

# Church Profile



Saint Boniface Episcopal Church  
3906 W. Mequon Road  
Mequon, Wisconsin 53092  
September 2022

## Church Profile for Saint Boniface Episcopal Church

### Summary Statement of church:

St. Boniface is a suburban church with people hungering for spiritual growth, outreach to others, and fellowship with each other. We lost quite a few members during the pandemic; those who remain are committed to the parish. We are determined to be a place of loving influence, strength, and hope. St. Boniface deeply wants to grow, move forward, and bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our surrounding areas. We want to honor God and the core group of leadership throughout the generations that established and maintained our presence as the Episcopal church in Mequon.



**Demographics:** Language spoken in church: English  
Language spoken in surrounding community: English

Race or ethnicity in church: Caucasian  
Race or ethnicity in surrounding community: Caucasian

Gender Distribution:      MALE                      FEMALE  
   51-46%                      60-54%

Age distribution  
19 YEARS OR YOUNGER      20 -34              35-49              50-65              Over 65  
   7 (6%)              12 (11%)              14 (13%)              31 (27%)              48 (43%)

Number of current paid staff: church: 4    preschool 7

Distance people live from church %

1/2 MILE OR LESS	1/2 - 1 MILE	1 - 3 MILES	MORE THAN 3 MILES
0	5%	20%	75%

Community Type %:	Bedroom community	College or University	Retirement
	95%	5%	*

\*We are not a retirement community; although, several of our members reside in Senior living communities.



### Description of Greater Community:

St. Boniface Episcopal Church draws parishioners from a wide variety of communities in Ozaukee, Washington, Waukesha, and Milwaukee counties.

English is the predominant language spoken at St. Boniface and in its surrounding communities. The majority of people in the communities are Caucasian. In addition, other larger groups include Asian, African-American, and Hispanic individuals. Also, people of Russian, Hmong, and Jewish Orthodox heritage live in our communities as do a number of African immigrants who are Anglican.

Most parishioners have obtained a bachelor's degree while others hold master's or PhD degrees. Approximately half of our members are retired, while the other half is in the workforce. Our members are primarily adults with a few children as members.





***What changes or trends have occurred within the congregation in the last five years?***

St. Boniface, like most mainline churches, has shown a decrease of participation in worship as well as learning opportunities, along with a decrease in programmatic offerings. This is not entirely attributable to the Covid pandemic. One factor that is related to the pandemic is that people left to find in-person worship instead of participating in our online worship. Due to diocesan guidelines, the area Episcopal churches did not resume in-person worship until after many other churches did. Other factors we have identified as reasons that people left over this timeframe have been i) families looking for a church with more children; ii) people searching for spiritual nourishment from the sermons; and iii) people searching for music other than what we were offering.

Another change has been a decrease of opportunities for fellowship. We eliminated fellowship events due to the pandemic and are just now resuming hospitality time after worship. The people of St. Boniface enjoy each other, so the decrease in the past five years of other events such as senior luncheons, mystery dinners, and parish picnics (to name a few) has had a negative effect because people miss being with each other.



A third trend in the congregation is similar to others: the greying of the faith community. The demographics are shared elsewhere in

this profile, but the resulting trend is having fewer people active and energized enough to do the work necessary for Christ's ministry.

### ***What changes or trends have occurred within the wider community within the last five years?***

Mequon is no different than so many other communities and is experiencing a rise in political divisiveness. A specific example of this divisiveness occurred in Summer/Fall 2021 with a school board recall campaign and election in the city. Although the initiative was soundly defeated, the rhetoric was poisonous in a relatively quiet suburb. Mequon and the surrounding communities from which we draw congregants have been experiencing a seemingly endless political battle, rife with increasing negativism on both sides.

We are a northern suburb adjacent to Milwaukee. The metro area, including communities where our members live, has been experiencing a significant rise in crime in the past few years, particularly in gun violence. We have seen murder rates set record numbers each of the past three years (e.g., a 40% increase so far in 2022 over 2021). Nationally Milwaukee has ranked as the fourth highest homicide rate increase in the country. (WalletHub, reported in local news, 27 Jul 2022)

Another trend is that there appears to be some success in area evangelical non-denominational churches' stabilization/growth in attendance. We note that some of the local mainstream congregations have minimized their denominational affiliation and identification (e.g., Christ Church ELCA) and have adopted a more non-denominational character to try to attract members.

### ***What are our current programs for mission and ministry?***

We have an active Outreach Committee that conducts quarterly food drives for local food pantries and provides meals for people in the Family Promise Program. We serve bi-monthly at a free meal program in Milwaukee. In addition, we contribute financially to several community programs. We also buy, pack, and deliver Thanksgiving dinner groceries for families in Milwaukee.

