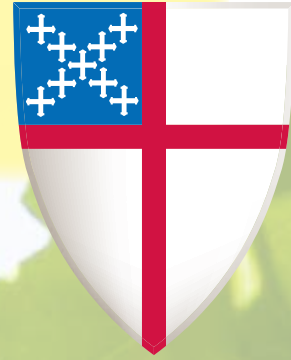


# St. Francis Episcopal Church

## San Antonio, Texas



### *Parish History*

The first official gathering of the St. Francis community was a Palm Sunday service held in the home of William and Margaret Atkins, on March 26, 1961. Made up of about 16 initial families, this new faith community called itself Northwest Episcopal Mission. The mission, which sought to serve San Antonio's rapidly growing Northwest side, was formally chartered on May 17, 1961, by the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, the Rt. Rev. Everett Jones.

Attendance at the services quickly grew, forcing the mission to move to a new temporary home at the 300-seat Town Hall at Wonderland Shopping Center in Balcones Heights. The Rev. Brendan Griswold, the first priest in charge, also doubled at times as the pianist. By January 1962, St. Francis had nearly 90 communicants in an area that was on the outskirts of San Antonio, prior to a strong period of growth in the mid- to late-1960s. Construction of a new church on a hill gave the founding group a sense of exuberance about the future.

On Oct. 14, 1962, the first service was held in the new church building situated on "a little knoll among the trees" at the current site of St. Francis, 4242 Bluemel Road. A Rieger pipe organ was custom built in Schwarzach, Austria, and installed in the new building, which had been funded in part with a grant from the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas. The church was designed by architects Peter Callins and Cyrus H. Wagner, and built on a wooded hillside, to give the impression of a structure that's an integral part of the natural landscape, with the use of native rustic stone, rough sawn cedar, and split cedar roof shingles.

By the time a dedication service was held at the church and televised locally on Dec. 2, 1962, St. Francis had 140 communicants. The service included a sermon by Bishop Jones, an order of Confirmation, and the singing of the anthem, "We Wait for Thy Loving Kindness, O God."

Today, St. Francis offers spiritual support, health clinics, and other forms of outreach, from warm coats for children to kitchenware and blankets, through its programs of compassion and care. During 2011, the parish became a food bank distribution point and broke ground with local partners on an international community garden, where refugees from Burma and Bhutan have begun growing their own vegetables.

As St. Francis celebrated its 50th anniversary on May 15, 2011, with a Confirmation service and a visit by diocesan Bishop Suffragan David Reed, the church continues to maintain a high profile in the community as a missionary parish committed to serving others, while still embracing the feel of a church family.



*As part of our search process for a new rector, we gathered for a parish-wide workshop to discern our strengths as a congregation and to look at the challenges we face at this time in our life together.*

## *Who We Are*

As an expression of the Body of Christ in this place, we celebrate God's love with everyone through fellowship and inclusion, Christian formation and discipleship, compassion and service, and faithful stewardship and giving.

## *Our Vision*

- For St. Francis to be a place where people find fellowship within our welcoming and inclusive spirit that encourages participation by all in every aspect of the life of the church.
- For St. Francis to be a place where we support each other in our walk with Christ, through contemporary and traditional worship and music styles and spiritual programs, using scripture, tradition, and reason as our guide.
- For St. Francis to be a place where we offer a variety of programs and activities that are enjoyable and rewarding and will attract people of all ages, including a growing number of younger members who will renew the life cycle and leadership of our congregation.
- For St. Francis to be a place where we are responsive to the call by Jesus for faithful stewardship of all God's gifts by sharing our time, talents, and treasure.



## *Strengths*

### *Relational*

St. Francis is a loving place filled with deeply committed families who nurture relationships between members. We sincerely care for each other and strive to stay in communication with all church members, whatever their condition in life may be. We are a diverse community in our talents, spiritual offerings, ethnicity, and ages, and we treasure our strong relationships. We believe we have "at least one of everything God has made."



### *Welcoming*

St. Francis truly welcomes all who long to worship here. Our members are friendly and provide a generous welcome to all newcomers and visitors. We welcome any person who would like to promote and support our diverse community of faith that in all aspects reflects the Body of Christ in the world.

### *Outreach*

We make an effort to make things happen outside our church walls, and our outreach ministries are recognized in the community. Our campus provides space and support for children's camps, youth soccer games, various support groups, and an African Pentecostal Church. We have an international community garden that directly involves an ecumenical group of churches that help the nearby refugee community. Our outreach ministries are thriving and continually evolving.

### *Worship and Spirituality*

Sunday mornings consist of several styles of worship and music, ranging from quiet to traditional

to contemporary. The different options for worship are appreciated, and our Christian formation program provides areas for spiritual growth for all ages. We participate in meditations, Bible studies, prayer ministries, and fine arts formation. St. Francis has a labyrinth and labyrinth guild, who support those persons on a spiritual journey or in transition.

