



# Chapel *of the* Cross

PARISH PROFILE

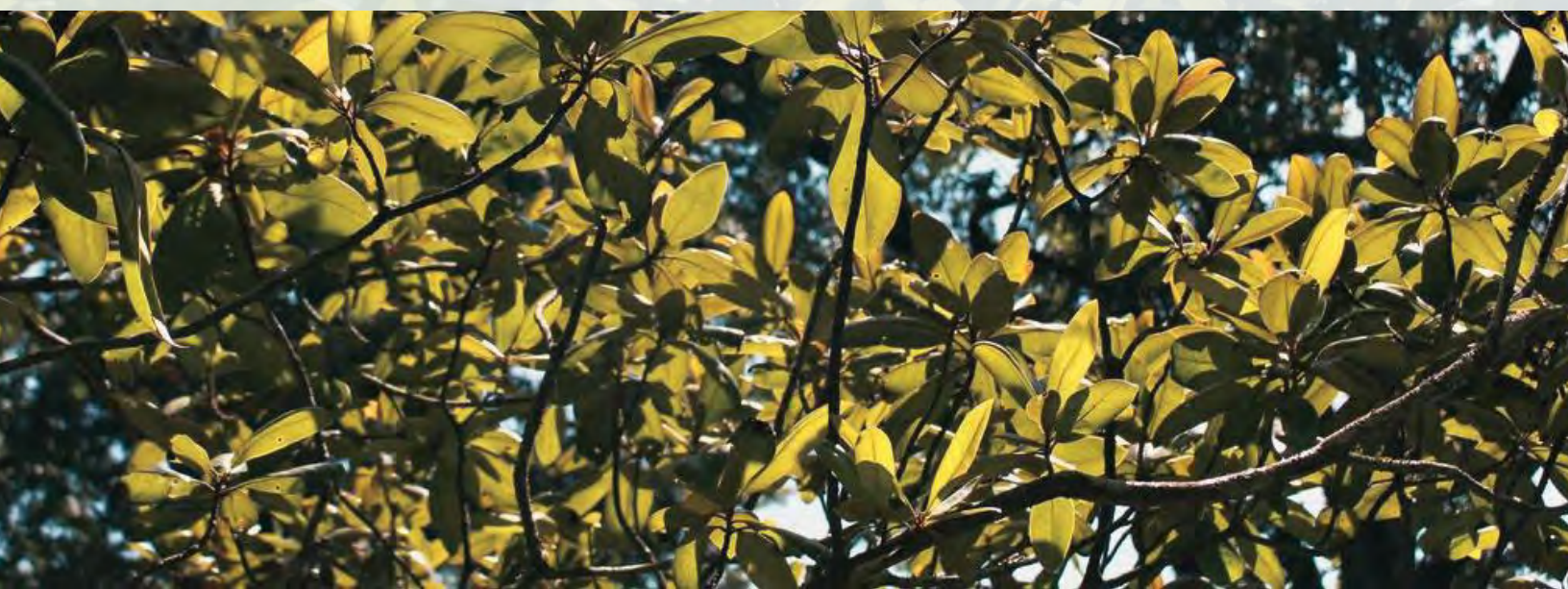
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# Our Mission Statement

*Welcoming the stranger, nurturing one another, and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Chapel of the Cross strives to live the mission of Jesus Christ through prayer, traditional liturgy, Christian education, active outreach, and love of all God's creation.*





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*The Chapel of the Cross is a deeply spiritual community rooted in rich history and tradition yet casual in its worship style and relaxed in its approach to one another. We are seeking a rector who is a strong visionary and gifted teacher, who can help strengthen our spiritual relationships with God and establish a solid course for our future. With an average Sunday attendance of approximately 250, more than 831 active parishioners, and an annual budget of approximately \$900,000, the Chapel is the 3rd largest Episcopal parish in the Diocese of Mississippi. Our parishioners best describe the Chapel in their own words:*

“The congregation at the Chapel has always been warm and welcoming.”

“The Chapel is a warm, inviting solace for many of its members who have enhanced their spiritual growth and raised their families during the years.”

“Everyone truly cares and are the most loving, non-judgmental people I have ever encountered.”

There is a “feeling [of] God’s presence, whether it be walking the beautiful grounds or seeing the friendly, smiling, welcoming faces - God is surely present at the Chapel of the Cross.”

