

The Episcopal Church in Minnesota: A Brief History

1830s: First Episcopal Services

The history of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota is one of migration and mission. Even before there were roads, there was church.



The Rev. Ezekiel Gear,
Fort Snelling Chaplain
MN Historical Society

In 1838, Ezekiel Gear, chaplain from Ft. Snelling, conducted the first Episcopal service in the wilderness near what was to become Stillwater, MN. The Church of the Ascension began regular services in 1846, three years before Minnesota was recognized as a territory and 12 years before it became a state. Other churches formed—Christ Church in St. Paul and Trinity in St. Anthony Falls—in 1850.



Fort Snelling at Bdote, the confluence of the Minnesota & Mississippi Rivers, c. 1844.
Artist: John Casper Wild

1850s: Migration and Mission

In 1851, Episcopal missionaries visited fifteen preaching stations along navigable rivers. The woodlands and prairies of the Mississippi River experienced vast migration as European immigrants moved west. The Ojibwe people were pushed into the north country and indigenous Dakota people were pushed out of the woodlands and onto the prairies. It is among “these diverse peoples, languages, and cultures” that Episcopalians gave birth to the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, noted historian The Rev. Benjamin Ives Scott.

Native American Ministry & Expansion



Enmegahbowh later in life.

Enmegahbowh, the only child of a Canadian Ojibwe chief, came to the U.S. in 1832 as a missionary. He invited the Rev. James Lloyd Breck to begin an associate mission in 1852 along the shores of Gull Lake, bringing Episcopal ministries to the Ojibwe and Dakota peoples. Together they developed the first indigenous ministry in the Episcopal Church. In 1859, one year after Minnesota gained statehood, Enmegahbowh—whose name translates as “*One who stands before his people*”—was ordained a deacon. Eight years later, he became the first Native American ordained an Episcopal priest in America and today is recognized as a Saint.



Enmegahbowh (left) with Rev. James Lloyd Breck (right) and Isaac Manitowab (center).

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The territory had a missionary Bishop, C. Jackson Kemper, who conducted the first Episcopal service in St. Peter, MN, at the home of Captain William B. Dodd. Dodd had built a 73-mile road from Ft. Snelling in just 109 days. Dodd would later donate land for construction of the first Episcopal parish there, Church of the Holy Communion.

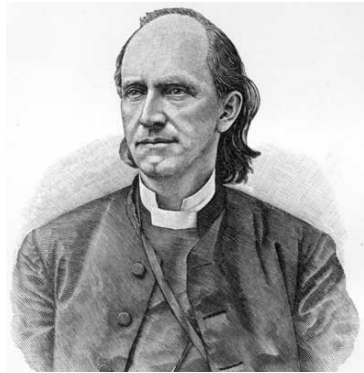


James Lloyd Breck, "Apostle of the Wilderness"
Project Canterbury

Settlers in southeastern Minnesota were able to worship with clergy like the Rev. Timothy Wilcoxson, who reportedly walked 100 miles a month carrying God's message throughout the territory.



Bishop C. Jackson Kemper, the first Missionary Bishop of the Episcopal Church, was responsible for what was then called the Northwest Territory (Indiana, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Nebraska).



Bishop Henry B. Whipple engraving
courtesy Project Canterbury/Anglican History

1859-1901: Our First Bishop

It took two years and two conventions to hammer out diocesan boundaries and canon law, but in 1858 Minnesota Episcopalians reportedly resolved their differences by electing as Bishop a completely unknown candidate, the Reverend Henry B. Whipple, who operated a store-front mission in the railroad yards of Chicago. Whipple's first sacramental act in Minnesota was the baptism of a Native American infant. He was known as a strong advocate for Native American rights during his 42 year episcopacy.

1860s: A Complicated Legacy Begins

Whipple is perhaps best known for his clemency plea on behalf of a group of 303 Dakota who were sentenced to death following the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. While 38 Dakota were hanged for participation in the conflict, President Lincoln pardoned 265 at Whipple's urging. The execution of the Dakota 38 in Mankato, MN is the largest mass execution in United States history.

Bishop Whipple departed from the standard practice of the day by encouraging and supporting indigenous leadership in the Dakota and Ojibwe churches—a legacy that is carried forward today by the leadership and vibrancy of the 11 [Native faith communities](#) operating in the Episcopal Church in Minnesota. But Bishop Whipple was also a proponent of and key figure nationally in United States policies of cultural assimilation, legal regulation of traditional practices, mandatory boarding school education, and the allotment and fragmentation of tribal reservation lands. The Episcopal Church in Minnesota was complicit in these devastating practices, and we still wrestle today with the generational trauma inflicted by them.

