been the home of the ordination of Michigan's first openly-lesbian priest. Members have been active internationally through the Nicaragua Project, our relationship with our sister church in Catarina, Nicaragua, and through Friends of Sabeel in North America. Locally, ECI members have served our homeless neighbors by partnering with MISSION prior to the COVID pandemic and, more recently, through our participation in Fed Up Ministry's food truck. Our members were active participants in creating the Michigan chapter of the Poor People's Campaign in 2018, and have circulated petitions for causes ranging from ending gerrymandering to enshrining the right to abortion care in Michigan's constitution. Most recently, we have an active Creation Care Committee dedicated to acting on the climate crisis, working for justice in Palestine, and have been taking part in work to combat Christian Nationalism.

THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED



Our Services

We gather on Sundays for participatory services. Our choir fills our chapel with a mix of spirituals, gospel and traditional hymns, and folk music from around the world. We use inclusive language. A special, and essential, part of our service is that after the sermon, members of the community contribute individual reflections on the scripture passages, the sermon, or connections between their faith and contemporary events.

Since the pandemic, we have fully hybrid services. Congregants zoom in and are projected on a screen in the front of the chapel. Online participants contribute by doing the readings and can share during the communal reflections. Maintaining hybrid services has improved the accessibility for many members of our church.

After services, in-person members and visitors gather to share food each Sunday, with special holiday potlucks on Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.



Our Ministries

Members of ECI actively work to make the world a more just place, rooted in our church community. We believe that Jesus' teachings call us to be forces for structural and social change. Our members have participated efforts to improve health services in our county, to document racial inequities in the judicial system, to advocate for restorative justice, and to fight for LGBTQ rights. We have active Creation Care and Prison ministries.

Our church also has vibrant small groups, including a Men's Group and a Spirituality discussion group to ensure that members engage in radical self-care and self-knowledge. We have a growing youth ministry that we hope our new priest can, with the help of the full church community, continue to expand.



Our chapel

The David Byrd Chapel was built by students at Washtenaw Community College, as part of a construction technology program created by [architect Byrd](#) to help Black and other minority students qualify for building trade apprenticeships. The chapel originally served as a gathering place for Washtenaw County's Black community. It became ECI's home in fall 1987. In 2001, we raised the capital needed to construct our Social Hall. In the 2020s, we added solar panels and a heat pump to reduce our environmental impact.



Just as our chapel was built from "the stones that the builders rejected," we have tried to follow in the spirit of David and his wife, Leticia Byrd, who believed that God's new creation can emerge from the people our society has rejected.

Our Next Priest

We are searching for a priest who embraces activism and will continue ECI's tradition of radical inclusivity. Our new priest should be able to work with and grow our community of religious, spiritual, non-religious, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA folks. They should accept people as they are. We hope our priest will be involved in local and regional communities and neighborhoods to create social change amidst troubling times.

We value thought-provoking sermons that link to present-day challenges and draw from the Bible and other sources. Our new priest should be an excellent communicator and have a passion for pastoral care. We hope our new priest will experiment with our liturgy so that the service speaks to our members and will draw new, young people and families to our church. Growing our youth program is a high priority for ECI.

Administratively, we hope the new priest will delegate to our Vestry and to skilled congregants, both so that the priest has a reasonable work load but also to promote cooperative engagement among and transparency with church members.



How to Apply

Interested clergy should send a cover letter addressed to the search committee, resume and a PDF file of their OTM portfolio to the Rev. Susie Shaefer, Office of Congregational Development and Transitions for the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan by email: sshaefer@edomi.org or mail to 4800 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI 48201.

Questions can be addressed to search committee co-chairs Edie Lewis (ohenewah49@gmail.com) and Gretchen Keppel-Aleks (gretchen.kep@gmail.com)

