

Episcopal Diocese of Lexington

PROFILE:

The Episcopal Diocese of Lexington was formed in 1895 when the original Diocese of Kentucky was divided into two - the Diocese of Lexington taking responsibility for the Eastern half of the state. The diocese is culturally and geographically diverse stretching from St Andrew's in Fort Thomas to St Mary's in Middlesboro, and the Church of the Ascension in Frankfort to Calvary in Ashland. It incorporates the city of Lexington and the horse farms of the Bluegrass, the suburbs of Cincinnati, as well as the rural Appalachian communities of the eastern coalfields and rural southern Kentucky.

Situated in Province IV of the church the diocese comprises 36 faith communities with 78 active or retired clergy. The diocesan cathedral is located in the city of Lexington as is Mission House - the administrative headquarters of the diocese. The bishop is supported by a staff of eight, by a Standing Committee of six, and an Executive Council of twenty-four.

The diocese also supports The Cathedral Domain, a camp and conference center located on 800 acres on the edge of the Daniel Boone National Forest and close to the Red River Gorge. Summer camps, retreats, conferences, and visitors looking to enjoy the beauties of the Eastern Kentucky Mountains use the Domain. In 2016 the Domain supported eleven summer camps and housed 6,323 guest stays – serving 18,121 meals!

Lexington is the second-largest city in Kentucky and the 60th-largest city in the United States. Known as the "Horse Capital of the World," it is the heart of the state's Bluegrass Region. The city has a population of 318,449, with a further 506,751 people in the metropolitan area. Lexington ranks 10th among US cities with, 39.5% of its residents having at least a bachelor's degree. It is the location of the Kentucky Horse Park, The Red Mile, and Keeneland Race Course, Rupp Arena (the world's largest basketball-specific arena), Transylvania University, the University of Kentucky, and Bluegrass Community and Technical College.

Lexington has a vibrant cultural life. It is home to many thriving arts organizations, including a professional orchestra, two ballet companies, a professional theatre, several museums, choral organizations, and a highly respected opera program at the University of Kentucky. In addition, several annual events and fairs draw people as attendees from throughout the Bluegrass Region. These include Summer Fest, The Festival of the Bluegrass, the Woodland Arts Fair, the Festival Latino, the Roots and Heritage Festival, Mayfest and the Lexington Pride Festival. Indeed, according to the 2000 Census, Lexington had the highest concentration of gay and lesbian couples of any city in Kentucky, and has long had a notable LGBTQ community, a fairness ordinance, and in the diocese, many welcoming and inclusive congregations.

Many other Bluegrass cities have equally energetic cultural scenes Danville's Great American Brass Band Festival, Ashland's Tree Festival, Mount Sterling's Court Days, Newport's ItalianFest for example. However the diocese also encompasses many of the poorest communities in America. 20% of the U.S.'s poorest counties are in the diocese with four of them being in the top ten poorest counties by median income.

The Rt. Rev. Bruce Caldwell came to Lexington in May of 2016 as Bishop Provisional and under his wise and caring leadership the diocese has made great strides in its healing process following the departure of Doug Hahn and difficult situations with the two bishops proceeding him. The diocese seeks to appoint a new Bishop Provisional early in 2018 with the possibility of turning that appointment into a permanent one within two or three years.

Working with the diocesan leadership the bishop has identified the following strengths and challenges:

Our strengths:

- Our current leadership in the diocese is tenacious, forward thinking and hard working.
- We have made great progress in the areas of education and formation. We have a robust EFM program. At the parish level we have a desire for good formation programs for all ages.
- Our largest congregations are self-sustaining, with well developed formation programs and ministries.
- Our smaller congregations are passionate, though challenged by size and resources.
- We have recognized the need to restructure and clarify the mission of our Cathedral Domain camp, and have in place a very good strategic plan.
- For our size we are gifted with many talented and skilled members, who when given the opportunity to lead, lead well.
- We see the value in offering a progressive Christian place of worship in rural communities.
- While more work needs to be done, the diocese has implemented processes to encourage group engagement in transition and conflict situations with an emphasis on deep listening and respect for all voices.

- There are planned and current initiatives in place to focus on the issue of congregational vitality.

Our Challenges:

- We have a historical top down leadership structure that relies on the gifts of the few rather than the many.
- Our leadership structures sometimes seem to frustrate our decision making process and can lead to unhelpful conflict.
- We have lacked adequate transparency and our communication has not always achieved the clarity and honesty we desire.
- We have not developed adequate resources over the years. Our endowment is insignificant, contributing only 7% of our 1.2 million dollar budget.
- Our leadership circle has not expanded as much as we would like.
- Our budget and vision is focused on maintenance and survival rather than mission.
- While some of our small and medium size congregations have looked at different models of ministry, a new imaginative vision around this work is vital.

What we need in a Bishop:

The past few episcopacies have ended at best irregularly, and some would consider poorly, and this has eroded trust in the office of bishop. The central office had historically been seen as distant and unsupportive by too many of our members and clergy. We therefore need a bishop who has already developed their Apostolic gifts but who also rejoices in the gifts and accomplishments of others. Our new bishop will come with a 21st century missional mind.

We need a bishop who will help us develop our existing resources while seeking new and innovative ways of bringing God's word to our congregations and beyond. The Cathedral Domain is an important element in our diocesan resources and we trust our new bishop will embrace the joy of God's creation and will move us forward with our Camp's strategic plan.

It is important that our bishop speaks with clarity and care, and is not easily diverted from a plan that is developed with the prayerful contributions of both the laity and clergy. It would be helpful in this healing if our new bishop had received training in family systems theory. While our new bishop will bring forward new ideas and challenges we want a

bishop who will continue to work with our existing leadership structures so that we are all empowered in our decision making. While our larger congregations are, in the main, healthy we need a bishop who will help us to continue to develop new models of leadership and shared ministry particularly in small faith communities.