In 1864, the prayer book was translated into the Dakota language by an Episcopal priest and missionary in Redwood County, Minnesota.

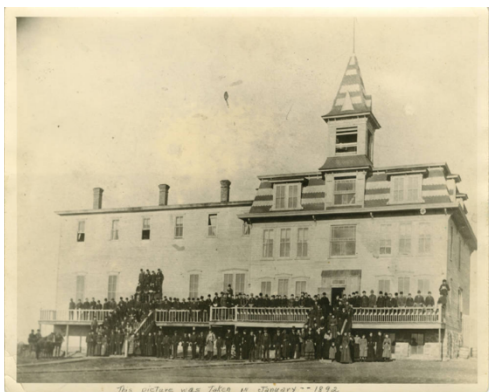
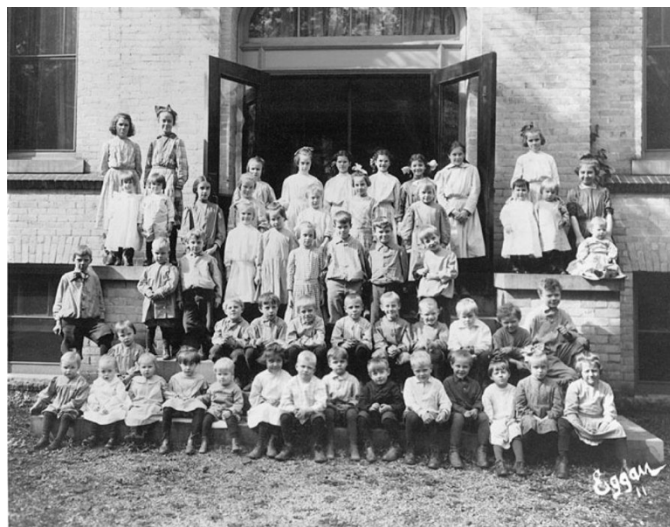
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1860s to 1940s—The Diocese Develops



1862-1869: The first Episcopal Church in America designed as a cathedral was built in Faribault: [Our Merciful Saviour](#).

1883: [Sheltering Arms](#) was established by Sister Annette Relf, a nurse and the diocese's first Deaconess, to create a safe haven for abandoned or homeless children.



1886: [Breck School](#) was established in Wilder, MN. Later moves (1916) to St. Paul and then, in 1981, to its present impressive campus in Golden Valley.

1888 & 1889: African Americans worshipped in a storeroom on Rice Street in St. Paul. Under the leadership of Mrs. Elizabeth Tibbs, St. Philip's Episcopal Church was founded in 1888, and one year later St. Thomas Episcopal Church was founded in Minneapolis. These two communities would later merge, becoming Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in St. Paul.

1894: Moved by the plight of the destitute "aged and infirm," Sister Annette Relf founded "The Church Home." It later becomes [Episcopal Homes of Minnesota](#) in St. Paul's Midway area, which today provides a range of senior living and care services.



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1895: Citing concerns about the ability to serve the whole state, a second diocese (Duluth) was created from roughly St. Cloud north at the first General Convention of the Episcopal Church, held in Minnesota.



A training school for Native American priests was located at the White Earth Reservation, and the Ojibwe Service Book and Hymnal were created.

Pictured is an early Episcopal Church near Cass Lake, MN. *Courtesy G. E. E. Linquist Native American Photographs, Burke Library Archives, Columbia University.*



1901: Samuel Cook Edsall (1901-1917) was elected second Bishop of Minnesota and moved Diocesan Headquarters.

1905: Described as one of the leading black clerics in the nation, Fr. Alfred H. Lealtad became the first full-time black rector in MN, serving at St. Philip's in St. Paul. In spite of his notoriety, no known photo of Rev. Lealtad exists.

1909: A campus ministry was formed at St. Timothy's House at the University of MN and was incorporated as University Episcopal Center.



1917: Frank Arthur McElwain was elected third Bishop of Minnesota (1917-1943), and the Executive Body, made up of Bishop and Directorate (later changed to Council, in 1934) was formed.

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1933: Seabury Seminary closed and moved to Evanston, IL to merge with Western Theological Seminary. Bishop McElwain became Dean.

1941: [St. Mark's Episcopal Church](#) was consecrated as the Diocesan Cathedral. The vision of Bishop Samuel Cook Edsall became possible in downtown when a long-supportive parishioner offered to sell the church a portion of her Loring Park estate at a very generously reduced price.



1943: Following declines during the Depression and war years, the two MN dioceses voted to reunite (a process which took 11 years to complete). The fourth Bishop of Minnesota, Stephen E. Keeler (1943-1956), developed a training school for lay readers and “Bishop’s Men” to hold Sunday services in rural areas during the war years.

