

St. Michael's in the Hills Episcopal Church

4718 Brittany Road Ottawa Hills OH 43615

Welcome to St. Michael's!

St. Michael's in the Hills Episcopal Church began 70 years ago, guided by a group of young families eager to create a place of worship for their children and each other. Our congregation now consists of 126 members in good standing.

Through the years as the parish grew, classrooms, a kitchen, Memorial Garden and large Fellowship Hall were added to the property which sits on a 10-acre plot. Thoughtfully maintained gardens, grand, mature trees and plentiful green space enhance the pleasant and peaceful environment.

We are conducting a search and hope to welcome our next rector to inspire us as we gather in worship, prayer, and fellowship. We believe there are great things in our future and our next rector can lead us as we further our mission in this community.

Please enjoy the information provided here and on our website: www.lovelearnsolve.org

OUR WORSHIP

We, at St. Michael's, feel that one of the most important ways to care for our spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being is to attend church service regularly. Currently, we are gathering for a Sunday, 10 am service. For many years it has been a tradition at St. Michael's to have 3 worship services. We have offered a 5pm Saturday service, an 8 am Sunday service and a 9:45 Sunday service. All were quiet and reverent services that offered the Holy Eucharist. The Sunday services included inspiring music from our beautiful choir who are a treasured part of the service. The Saturday and early Sunday services had an average combined attendance of about 20-25 when we were offering them. Many people are interested in reinstating these services when we are able so that there are plenty of opportunities to worship together. All services use the Book of Common Prayer, Enriching our Worship, and other resources. Additional weekly services have been offered during Lent. A compline service is offered each Wednesday evening and can be attended via Zoom. We embrace both high and low worship styles in the Episcopal liturgy spectrum.

Morning Prayer is offered occasionally (more often since we are without a permanent minister) and led by a parishioner who is currently in the discernment process for the priesthood or one of two others that have liturgical training. Morning Prayer adds freshness and variety to our worship experience. We cherish the beauty of the language. We look forward to the different genres of choral and congregational singing and the adaptability of the prayers and scripture passages.

We value thoughtful weekly sermons that not only touch on the meaning of the scriptures, but also how so many of the readings correlate to our life experiences. This includes family, community, service, national well-being, pandemic, etc. Our lives are cyclical and we are affected not only by personal issues but also by world-wide concerns. Sermons that reflect this duality of scripture and reality can promote greater understanding and provide a degree of comfort.

St. Michael's beautiful Memorial Garden is the setting for our late summer outdoor service of remembrance for all of those interred in the garden.

We are eager to maintain the beauty and tradition of our Sunday service while finding other, non-traditional ways to worship together. Small prayer groups, discussion groups, service projects and community events are some examples of these opportunities.

OUR COMMUNITY

St. Michael's in the Hills is in Ottawa Hills, an established, verdant, incorporated village on the western edge of Toledo, Ohio. The church has welcomed members not only from the Ottawa Hills community but also from Toledo and area suburbs of Sylvania, Perrysburg and Maumee.

The Toledo region, with a population of approximately 600,000, is in northwest Ohio and enjoys the benefits of both the Maumee River and Lake Erie. The ethnically diverse area has many advantages of larger cosmopolitan areas but with a mid-west and smaller town charm. The region is recognized for its major industries in advanced manufacturing, energy, automotive, and logistics and distribution sectors.

Toledo boasts a variety of cultural institutions and natural parks. This includes the Toledo Symphony, Toledo Ballet, Toledo Opera, Toledo Museum of Art, regional theater, community choirs, and ethnic fairs. The Toledo Zoo (repeatedly voted #1 zoo in the nation), Metroparks Toledo including Toledo Botanical Garden and children's science museum Imagination Station attract all ages. The Toledo/Lucas County Public Library system has the largest per-capita circulation in the country.

Sports are also popular in Toledo with the Mudhens Triple-A baseball team, boating on Lake Erie and the Maumee River and the Toledo Walleye hockey team. The extensive Toledo Metroparks system puts beautiful green spaces and outdoor activity opportunities close to every neighborhood.

The Ottawa Hills Local Schools are consistently ranked in the top tier of Ohio public schools. Sylvania and Perrysburg districts also focus on student preparedness. There is also a sizable number of private schools in the area. Toledo School for the Arts is the top rated community school in the state. There are approximately nine colleges serving the area including the University of Toledo and Bowling Green State University. In addition, several private colleges/universities and two community colleges round out the opportunities.

Toledo has easy access to places, services, and events. We are 45 minutes south of Ann Arbor, Michigan, the home of the University of Michigan, an hour from Detroit and its modern international airport, and an easy four-hour turnpike drive west to Chicago or two hours east to Cleveland.

OUR CONNECTIONS

A continuously-updated website, www.lovelearnserve.org, serves as the central information resource for the parish. The site provides the ability to watch our service as a livestream and includes recent livestream videos along with current and past bulletins, weekly announcements, event calendars, parish group descriptions, activities, and initiatives in an easy to navigate, user friendly format.

The church also has a [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/lovelearnserve) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/lovelearnserve) account that is updated by the current office administrative assistants.

Weekly Friday emails give parishioners a preview of the weekend service, reminders of upcoming events and requests for help and donations for outreach projects. The weekly worship bulletin is packed with announcements, prayer lists, and calendars.

Meet our staff: www.lovelearnserve.org.

OUR PEOPLE

In a recent internal survey, many of our parishioners felt that we may be perceived by the larger community as white, wealthy, and formal without much to offer young families. Acknowledging that perception is the first step in changing it, because we know that we are a vibrant group of talented, smart, devout, fun people with a proud history. We welcome and embrace all who want to join us. Our congregation includes well-educated and accomplished individuals who are natural leaders in our church, community, and in the professional and business worlds. There is incredible talent in our midst. At church we find eager volunteers, a "can do" attitude and a confident modesty.

Our community is friendly, welcoming, and caring. We strive to find ways to show that to our community!

OUR CHALLENGES AND OUR SUCCESSES

Just as many faith communities are facing hardships, we are challenged by low attendance at services and an aging population. We are loosening from the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic and trying to move past the aura of fear and unease that has enveloped us for so long. With prayer and focus our parish will grow in spirit and number as we share God's love with His people, wherever they are and whoever they are.

Even as we have faced several changes in pastoral leadership and diminishing attendance, creative and reimaged initiatives have appeared. Activities and partnerships in **Worship, Outreach, Education, Stewardship and the Arts** have brought bright light to our own community while we engaged with other organizations in our region:

- At a recent **Common Grounds** presentation we were introduced to the work of the Lucas County Human Trafficking Coalition, an organization that is devoted to combating and eradicating human trafficking in the Lucas County area. This presentation sparked an idea as a means to outreach and action. St. Michael's organized a luncheon and silent auction to raise funds for LCHTC. It proved to be very successful as a fundraiser and in raising awareness. Soon after, **Off the Beaten Path** events series sponsored a presentation by Rev. Becca Stevens, founder of Thistle Farms, a free, 2-year residential community offering women survivors of trafficking and prostitution a sanctuary to heal and thrive through job training, therapy and healthcare. These kinds of activities are central to the mission of St. Michael's: to Love, Learn and Serve.
- After a three-year hiatus, the parish **Rummage Sale** earned over \$6000.00 to be split between the church's general fund and Compassionate Health, a family clinic servicing Toledo's Latino neighborhood. Unsold items were donated to four different local charitable agencies. 35 parish volunteers made this monumental project happen.
- **Compline** is an ancient contemplative liturgy for the end of the day. Conceived while parents were waiting for their kids during Youth Choir rehearsals, St. Michael's Compline evolved during the pandemic into a Zoom-call, originally hosted by the Rector, but now sustained by lay leaders. Using the New Zealand prayer book, a small, loyal group of parishioners log on weekly for an experience of prayer and community.
- St. Michael's members are very generous to our parish. The pandemic and recent transition periods have limited the kinds of **Stewardship** campaigns we've conducted lately, but even so we've been moderately pleased with the results. This year, we hosted a parish-wide **Fall Blessings Dinner**, marking a return to an older tradition, to acknowledge our gifts and our blessings. We have some financial security through our endowment and some financial worries because of demographics, but we try to keep our concerns in perspective with our blessings.
- The St. Michael's **Livestreaming Ministry** is comprised of volunteers and a member with some technical expertise for support. The system has grown gradually by means of generous donations. We now have an excellent system of cameras, computers, and audio system for running the software that sends the video to our website and social media platforms. We adapted our sound system in the church to get high-quality audio so that remote worshippers can clearly hear the entirety of the service. To make it as simple as possible for the volunteers, we added a stream deck that allows us to set up labeled pushbuttons and pre-

program where the cameras are focused.

- Currently we have a Youth Ministry Director that is a member of our church and works part-time. Sunday School meets the first and third Sunday of each month, following the 10:00 service and lasts approximately 45 minutes. Volunteers lead the students to explore ways to love, learn and serve through storytelling, singing, crafts, and reading scripture, and we enjoy a snack. Families are also welcome to join together approximately once a month at off-campus locations for outings such as ice skating and bowling.
- In January of 2023, we sponsored a memorial banquet “**The Bethlehem Dinner**” in thanksgiving for the life and ministry of the Rev. Margaret Sammons. Over 100 parishioners and friends attended this event which was rich with musical and spoken tributes and a dinner prepared by the parish. All the money raised that evening (over \$4000) was donated to “Leading Families Home”- an agency that our Outreach committee has devoted much care to in the past.
- During the month of June, St. Michael's offers a Summer Arts Program dedicated to one of our former members who was a career educator in the Toledo Public Schools. **The Isabelle Carter Arts Program** is sponsored by St. Michaels in the Hills and the City of Toledo Parks and Youth Services. The camp serves, primarily, children from the Toledo Public Schools and neighborhoods outside of our own. The camp offers 45-minute classes for K-12 in music, visual arts, dance, theater, and calligraphy for grades 7-12. Free lunch is provided by a local food organization, Connecting Kids to Meals. Much of the staff for this program is served by St. Michael's volunteers.
- Our church is blessed enough to have connections with the Toledo Opera, WGTE Public Media, and other gifted professionals in the music and artistic fields. We have hosted amazing concerts, lectures, and have even recorded two, hour-long television specials, “The Tower Brass Quintet at Christmas” and “Christmas and the King of Instruments.” Members are looking forward to enjoying the gifts of talent from others soon.
- A recently discovered two-octave set of handbells has inspired eight **Bell Choir** volunteers to add its distinctive and captivating sound to our service once each month.

IN CONCLUSION

We are a congregation that has faced enormous challenges and embraced remarkable triumphs. We are steadfast and resilient, hard-working, and trusting. At this moment we find ourselves determined, through prayer and perseverance, to continue to grow our congregation, serve the greater community and march toward the future. We are looking for a rector who will guide us, love us, and bring us closer to God in all ways.

We welcome further discussion and would love to share the goals we have outlined for our parish as we move forward to love, learn, and serve.