“There is a love and respect for our leadership throughout the congregation . . . and this makes us strong as a church community.”

“Currently there is a feeling of energy and renewal at the Chapel.”

“Chapel does an excellent job of loving the community, as well as loving its own members.”



***Based on the results from  
301 survey responses:***

*Results from  
our parish  
survey*

**I usually attend  
Sunday worship  
services at the Chapel:**

**70.8%**

Three or more times per  
month.

**17.9%**

Two times per month.

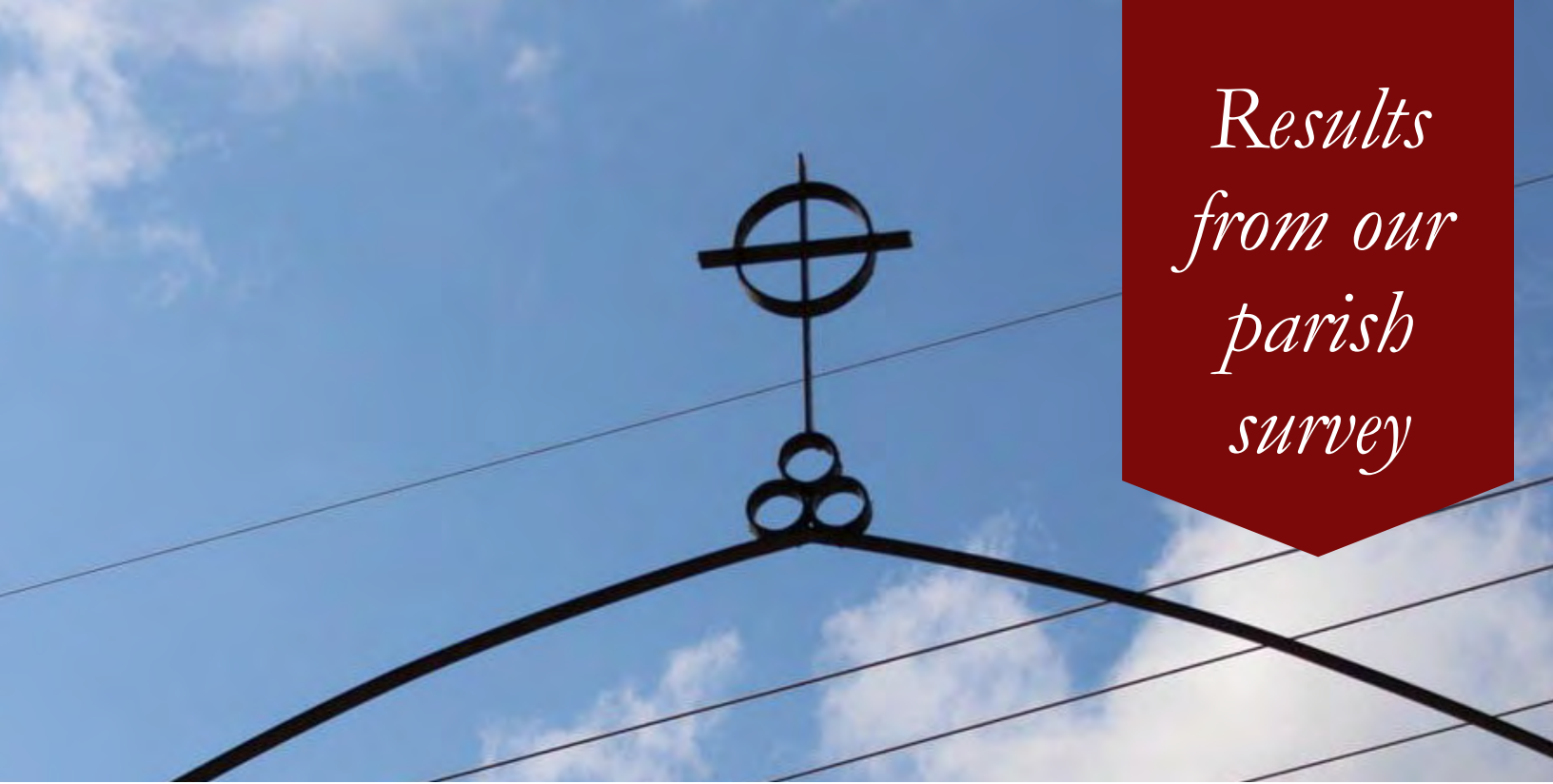
**7.3%**

Once a month.