### Location

Location, location, location. We have a beautiful seven-acre campus that offers physical room for expansion. We are located just off Interstate 10, in the company of the Medical Center, business hubs, and universities, and we have a distinct opportunity to be a visible beacon in a heavily populated area, which includes students, refugees, and working poor.

### Challenges

#### Youth Program

To develop a fundamental and active youth ministry, we need a youth director on staff who will be 100 percent devoted to all youth, nursery age through high school. We need someone who will work hand-in-hand with our rector to envision a youth and children's program that is strong and will help grow attendance of the younger generations at our church. We would like to see educational and social activities for our youth, particularly junior and high school age in collaboration with other churches.

#### Member Growth

We need a concentrated effort to increase our attendance and to focus on visitors and young families that come to St. Francis and look for creative ways to attract young families to our parish. This will require providing activities for the families to help grow their interest in St. Francis and growing and sustaining vital children's and youth ministries.



### Property Management

We are in need of property improvements. The foundations of the parish hall and other buildings are in need of structural repair. Our older buildings need to be refreshed with updated décor and fixtures. We need a new nursery and toddler facility that is closer to our sanctuary, aiding in the growth of our parish.

### Communication

Our parish needs better internal communication efforts, in getting the word out about scheduled meetings and explanations on church leadership decisions. We need to respect the different styles of receiving communication in our parish (not everyone has an email address). We need to improve the communication between the parishioners that attend each of the three Sunday morning services, whether with an increased number of opportunities for fellowship or a time to gather on Sunday mornings between services and Sunday school.



## *Fellowship and Inclusion*

### *Holy Smokers*

The Holy Smokers cook chicken, turkey, sausage, and brisket. They offer their smoked delights in exchange for donations, and have used proceeds to upgrade the pavilion and basketball court.

### *Newcomer Ministry Team*

The Newcomer Ministry Team gathers weekly to discuss personal ways to connect with the newcomers to St. Francis.

### *Quilters*

The Quilters gather to complete a quilting project and invite all who are interested to join them. The finished quilts are raffled off for charity.

### *Women of the Church*

The Women of the Church meet monthly for fellowship and to find ways to meet the needs of the congregation.

### *Second Tuesday Reading Group*

The Second Tuesday Reading Group meets every second Tuesday of the month at the home of one of the parishioners to discuss the selected book.

### *Dinner for Eight*

Several groups of eight parishioners get together once a month for dinner and fellowship.



### *Renaissance Faire*

In 16th-century England, the day of the village fair was eagerly anticipated. There were artisans and fortunetellers, jesters and acrobats, musicians, and all kinds of savory foods. The Renaissance Faire at St. Francis recreates that atmosphere. Our goal is to make our faire as entertaining as it is educational, with something to interest everyone. All proceeds from the faire are donated to various service groups within the city and church-approved outreach organizations. The day after the faire features a worship service using the 1559 Book of Common Prayer.

### *Christian Formation and Discipleship*

#### *Godly Play*

Godly Play volunteers are trained in the Godly Play program to teach children the wondering process of biblical stories.

#### *Fine Arts Formation*

Fine Arts Formation volunteers focus in depth on one particular biblical story at a time, continuing with a fine arts presentation at the end to demonstrate their understanding of the story.

#### *Episcopal Youth Christians*

For either Junior High or Senior High age, the group helps to meet the spiritual or emotional needs of the youth. Volunteers help them grow in their faith and mature in making choices about their future.



## *Ministries & Outreach*



### Children's Chapel

Children's Chapel is held during the 9:00 a.m. service as a child's version of church with lessons focused on the gospel reading for that Sunday.

### Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School is held in the summer for children from ages three through 11 years. Assistance is needed to teach, lead, and care for the children.

### Adult Christian Formation

Adult Christian Formation classes include an Inquirer's Class and the varying Sunday school classes and Bible studies, which meet on Sunday mornings.

### Men's Study Group

The Men's Study Group meets on Tuesdays at noon to discuss topics based on a book or the scripture.

### Personal and Spiritual Growth Group

Personal and Spiritual Growth Group meets weekly on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. to look at one's life in the light of a book that is studied by the group.

### Education for Ministry (EfM)

Education for Ministry (EfM) is a four-year program for theological study developed by the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. It

covers the Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, and Theology.

### Cursillo

Cursillo is a four-day experience in which participants learn the rules of life in order to share in the joy of knowing Christ. The program also trains leaders to be examples of Jesus' teachings.

### Labyrinth Guild

Labyrinth Guild is for people in transition, for anyone seeking healing of one sort or another, for those on a spiritual journey, or for times when there is a need for such things as clarity, letting go, reconciliation, meaning, purpose, or peace.

### Compassion and Service

### Community of Hope

Community of Hope is a 14-week program of spiritual development and practical training to improve pastoral and leadership skills. Members meet regularly and assist the rector with visitation, prayer, and regular communication with those who are in need of pastoral care.

### Super Seniors

Super Seniors meets quarterly to make sure all our seniors are doing well and to see how we can be of service to them.

## Ministries & Outreach

### Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Neighbors Helping Neighbors partners with Family Service Association to assist families in our neighborhood. We coordinate with other social service groups in the area.

### Parish Nurse

The Parish Nurse provides medical information and education concerning medical and life issues to parishioners. This may include one-on-one time with individual parishioners, workshops for groups of parishioners or the general public, or visitors. The parish nurse does not provide direct medical care but consults with and educates the parish.

### Ministry of Correspondence

The Ministry of Correspondence writes notes in times of celebration and need. This art form is much appreciated by the recipients.

### Mental Health Ministry

Mental Health Ministry is available to parishioners in need of help for themselves or for those who have loved ones that would like help. All meetings are completely confidential.

### Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity partners with churches to build affordable housing for those in need. St. Francis is a participant in the local area.

### Daughters of the King

Daughters of the King are women who regularly pray as a “rule of life” and take on the responsibility of praying in confidence for the needs of others.

### Eucharistic Visitors

The Eucharistic Visitors take the consecrated elements to those unable to join the church community in the celebration of Eucharist.

### Outreach Committee

Outreach Committee serves members of our community in a variety of ways.

### Food Gathering Ministry

The Food Gathering Ministry’s mission is to provide food and toiletries to those needing basic items, within our parish and in our surrounding community.

### Kitchen Pantry Ministry

The Kitchen Pantry Ministry restocks and organizes the pantry.

### Faithful Stewardship and Giving

Office Volunteers, Stewardship Committee, IT Committee, Communications Team, and Wedding Guild

### Liturgy and Worship

Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, Acolytes, Altar Guild, Flower Guild, Information Coordinator, Greeters, Ushers, Liturgy and Worship, Praise and Worship Team, Choir, Service Coordinator, and Projectionist



## Ministries & Outreach

## Parish Life and Worship

Sunday worship at St. Francis consists of three services with Holy Eucharist, at 7:45 (spoken), 9:00 (contemporary) and 11:15 a.m. (organ and choir). There is also a Wednesday Holy Eucharist service at noon with prayers for healing.

Christian formation is offered throughout the week and on Sunday mornings from 10:10 to 11:05 a.m. for all ages. Youth formation classes include Godly Play, Fine Arts Formation, Rite 13, Journey to Adulthood, and Episcopal Youth Christians. An Inquirer's Class and Sunday school classes are offered in Christian formation for adults. A men's study group meets on Tuesdays, and a personal and spiritual growth group meets weekly on Wednesdays. St. Francis also offers courses in Education for Ministry.



### *Parochial Statistics:* (from 2011 Parochial Report)

Baptized Members	272	
Average Sunday Attendance	156	
Total Operating Revenues (2011)	\$355,238	
Total Operating Expenses (2011)	\$356,947	
Stewardship for 2011	111 Pledge Units	\$317,400
Stewardship for 2012	109 Pledge Units	\$261,953

## Prioritization Exercise

Congregations typically look for potential rectors who have skill sets and/or experiences in specific areas of ministry. At the parish profile workshop, attended by 45 people, those attending prioritized a list of 18 skills or experiences. A questionnaire with the same items was mailed to each home in the congregation, and 54 questionnaires were returned. The table below indicates the ranking of these items by each group, at the workshop and those mailed to homes.

Skill/Experience	Workshop Rank	Mail-in Rank
Good pastoral skills	2	2
Effective preaching skills	1	1
Adult Christian Education	7	11
Openness in sharing his/her personal faith	8 Tie	12
Stewardship education skills	14	13
Youth Ministry	3	4
Good administrative skills	4	3
Interest in various expressions of worship	8 Tie	9
Ministry to the elderly	11	10
Active ministry in dealing with social action issues	13	14 Tie
Active support of outreach programs	5 Tie	8
Renewal ministries	12	14 Tie
Collaboration with other denominations in community ministry	15	15
Active ministry in evangelism	10 Tie	14 Tie
Strong children's Sunday School program	6	6
Encourage and enable lay leadership	5 Tie	5 Tie
Good counseling skills	9	5 Tie
Ministry to families	10 Tie	7

## Opportunity

### San Antonio, Texas

San Antonio, Texas, is the seventh largest city in the nation and the second largest in the state. San Antonio has a diversified economy with four primary focuses: government/financial services, health care, energy, and tourism. There is a strong military presence in San Antonio, and a number of Fortune 500 companies are headquartered in San Antonio, including Valero Energy Corp and Tesoro Petroleum Corp. San Antonio is a multi-cultural city, with a strong Hispanic and Spanish-speaking community that continues to grow. The Riverwalk and the Alamo draw hundreds of thousands of tourists to the city every year.



### The Diocese of West Texas

The Diocese of West Texas comprises 90 congregations spread over 60 counties in South Central Texas. Bishop of the diocese is the Rt. Rev. Gary Lillibridge, and Bishop Suffragan is the Rt. Rev. David Reed. Headquarters for the diocese are in San Antonio.