1950s to 1970s: Growth Years

In the post-war years, membership peaked in Episcopal churches statewide. Hamilton H. Kellogg (1956-1971), fifth Bishop of Minnesota, became the first bishop after full reunification with the Diocese of Duluth.



Bishop Philip F. McNairy (1971-1978) developed “A Man in Place” that provided for resident priests in the context in which the clergy served, and assigned the Bishop’s Deputy for Southwest MN to implement the Lay Academy for New Directions (LAND) to advance lay ministries and non-stipendiary ministry, emphasizing the ministry of all the baptized.

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1970s to 2000: The Church Evolves

1974: Two Minnesota residents shared a vital role in Church history.

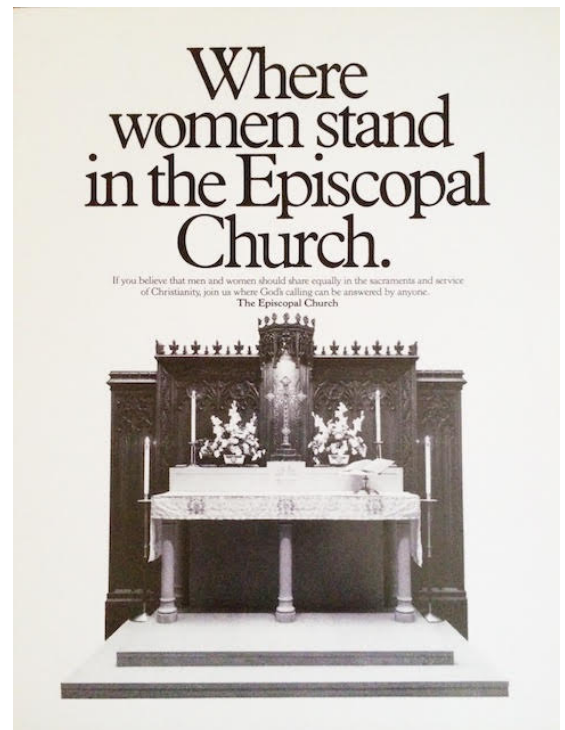
Two years before General Convention explicitly authorized the ordination of women, The Rev. Dr. Jeannette Picard and The Rev. Dr.

Alla Bozarth-Campbell became 2 of the first 11 women to be ordained as Episcopal priests on July 29, 1974. They were known as the "Philadelphia Eleven," Picard was the oldest of the group, at 79, and Bozarth-Campbell the youngest, at 27.



September 15, 1976: Minnesota helped lead the push for the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate, authorized at General Convention in Minneapolis. After her ordination was recognized, Picard became chaplain at St. Luke's Hospital (now United Hospital) and an assisting priest at St. Philip's Church in St. Paul, MN. Bozarth-Campbell founded Wisdom House, an ecumenical feminist spirituality center, and has authored over 40 books.

1978: The Episcopal Ad Project began. The Rev. George Martin partnered with a nationally-known ad agency to develop identity-claiming ads for the Episcopal Church.



1978: [The 7th Bishop of Minnesota, Robert M. Anderson \(1978-1993\)](#) began his episcopate.

1980s: Trained ministry teams were developed in Cloquet, Proctor, Hermantown, and Chatfield, and the first "locally ordained" priests began work.

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1983: The Sheltering Arms Foundation formed to make grants for direct service work for children and, later, for advocacy work for vulnerable children and families.



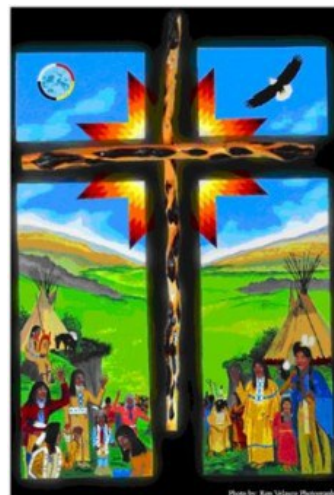
1990: [The Episcopal House of Prayer](#), a retreat space for contemplative ministry, spiritual transformation, and interfaith dialog, opened on the campus of St. John's University.

Photo courtesy the Cunningham Group. Winner of the AIA MN Architectural project that has withstood the test of time.

1993: [The 8th Bishop of Minnesota, James J. Jelinek \(1993-2010\)](#), began his episcopate. [An intentional ministry to immigrants and refugees](#) began with outreach to Latino and Hmong populations.

1998: Gospel-Based Discipleship was implemented in the Department of Indian Work. A course in Indian Studies was developed in partnership with the Department of Indian Work and United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.

Image courtesy All Saints Indian Mission.