**4.0%**

Seldom.





*Results  
from our  
parish  
survey*

**I have attended the Chapel for:**

**13%**

Two years or less.

**14.0%**

3-5 years.

**14.3%**

6-10 years.

**22.9%**

11-20 years.

**35.9%**

More than 20 years.



*Results  
from our  
parish  
survey*



**I have children under the age  
of 12 in my household:**

**24.9%**

Yes

**75.1%**

No



**I have youth between the ages  
of 13 and 18 in my household:**

**8.3%**

Yes

**91.7%**

No

# Our History



Constructed in 1848 and consecrated in 1852, the Chapel of the Cross was originally built as a worship space for Annandale Plantation in Madison County, Mississippi. In the decade that followed its consecration, the Chapel thrived, holding services, providing religious education, and confirming many Annandale residents.

During the Civil War, the Chapel suffered from neglect and began a decline that would last the rest of the century. In 1903, the Diocese of Mississippi declared the church extinct. Some revitalization began a few years later, and although the Chapel was reactivated as a house of worship, it saw little growth in the following decades.

In the 1970s, the Chapel underwent its first major restoration, and its numbers began to grow. The church was granted parish status in 1985, and the Chapel's membership experienced steady increases due to the rapidly expanding population in Madison County and the outreach efforts of our parishioners. The Chapel's average Sunday attendance rose significantly in the 1990s, and today we are an active and thriving parish.

To accommodate our growth, construction of additional church facilities was undertaken in the 1990s, providing 4,500 square feet of space for a large Parish Hall, kitchen, and offices for clergy and staff. In 1998, the Chapel's education buildings were completed, providing approximately 17,000 square feet of space for Christian education, choir rehearsal, meeting rooms, and youth activities. In 2008, the Chapel acquired 6 acres behind the church grounds, providing our parish with a total of 30 acres for church activities.

As the Chapel continued to grow in membership, it became apparent that our parish required a larger worship space. After a feasibility study in 2016, the decision was made to move forward with a capital campaign that resulted in a new design to accommodate approximately 360 people. Ground was broken on Palm Sunday 2019, and the first service was held in the Chapel of the Resurrection on February 7, 2021. The new worship space was consecrated by Bishop Brian Seage on May 16, 2021.

Although the Chapel building itself has a long history, the current iteration of our parish is relatively young. In the past 10 years, our parish has functioned as a program-sized church community, with weekly Sunday attendance averaging approximately 250 parishioners.

# 94.9%

of survey respondents  
believe it to be important  
for the Chapel to grow in  
membership.





## *Our Community: Madison, MS*

Once a small farming community, Madison, Mississippi, is one of the fastest growing cities in Mississippi. It enjoys the benefits of a rural community but is located just minutes from the capital city of Jackson. With more than 500,000 people in the metro area, Jackson has all the amenities of a large city, while small-town charm and hospitality abound in Madison.

Because of its location, Madison boasts numerous cultural and educational opportunities. The metro area is home to a children's museum, a science and natural history museum, the Museum of Mississippi History, the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, and an art museum, as well as a professional theater company and a symphony orchestra. Jackson also hosts the International Ballet Competition, one of the oldest and most respected dance competitions in the world. The metropolitan area has five four-year colleges and universities, two community colleges, and the University of Mississippi Medical Center, the state's premier and only academic health science center.

Madison is also nationally recognized for its school system. Upper, middle, and lower schools are regularly recognized for their academic achievements and national standings in the areas of AP scores, ACT scores, and scholarships. Several outstanding private and parochial schools are also in our community, including St. Andrew's Episcopal School.

Recreational activities abound in central Mississippi. We have world-class golf courses, one of which hosts a PGA tournament. The Mississippi Braves, the double-A affiliate of the Atlanta Braves, compete for Southern League titles. Fine dining options are abundant, with award-winning chefs offering unique, soulful cuisine. You can also make your own fun biking on the picturesque Natchez Trace Parkway, boating on the Ross Barnett Reservoir, running on our pedestrian trails, or camping, hunting, and fishing in our numerous state parks.

With the amenities of a metropolitan area, and the charm and convenience of a small town, Madison is a truly desirable place to call home.



**87.9%**

of survey respondents indicated that the Chapel had identified and is adequately responding to specific needs in the community.

# Outreach Ministries

Our parishioners devote significant time and resources to our local, national, and global communities. With an active Servant Ministry Committee, we have numerous programs and fundraisers throughout the year to support those who are in need.

The Chapel's largest community outreach and fund-raising event is its annual "A Day in the Country," historically held on the first Saturday in October for almost 40 years. The festival consists of music, food booths, "Kid's Country," hayrides, tours of the grounds, wine tasting, and wares from local craftsmen. Literally thousands of people from our community attend the event, and the funds traditionally serve to preserve the Chapel and support our community outreach projects.

Out of the COVID pandemic was born "Christmas in the Country," which has raised almost \$60,000 for Our Daily Bread and Toys for Tots since its inception in 2020. This event consists of three nights in December when parishioners decorate the church grounds with lights, music, and Christmas scenes, and members of the community drive through by the thousands to share in our holiday cheer.





Our parishioners are strong supporters of Stewpot Community Services and Our Daily Bread, where we regularly serve meals to the disadvantaged in the metro Jackson area. Since this ministry began, we have fed the folks at Stewpot almost 100 times and provided 15,000 meals. We also provide financial and volunteer support to MadCAAP (Madison Countians Allied Against Poverty), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of our fellow citizens in need. We have also hosted volunteers from outside of our community who provide MadCAAP with labor to build homes for deserving Madison County residents.

During the 2022 holiday season, the Chapel delivered 700 food boxes to the clients of Our Daily Bread. Each box contained a turkey and enough nonperishable items to feed a family of six. Over the last seven years, this ministry has grown significantly, and we have now delivered more than 5,000 food boxes to Our Daily Bread, providing Christmas meals for more than 30,000 people in Madison County.

Other local volunteer programs include the provision of school supplies to foster children in Madison County; active participation in Kairos Prison Ministries, which provides loving Christian support to incarcerated men and women; providing gifts to underprivileged children through Madison County Angel Tree; and assembling holiday comfort packages for women in the central Mississippi prison system.

We have participated in Salt and Light Ministries for over a decade, providing a scholarship for a student in Honduras annually for just over \$300. It provides uniforms, books, and school fees. Our current student continues to thrive with high grades, and she sends the Chapel a letter annually thanking us for our support.

# Christian Education and Spiritual Formation



# 98.6%

of survey respondents believe the Chapel effectively proclaims the Gospel.

## Children and Youth

Our parish children are vitally important to our members, and we seek to guide and support our children through every stage of their growing lives.

In addition to regular children and family programming and a successful preschool, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd serves as an important component of children's formation at the Chapel. It provides religious education and spiritual formation for children ages 3 through 12 and serves as our weekly Sunday school program. It is rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. Children gather in atria, appropriate for their ages, and work with prepared materials to learn about God and strengthen their spiritual relationships. These atria are joyful places filled with activity, singing, discussion, and prayer.





The Chapel is home to a growing and vibrant youth ministry program with an emphasis placed on community engagement, spiritual development, and intentional fellowship. The EYC at the Chapel meets every Wednesday and Sunday for events dedicated to the spiritual formation of students. Programming has included a series analyzing the various names of God, an in-depth examination of the book of Esther, and a series unpacking the various spiritual themes and messages in popular media. In the coming year, our youth minister plans to continue his programming dedicated to formation as well as expand on the work and lessons learned in their recent mission trip to Austin, Texas, where our youth learned about food insecurity and hunger within communities.

## Adults

The Chapel provides numerous programs for adults to deepen their faith, including Sunday school classes, small group Bible studies, Wednesday night services, and other gatherings. In fact, this is one area that has been greatly expanded by our priests in the last 10 years, with more than 70% of survey respondents agreeing that there are ample opportunities to participate in small group study. Some examples of our adult programming include Chapel Young Adults (“CYA”), Seasoned Saints (for more senior members), Chapel Grille (men’s group), and a regular Wednesday Morning Bible Study.



# Liturgy

Our parish values the rich liturgical tradition of the Episcopal Church as we invite all baptized Christians to share in the Eucharist.



## 97.5%

of survey respondents indicated that they like the style and feel of the worship service they attend.

There are three Sunday Eucharists at the Chapel. The 8:00 am and 5:00 pm services are small, casual services. These services are held in the Chapel of the Cross with an average attendance of 60 to 70 parishioners at the 8:00 am service and 25 to 30 at the 5:00 pm. The 10:30 am service, held in the Chapel of the Resurrection, is a larger, more family-oriented service with regular attendance of more than 200 parishioners.