We deliver flowers at Christmas and Easter to the homebound in our congregation and are currently forming a lay home-visit ministry. We also have a Christmas Giving Tree.



We have an active Daughters of the King chapter. A weekly summer program, Wine Women Word, brings together women from St. Boniface and neighboring churches to meet socially and discuss various biblical topics. St. Boniface also hosts a monthly interfaith women's book club.

A men's group meets weekly for breakfast. Men also participate in two interdenominational groups that meet weekly to study Holy Scripture.

We live-stream our Sunday service via YouTube. Tuesday evenings we have bible study and pray Compline via Zoom. Our

deacon brings monthly communion to a senior living center.

We aspire to do more and recognize the need to revise our parish Mission Statement to reflect our desire to more fully minister to the greater community.

### ***What are the goals of our parish?***

A primary goal for the parish of St. Boniface is to have a clear Mission Statement, born out of our Baptismal Covenant. This will be foundational for our worship, our education programs, the ways we interact with each other, and how we do service in our wider community. We want to be a viable Episcopal church that can sustain and grow our ministries.

1. St. Boniface needs clarity about our mission. Our goal is to find a priest who can work with us in defining and writing our Mission Statement.
2. We want to increase confidence among the parishioners that we will remain a viable church community moving from survival mode to growth in numbers, giving, and participation.
3. Some parishioners have fallen out of the habit of weekly worship. We want to focus on an active worship in Word and Sacrament that will attract worshippers with enlivening music, an invitation to engage with scripture, and a sense of being fed that moves us to everyday lives that reflect God's love. We want a hospitable worship that connects us to the divine and each other, empowering the congregants to pour themselves out to family and community as we are called.
4. There has been a movement away from a willingness to participate in learning opportunities. We want to revitalize the desire to learn about the essence of our faith tradition and be a people with a working knowledge of the Bible. Examples of such programs include bible study, Education for Ministry, social justice studies, an instructed eucharist, and an eventual restoration of a children's Christian education program.
5. We desire to be a place of greater depth in spirituality. We want to explore our spiritual gifts and have the tools to develop them. We want to learn to be a praying community.
6. We want to build on the love already shared among members via small groups that invite intimacy and vulnerability, growing in strength to celebrate, encourage, and support each other.
7. We want to be a welcoming place in our community that can partner with others, assess needs, and have offerings that speak to and serve those needs. Ideas may include being a location for outside groups such as





12-step groups, guest lecturers, concerts and recitals, retreat opportunities, LGBTQ+ youth/family support, etc.

8. Occasional incidents of outburst and differences of opinion have not always been handled with grace and accountability. A goal for our parish is to be able to deal with conflict and unacceptable behavior in a direct and loving manner. As the divisiveness of our culture invades our church, we need to develop deep listening skills and honest but grace-filled ways of speaking.

### ***Who are we? Why are we here?***

St. Boniface is a parish seeking our purpose. We desire to continue to be an Episcopal presence grounded in our Baptismal Covenant. Our intention is to be a place of worship, welcome, hope, and growth. We are looking to define what all of that looks like in its particularities.

### ***What are our gifts and resources?***

Our top three assets are location, commitment, and outreach.

Located along Mequon Road, the church is highly visible in the city of Mequon but also draws parishioners from neighboring communities. The original structure, built in 1958, contains offices and classrooms, as well as large, flexible spaces. Built in 2001, the sanctuary provides a contemplative, inspirational setting. The airy, modern design may appeal to visitors who find more traditional church decor intimidating or old-fashioned.

While membership numbers have decreased in recent years, St. Boniface maintains a core group of people who are committed, articulate, well-educated, and hard-working. A passion for outreach fuels this core, and the parish supports local and regional non-profits both financially and through in-person service. Four times each year the church hosts a food drive for area pantries. We also regularly volunteer with The Gathering, a Milwaukee-based program feeding the food-insecure, and Family Promise, an Ozaukee county program providing housing and meals for homeless families.

Parish members are committed to the church and outreach, but it is a dwindling number of aging people. Despite the location in a well-populated suburban area, it has been challenging to draw new members who might help re-energize our congregation.

### ***What obstacles do we face?***

In the past, St. Boniface has been an independently-minded church that has had an ambivalent attitude towards the diocese and at times has become disenchanted with previous rectors. It holds high expectations of the rector as a spiritual leader. Parts of previous rector relationships have soured, with shared responsibility between the rector and congregation. This has led to a habit of being more self-sufficient than is occasionally appropriate. We have worked hard on this issue in the past year and have become more collaborative.

This relationship dynamic will need to be tempered in two ways: expectations of what a half-time priest can accomplish will need to be right-sized; and the parish will also need to become more collaborative, looking to the priest for guidance in the congregation's mission and focus.

This period of transition, with the aid of a trained interim priest, has stimulated parishioners' vision for what St. Boniface could become. We have a desire to grow, remain relevant, and serve the community and the wider world. A priest who can channel this hope into a plan of action is needed for the congregation's long-term survival.



### ***What are the gifts we consider essential in this position and those that would be very helpful?***

#### **Essential**

- Help people develop their spiritual lives
- Help people understand and act upon issues of social justice
- Be an effective communicator
- Effectively deal with conflict

#### **Very Helpful**

- Build a sense of community among the people with whom he/she works
- Be an effective teacher
- Work regularly in the development of stewardship growth
- Bring joy and good humor to relationships
- Be able to share leadership and work as a team

### ***What do we expect of our priest during the first year?***

The people of St. Boniface are hungry for spiritual nourishment. We crave Sunday sermons that are well-prepared and link living today as a Christian with the gospel message. While there are many areas that a new rector will want to focus on, and the parishioners will hope for, preaching is the first “glimpse” parishioners will have of the future and will be foundational as we begin to rebuild St. Boniface.

Focusing on getting to know each other will be vital in building trust, which can lead to honest conversation, and is essential to helping us define our future. Being increasingly open to shared ministry will be very important and will be dependent on trusting relationships.

Rebuilding our congregation will require a belief that St. Boniface has a future. While we are determining just what that is, we need a rector who knows us, believes in us, and is enthusiastic about what we can become. Enthusiasm is contagious, and we need it to spread throughout the congregation.

Conflict in transition is to be expected. We want to work with a new rector in preparing to deal with adverse situations.

Lastly, but perhaps most critical to our future, we must develop a new Mission Statement. We have come to understand how essential it is and realize that we will need help clarifying for ourselves and for the greater community just why we are here.



## ***What support will we give our priest during the first year?***

We are eager to support our new priest and are committed to doing so in a number of ways. We will begin with asking our new rector what he or she needs from us. We will listen and be open to new ideas. If someone says, “Well, that’s not the way we’ve always done it,” we will help that person understand that we are looking forward, not backward.

St. Boniface parishioners will learn about and respect the time limitations of a half-time priest. Vestry members and committee chairs are able to handle myriad duties that don’t require a priest’s participation. We will work collaboratively with our new rector on what is happening throughout the church.



The first months will be a whirlwind of meeting new people and getting to know each other; we are planning to wear name tags during our church services. We will attend services, participate in fellowship opportunities, and encourage others to do the same.

Once our new rector is settled in, we will work together to develop mutually agreed upon goals. We will pray daily for our new rector, our shared ministry, and our faith community. Our commitment to our new rector will include flexibility, open communication, and making time for having fun together.

## ***Something more we would like to add:***

The leadership team recognizes there is unrealized potential within our parish. This includes everything from underutilized building space, to people sitting on the sidelines waiting for a catalyst, and even unrecognized gifts and talents. We need to be willing to explore new ideas.

The St. Boniface facility also presents unrealized potential. We are located on a main street one-half mile from the high school, and a quick three-minute drive from the increasing development and activities around the Mequon Town Centre. We are an optimal and visible site as a base for Christ’s ministries in the heart of Mequon as well as a large radius of growing communities.

Mequon and surrounding communities offer a strong quality of life. Excellent schools, low taxes, and safety are hallmarks of the area. Downtown Milwaukee is a 20-minute drive, allowing easy access to cultural opportunities, professional and college sporting events, shopping, and dining.

The upcoming departure of Mequon Preschool, on site for more than 40 years, provides an open canvas for discerning mission opportunities here. Pre-Covid we had external musical groups (e.g., Homestead H.S. Orchestra, UW-Milwaukee Classical Guitar students) take advantage of the superb acoustics of the church for concerts and recitals.

We have an outstanding Music Director who has a gift for using music to deepen our worship experience. She is open to a variety of forms of music.

We have a columbarium that is treasured by our parishioners.

### ***Document Sources***

This profile was created from information received from an all-parish timeline exercise, a Congregational Vitality Assessment Survey (analyzed by FaithX/the Episcopal Church Foundation), and six facilitated focus groups. In addition, we used local website data for our demographics, and an updated and curated parish directory. The information received from all these sources was carefully analyzed and edited weekly from June 29—September 14, 2022.

### ***The Parish Profile Team:***

The Rev. Debra Trakel

Deacon Terry Garner

Senior Warden: Sarah Kerkman Dwyer

Vestry Members: Mary Metz, Rob Mortensen, Esther Simonson

Photos: Rick Bate

Mary Metz