1998: Dr. Irma M. Wyman, a pioneer—as one of the first two women to graduate from the University of Michigan Engineering School and the first female Vice President of Honeywell in Minneapolis—was appointed the first female Archdeacon for the Diaconate in the history of the Episcopal Church of Minnesota.

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2000-2018: Redefining Roles and Mission

2002: The Department of Indian Work created Kah-O-Sed School to form persons discerned for lay and clergy leadership roles by their local congregations.



2003: General Convention was held in Minneapolis, and Gene Robinson was confirmed as first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church.



2004: The Episcopal House of Prayer in the City began as an outreach of the original, offering weekly contemplative prayer first at St. Mark's and then at St. Paul's, Lake of the Isles in Minneapolis.

2005: Marilyn Goodwin, Carol Smith, John Rock, and Delores Beaulieu, members of the White Earth Nation, were ordained as deacons.

2009-10: Canon Sandi Holmberg became Missioner for [Total and Shared Ministry](#).



2010: [Brian N. Prior, Ninth Bishop of Minnesota](#), began his episcopate. He initiated the renaming process to change the Diocese of Minnesota to The Episcopal Church in Minnesota (ECMN) to signify—legally and culturally—a new identity as a network of faith communities. The change officially took effect in 2013.

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2011: The [School for Formation](#) was founded, offering formation courses for leaders in all four orders of ministry, including training for ordination. At right, the Rev. Devon Anderson instructs School for Formation students in the celebration of the Eucharist.



2014: Renovation of the campus's oldest building was completed, creating [the ECMN Retreat Center & The Inn at Shattuck-St. Mary's](#) in Faribault. The Retreat Center includes 12 guest bedrooms, meeting space, and a full catering kitchen.

2016: ECMN, together with [St. Andrew's Episcopal Church](#) in north Minneapolis, launched [Circle of the Beloved](#), an intentional Episcopal Service Corps community of young adults "promoting kinship across lines of difference."



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2017: ECMN made a missional choice to purchase and renovate an office building in North Minneapolis. The new space includes gathering spaces for church and neighborhood groups, offices for ECMN missionaries, and updated a popular first floor eatery, Sammy's.



2017-18: The Youth Commission was formed and other youth ministries were developed.

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2018: [Holy Trinity](#), St. Paul celebrated its 130th year as Minnesota's only surviving African American Episcopal Church by hosting a series of difficult discussions about race, religion, and community. Its predecessor churches (St. Philip's and St. Thomas) were formed when forced to sit apart from white Episcopalians in the 1880s.



Holy Trinity. *Star Tribune*, Shannon Prather.

Today

ECMN calls our 10th Bishop. [Walk with us on this adventure](#) of living into Christ's love and building the kingdom of God here in Minnesota.



Community Conversations for Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation and Understanding Presents:

Historical Trauma

THE HURT THAT NEVER LEAVES US

Slavery – Trail of Tears – Jim Crow – American Indian Boarding Schools
Chinese & Japanese Internment Camps – Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment

Many people who live in our community are affected by historical traumas like those pictured above. The impact of traumas like these is made even more tragic by the facts that they were government sanctioned, they span generations, and they are still felt by the descendants of the initial victims. Historical trauma is present in many places today. Healing this trauma begins only when we acknowledge it, recognize its impact, and work together to build resiliency and healing for all those affected.

Join us in a discussion focused on acknowledging and healing this trauma.

Saturday April 28, 2018
3-6 PM
at Hamline United Methodist Church

Free Ticket Required//Space Limited
Get yours at tinyurl.com/RacialForum3

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Acknowledgements:

This brief illustrated history prepared by the Bishop Search Committee in 2019 is our gift to ECMN. It shows some of our regrets, yet contains themes of bold experimentation and risk, our standing for social justice, and pushing the boundaries to serve people where they are.

We gratefully acknowledge many sources listed below. The history is not comprehensive. It is missing key photos, particularly of the earliest African American clergy and congregants and other persons of color. ECMN welcomes historical photos that help us tell the story of the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, a network of faith communities striving to live out the Way of Love and to follow Christ's call to love everyone. If you have access to any such photos, please share them with news@episcopalmn.org.

Special thanks to:

**Episcopalians in Minnesota, 1995, by Benjamin I. Scott*

Also thanks to:

- *The Minnesota Historical Society, which houses previous diocesan records of the Church, and various individual faith communities' websites.*
- *Project Canterbury, an online archive of material related to the history of Anglicanism. It was founded by Richard Mammana, Jr. in 1999, and is hosted by the non-profit Society of Archbishop Justus.*
- *History of the Diocese of Minnesota, 1857-1907, George C. Tanner papers, MNHS.*