Our liturgy provides an array of opportunities for lay ministry, including vergers, ushers, lectors, chalice bearers, acolytes, and flower and altar guilds.



# Music

We are blessed to have a talented group of Chapel members and an expert Director of Music who enhance our worship with music and song.



## 87.7%

of survey respondents agreed that music at the Chapel worship services adds an important dimension to their spiritual life.



The Chapel offers music at the 10:30 Sunday morning Eucharist. Using traditional hymns and service music from the hymnal, the music is supported by the Chapel's 20-rank Noack organ and by the adult Chapel Choir, which sings generally a cappella anthems and motets ranging from those of the Renaissance period through music of the present. The music program seeks to assist the congregation in worship and strives to be a seamless part of the whole, striving to enhance the spirituality of the services when music is offered.

The Chapel Choir consists of members of the parish and four compensated singers. Since 2021, the Choir has commissioned an anthem written each year by a prominent US composer.

The Chapel of the Cross currently offers two children's choirs, the Cherub Choir for grades 1 and 2, and St. Cecilia Choir for grades 3 through 6. St. Cecilia Choir sings at the 10:30 service quarterly, while the Cherub Choir sings in church once a semester.

In 2021, the Chapel initiated Concerts in the Country, a series of musical performances presented Sunday evenings at 5:00, intermittently dispersed throughout the year. The Concerts range from solo performances to ensembles consisting primarily of metro-area musicians. The various programs are funded solely through donations.

# Governance



The Chapel is governed by clergy, two wardens, and a nine-person vestry. The church staff consists of a priest in charge, an interim associate priest, a parish communicator, an organist and choirmaster, a director of youth ministries, a preschool director, a sexton, and a parish administrator. Until her recent retirement, we also employed a director of children's ministries, and we intend to fill this role in the future.

The Chapel is one of 85 congregations which comprise the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi, part of Province IV of the Episcopal Church and one of the owning dioceses of the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. Currently, our diocese is led by the Right Reverend Brian R. Seage, tenth Bishop of Mississippi, whose successor is anticipated to be consecrated and assume office in mid-2024.

The Diocese of Mississippi and its rich mixture of urban, suburban, town, and rural congregations embrace all styles of worship and churchmanship, from Anglo-Catholic to Evangelical. It has a history of being a moderate but progressive voice in the life of the Episcopal Church.





# Strengths

Chapel members often describe an initial attraction to our parish based on the Chapel's simple beauty and pastoral setting, providing a quiet retreat from a bustling world where we can reflect on God and experience His love. However, once acquainted with the Chapel, it quickly becomes apparent that our strength lies in our membership.

Our parishioners warmly welcome visitors, readily volunteer for committees and programs, and love and support each other in good times and bad. Our Hospitality Guild regularly hosts special events and functions for our membership, and on special occasions, like the Sunday after Day in the Country, we worship together in a single service on Sunday mornings. Our Grave Diggers Guild painstakingly digs the graves of Chapel members and their families who are buried on our grounds, while prayer vigils are held inside the nave for those who have died.

The health of the Chapel is evident in our vibrant programs for children and youth, our diverse outreach programs, and our strong parish life activities. Our focus on spiritual study is reflected in the six clergy and postulants that have come from our parish in the recent past.

Our new rector will find an enthusiastic parish with a warm, service-minded congregation in a growing area of our state. We share a strong sense of community rooted in faith and dedicated to sharing God's love through outreach ministries in our state and around the world. Our parish is ripe with potential for growth, and our parishioners are eager to expand our programs to enhance the spiritual health of our community.

# Qualities our parishioners appreciate most about the Chapel

- Episcopal worship tradition
- Inspiring sermons
- Holy Communion
- Spiritual growth
- Friendly people

# 96.7%

of survey respondents agree that our parish is spiritually alive.



