

LAKE COUNTRY EPISCOPAL CHURCHES

Lake Country Episcopal Churches is a collaborative group of Episcopal parishes in what is commonly referred to as Lake Country in Waukesha County. It includes the parishes of; St. Anskar in Hartland, St. Alban in Sussex, St. Bartholomew in Pewaukee, St. John Chrysostom in Delafield and Zion in Oconomowoc. We began meeting together in the fall of 2013 in response to some commonly shared challenges; declining membership, ageing membership, fewer young families and small children, tightened finances which in some cases necessitated the transition to part-time clerical ministry. One of the things which quickly became apparent from our meetings was the fact that despite all of us being Episcopalians in the same diocese and geographical area; we often didn't know each other at all. We began to search for ways in which our parishes could work together collaboratively to accomplish together what individually we could never hope to accomplish.

Since we first began to meet, our parishes have been brought together in various joint activities and ministries. They include: joint Lenten Programming at Nashotah House, joint Confirmation classes, shared Easter Vigil, Trivia Night fund raiser for Lake Country Free Clinic, shared Fourth of July fireworks, a campus tour and dinner at Nashotah House, serving and assisting at the 2015 Diocesan Convention as greeters and tellers. In the fall of 2014 we began a lecture series focusing upon world religions, which is free and open to the public. Our featured lecturers have all been eminent leaders of their respective faith tradition. Our inaugural lecture was on "What it means to be an Episcopalian/Anglican". Since then we have had presentations on Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Greek Orthodoxy. We often solicit feedback from attendees at the presentations. After each presentation, we do a recap of the event to see what went well and what could have been better. From these recap sessions, we began to sense that while we believe that our series on World Religions has been a success, we need to broaden our focus. As a result, we are now in the process of broadening the scope of our presentations. We will host a presentation on Human Trafficking in the Greater Milwaukee area, in the fall of 2016. With this broadening of our focus, we hope not only to better educate ourselves and our fellow Episcopalians, but our neighbors, regardless of their faith. It is also hoped that presentations on such timely topics may serve not only as an interesting learning experience but also as a possible catalyst for action. LCEC has also presented a musical evening, with the appearance of the Church of Our Savior Youth Choir, at St. Anskar's.

Since our first meetings, we have begun to replace a culture of fear, isolation and scarcity with the realization that as members of the same Body of Christ we are stronger when we work together. One of our primary goals, aside from getting to better know and love one another, has been to reinforce our Episcopal identity both to ourselves and to the local communities around us and to actively engage with those communities. It is our hope that through our continued collaboration together and engagement with the greater community, we may give effective witness to the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst.