

ST. ANDREW'S PARISH

Kent, Connecticut

We are:

A spiritual home, a place of worship, fellowship, joy and comfort
A focal point of our small town
A vibrant parish committed to increasing outreach in our area and beyond

A beautiful and peaceful green place in the center of Kent, inviting to all

Through the generosity of our parishioners, who give of their time, talent and treasure, we are active and involved in our church and community and are financially healthy

A Brief History:

The Episcopal church was a presence in Kent before 1760 through missionaries, and had its first church building in Kent by 1772. As a congregation of the Church of England in an area whose settlers were uncomfortable with the English church, the church building was sited at the southern fringe of Kent.

St. John's Church (as it was then named) was consecrated in 1819, led at that time by The Rev. George Andrews, who ministered to several Episcopal parishes in the NW Corner of Connecticut.

Aided by his wife's fortune, Fr. Andrews built four churches for his parishioners in our region, including one in Kent. All have been altered over time but are recognizable as having a common architect (reportedly, Fr. Andrews himself). St. Andrew's is the only one of the churches constructed of stone.

The new church building was located slightly to the north of the original building. Reflecting its gratitude to Fr. and Mrs. Andrews, the parish was renamed from St. John's to St. Andrew's when the building was consecrated in 1827.

Since construction of the church building, the center of the town has moved two miles southward from its origin in Flanders and now St. Andrew's sits at the crossroads of Kent – physically and metaphorically.

Our Worship Services:

St. Andrew's has two Eucharist services on Sundays, at 8:30 and 10:30. The later service is with music, sung by our choir and congregation with organ accompaniment. The 8:30 spoken service provides a quiet opportunity for reflection and meditation. We have a weekly Wednesday evening Eucharist service. The 10:30 Sunday service is available on YouTube, live-streamed and recorded.

The church is open for private prayer and meditation every weekday.

At Christmas we share a family Eucharist at the chapel of Kent School (an independent Episcopal school) before our own later service. During Holy Week, we worship on Maundy Thursday evening, on Good Friday with a traditional service followed by Tenebrae in the evening and on Easter Sunday with our two services, both with music.

Our Post-Pandemic Parish By the Numbers:

St. Andrew's was open in 2022 for the entire year for the first time since 2019. Average in-person Sunday attendance at both services was 56, up from 38 in 2021. Average in-person weekly attendance at all services in 2022 was 72.

We started live-streaming and recording services during the pandemic and expect to continue that practice. We have an average of 44 people viewing our services online.

We count a total of 186 active participants in the life of the parish, including 14 who are 12 years old or younger. We added 11 new members in 2022.

Our Church School:

We renewed our church school in 2022 with a freshly decorated, dedicated facility in the undercroft of the church and two professional educators to instruct the children each week. Our church school doors are open to any and all children who wish to attend, whether weekly or occasionally. We delight in the happy chatter that drifts up into the church as we worship and the children learn and sing. We welcome the children into the Nave to share the Eucharist or blessing with the other worshippers.

Adult Education:

A course of Bible study, with bi-weekly instruction combined with lively discussion, began in 2022. We read the Gospels of Mark and Luke and Genesis and look forward to resuming this course with a new Rector. A multi-week lecture series on the Book of Common Prayer attracted many parishioners. We look forward to a variety of on-going adult education events.

Our Spiritual Life

In addition to our regular services, we worship as lay members of the parish. On Friday evenings we hold meditative prayer services led by parishioners. With a focus on Lent, small groups have formed to pray together and share thoughts on spiritual readings, practicing the Way of Love.

Our Pastoral Care

The lay members of the Pastoral Care Commission visit parishioners who are homebound, both long term and short term, or who need comfort in any way. They serve so that no one is left behind when not physically present at St. Andrew's on Sundays. Several Eucharistic lay ministers can provide Communion. We look forward to enhancing this ministry with a new Rector.

Our Buildings and Grounds:

Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners and careful oversight by the Properties Commission, the church and its buildings are in fine condition and our precinct is beautifully landscaped.

The church building, completely renovated in 2012, was built in 1826. It was designed in the then very new Gothic Revival style, intended to recall the parish buildings of England and characterized by its six extraordinarily beautiful stained glass lancet windows. The church's simple and peaceful beauty invites communion with God.

In the 1870s, as part of a major renovation, the parish replaced the short top of the bell tower with the distinctive heaven-pointing steeple that exists today. The bell, which is rung to call worshippers to church, played a broader role during the Covid pandemic of 2020-2021 when it was rung at dusk every evening to provide comfort and a sense of community to a town living in isolation and anxiety.

The rectory, adjacent to the church, is a spacious and graceful Greek revival building with a porch and Gothic detailing added in the late 19th century. It was built in 1883, renovated in 1999 and modernized in 2019.

The parish hall, built in 1968 and since upgraded, comprises the church offices, a large room for assemblies (including our popular weekly after-church coffee hour), rooms for choir practice and small group meetings, and a library/Vestry meeting room. A community nursery school uses several rooms on the ground floor of the building. We provide space for meetings of AA, Al-Anon and other groups.

The Close, our memorial garden, was built in 2012 as a final resting place for parishioners and friends of the parish.

Our Mission and Outreach Activities:

Our parish, led by our Mission and Outreach Commission, assists the community, the diocese, and the world through the gifts of our time, talents and resources. Recently, we have been particularly committed to providing support and increasing outreach in our area. To that end, the M & O commission has developed a working relationship with the town's social services director. We participate in the Torrington Soup Kitchen, provide fresh produce from our garden to the Kent Food Bank, and provide financial support to many local and regional organizations. We have hosted a luncheon for veterans on Veterans Day for several years and have now expanded that outreach to include a luncheon for first responders. Another luncheon we participate in is at the nearby senior living facility, Templeton Farms. We contribute time and financial support to the Kent Memorial Library fair over Labor Day weekend.

Our Refugee Resettlement Team worked with other local institutions to help with the resettlement of an Afghan family of six in a furnished apartment in New Milford.

Community Outreach:

We are a vibrant cornerstone of the community and even non-church-goers feel a part of St. Andrew's.

We are welcoming to all. Our newer members tell us that our hospitality to visitors is unusually warm and is the reason they chose St. Andrew's.

In 2022 we revived our tradition of sharing worship with First Congregational Church, with four joint services (including Thanksgiving and Christmas Day). We also reconnected with Kent School, an Episcopal secondary school in town: Students and faculty attend worship at St Andrew's one Sunday a month, music students perform regularly at Sunday services, and we share a joint family Christmas Eve service in St. Joseph's Chapel at Kent School.

Our Music:

Music is a core value of St. Andrew's. Our choir director/organist is knowledgeable of liturgical music, honoring its rich tradition while expanding our horizons and challenging our choir of accomplished

amateur singers.

While music is a cornerstone of worship at St. Andrew's, we are also committed to bringing music of all kinds to the community. The Music in the Nave concert series features a wide range of offerings - from a performance by the Manhattan String Quartet to a cabaret-style concert by a founding member of Blood, Sweat and Tears to the annual traditional Sing-in of Handel's Messiah accompanied by members of the Sherman Chamber Ensemble with professional soloists. In the past year we have hosted Livingston Taylor and the Yale Whiffenpoofs to sold-out audiences.

The Kent Singers, a regional choral group, holds its concerts in the church, as does the Sherman Chamber Ensemble.

Our Organization:

Our church is governed by 14 members of the parish who are elected (in practice, unanimously) at the Annual Meeting. Our 9-member Vestry is led by five Officers, a Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and Clerk. Vestry terms are three years. The Wardens are appointed by the Rector with the Junior Warden becoming Senior Warden at the end of a two-year term.

St. Andrew's seven commissions manage many aspects of parish life. These lay-led commissions report to the Vestry and are responsible for education, hospitality/fellowship, mission and outreach, music, pastoral care, our properties, and stewardship.

Our Town:

Kent is located in the Litchfield County hills in the northwest corner of Connecticut, immediately adjacent to New York State, about 20 miles south of Massachusetts and on the eastern edge of the Hudson River Valley. Hartford and New Haven are each about 50 miles from Kent. New York City is 90 miles to our south, a two-hour train trip from area stations. The Northwest Corner comprises many small towns spread out over our large area.

Kent, a vibrant town straight out of *Yankee* magazine, has scenic beauty and New England charm. The town has a variety of restaurants, galleries and stores, including an independent bookstore. Like St. Andrew's, Kent is a center of volunteerism and community spirit. Much of the town's government is volunteer, as are most of our many local organizations.

Kent's population benefits from the energy of New York City through weekenders and resident retirees, as well as an influx of new families from the city who came during covid, loved living in Kent, and stayed.

Kent is a place of outstanding natural beauty, sitting beside the Housatonic River, overlooked by hills and surrounded by forests. Macedonia State Park and Kent Falls State Park provide wonderful opportunities for hiking and other recreation. The Kent Land Trust publishes a guide to the miles of hiking trails within our borders, including several legs of the Appalachian Trail, which runs through Kent.

Kent Center School, located within walking distance of town, is our excellent public elementary (grades K-8) school. The public high school, Housatonic Valley Regional High School, which serves several towns in the county, is in Falls Village to our north.

There are several top-ranked independent schools in our area, including two in Kent affiliated with the Episcopal Church (Kent School and South Kent School) and a third nearby, Trinity-Pawling School, as well as Marvelwood School in Kent. We have a close relationship with Kent School, whose chapel is officially a chapel of St. Andrew's.

The Kent Memorial Library, a centerpiece of Main Street and of Kent life, is in the process of funding a major renovation and expansion.

Kent boasts two churches in addition to St. Andrew's (Congregational and Roman Catholic).

Fundraising:

St. Andrew's has an annual Stewardship appeal which lasts from October 1 until the Sunday of the Celebration of the Feast of St. Andrew's in mid-November. The approach to the parish is through correspondence and weekly announcements by Stewardship Commission members with the support of the Rector in remarks and written acknowledgements.

The other major fundraising activities are led by our annual three-day tag sale, which is as much a fellowship activity as a fundraiser because it involves so many parishioners over the month-long preparation for the sale. Held in August during Kent's summer sale days, the tag sale is a regional phenomenon, attracting wide interest for both donations and sales. Our Christmas Bazaar, which also attracts huge support from parishioners, is a lovely seasonal festival which turns our parish house into a beautiful Christmas boutique to the benefit of Mission and Outreach. We sell Christmas trees over several weekends from Thanksgiving until Christmas week, creating a center of good will and cheer on our lawn.

What We Seek in Our Next Rector:

A full-time Rector to live in the Rectory and guide our church, building on our current strong base of worship and good fellowship to grow our parish in diversity, faith and service in the future.

Spiritual Leadership

Deliver relatable, biblically-based sermons with sensitivity to diverse opinions in the parish
Be comfortable in using traditional sacramental worship
Teach and guide parishioners in church and in other gatherings
Connect with parishioners individually and in groups
Have knowledge and love of sacred music
Actively and flexibly listen and communicate

Pastoral Leadership

Participate in our parish family
Attend to those who are in need
Reach out to those who have disengaged from the church
Encourage new and younger members
Delegate appropriate areas of pastoral care

Education

Support and work to grow our church school
Provide adult education through Bible Study and other instruction

Community Leadership

Serve as St. Andrew's presence in Kent by participating in the town
Encourage mission and outreach activities by parishioners

Practical Leadership

Guide our Officers and Vestry
Support the missions and activities of our commissions, including our stewardship and other financial activities
Oversee our parish administrator

Bring Energy, Enthusiasm and Joy to the Parish

If you are interested in leading a church and living in a town that share beauty, energy and fellowship, please send a Letter of Interest, a current resume or CV, and a completed, current OTM profile to ECCT's Diocesan Transition Minister, Ms. Amber Page Gehr, at apagegehr@episcopalct.org.