# Challenges

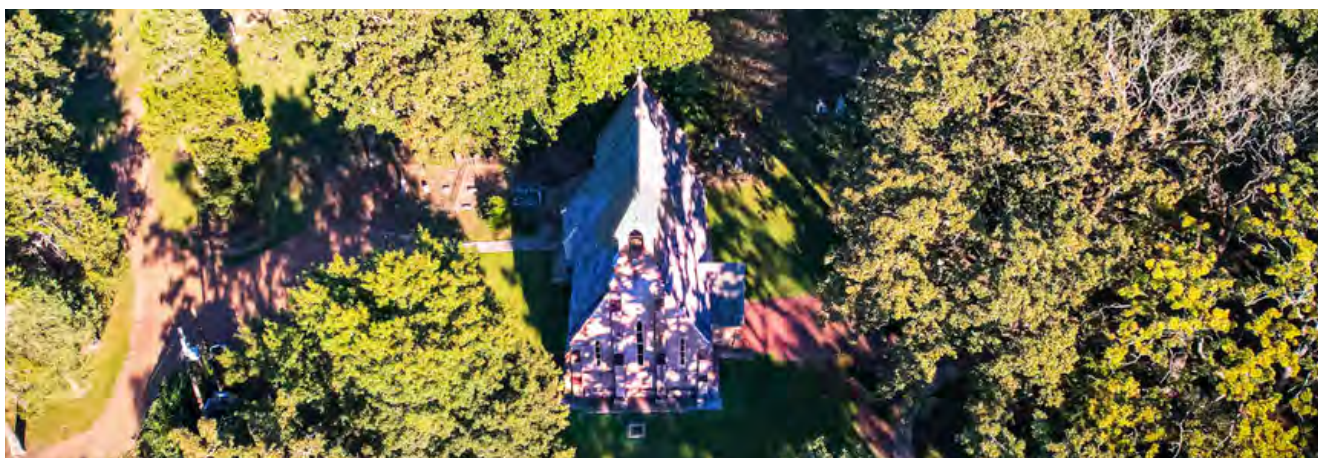
While we possess significant strengths, we face certain challenges as well. With the construction of our new worship space, the Chapel has accumulated approximately \$2.1 million in debt. This debt causes concern among some of our parishioners, and the next rector will need to inspire new and fresh fundraising programs to reduce this indebtedness.

## 88.9%

of survey respondents agree that it is important for the Chapel to enhance its existing programs and facilities to better serve our current membership.

## 67.9%

of survey respondents indicated a willingness to contribute to a capital campaign to renovate/enlarge our parish hall and kitchen.



Notwithstanding our debt and recent construction of our new worship space, many of our members believe it important to enhance the existing programs and facilities at the Chapel to serve our current membership. As just one example, as our parish has grown in membership in the last decade, our support buildings, including our parish hall and kitchen, are small and out-of-date.

Additionally, as the structures on our campus age, there are a number of long-term maintenance issues that need to be addressed, including new roofs and air conditioning units for our education and administrative buildings.

# What we are seeking in a new rector

As a parish, we are in agreement that our new rector must be a strong visionary with a unifying presence to help our diverse congregation maintain a singular focus on Christ and His church. We are seeking a gifted speaker and preacher who can relate to us regardless of our personal circumstances and who can help us strengthen our spiritual relationships with God. We desire a kind, compassionate, and loving individual who is sensitive to the needs of our members and who, at the same time, is confident in Christ to take on tough challenges and make informed decisions in an open, honest, and deliberate manner.

We are seeking an individual who is talented in building community, so he or she can serve as a bridge between our diverse members with differing viewpoints and help us thrive as part of a cohesive and unified parish. We are seeking a spiritual leader who is grounded in a deep faith, rooted in scripture, and has a high moral character to direct us and challenge us, so that we may strengthen our relationships with God and one another. Finally, we are seeking an honest and confident leader who can help us discern the best course of action to grow and develop our programs for the future and, if appropriate, lead us in a capital campaign to address our existing debt, maintain our grounds and support buildings, and expand our facilities to accommodate our growth.



# Top 5 areas of ministry in which we most want the new rector to have gifts



- Preaching
- Spiritual Growth
- Church Growth
- Pastoral Care
- Counseling



# **Top 5 most important traits we seek in a new rector**

- **Commitment to the Gospel and Christian Values**
- **Positive Attitude**
- **Personable/Outgoing**
- **Ability to Build Relationships with Parishioners and the Community**
- **Leadership Skills**



To engage with us in discernment regarding a call to serve as Rector of the Chapel of the Cross, please submit an Office of Transition Ministry portfolio, a resume, three references, and a cover letter via e-mail to the Chair of our Rector Search Committee, Bob Williams, at [Bob.Williams@mid.ms.gov](mailto:Bob.Williams@mid.ms.gov). For consideration, please submit your information to us by September 11th, 2023.