Episcopal Church of the Advent
Parish Profile 2026

Mission Statement

To love and serve God and our neighbors by offering to the people of Tallahassee meaningful worship services rooted in the tradition of Episcopal liturgy and music, a high-quality education to young children in our day school, opportunities for fellowship, and outreach ministries that serve the community and the world.

Vision

To be an inclusive and accepting congregation that welcomes all who want to love God by serving the community through programs of outreach and giving.

History

In 1958, The Right Reverend Edward Hamilton West, the Fifth Bishop of Florida, envisioned a need for a new Episcopal parish on the north side of Tallahassee. In December of 1958, Bishop West called The Reverend Harry B. Douglas to address this need. Father Harry, who at that time was Director of Camp Weed, the Diocesan Youth Camp, began the process of organizing a mission church, which would grow into the Episcopal Church of the Advent (Advent).

Services began on Sunday, March 1, 1959, in what was then Yon's Hardware Store at the intersection of Thomasville and Betton Roads. Incorporating an old door on concrete blocks as an altar, an altar cloth borrowed from St. John's, a service book from the Chapel of the Resurrection, and candlesticks from Holy Comforter, 44 congregants participated in this initial service.

In nearby Lloyd, Florida, St. Clement's Episcopal Church was closing down due to dwindling attendance and the need for extensive repairs of their chapel. St. Clement's Chapel was given to the new mission and was moved to its present location on Advent's property. After renovations were completed, the chapel was dedicated on November 29, 1959, the first Sunday of Advent, and served as the main place of

worship until the new sanctuary was built circa 1966. In January 1966, the mission became a parish.

Father Harry served as the Rector of Advent for 10 years, until 1968. During his tenure, the parish had acquired their own property, renovated St. Clement's Chapel, and built a new sanctuary. The parish grew tenfold during his time as Rector.

Fr. Harry with his family in St. Clement's Chapel

The Rev. Matthews Weller shepherded the parish until September 1970 when the Reverend Bob Snell became Advent's Rector. Father Bob served as Rector for 20 years. Under his guidance, Advent's outreach flourished. The Advent Day School, a day school for preschool aged children, was opened in 1971. It continues to serve as one of the most highly respected preschools in Tallahassee. Father Bob was named Rector Emeritus in 1992.

The Reverend Ron Davis, Father Bob's assistant, served as the next Rector for several years. Father Ron was a nurturing shepherd. With an emphasis on "equipping the saints," lay leadership was strengthened under his direction.

The Rev. Jim Hobby served as our Rector from 1993 through 2001. Father Jim emphasized evangelism and outreach. During his time as Rector, Advent became involved in supporting sports teams, AA groups, Habitat for Humanity, local shelters, and prison ministries.

The Reverend Travis Boline became the Priest-in-Charge after Fr. Jim's departure. The Reverend Bob Koon became the Rector of Advent into 2003. Mother Travis continued to serve as an assistant priest under Fr. Bob Koon's leadership. Father Bob and Mother Travis, like other clergy in the Episcopal Church, became disenchanted with the Episcopal

Church USA after the Right Reverend Eugene Robinson, an openly gay man, was consecrated as a bishop in 2003. In 2006, Father Bob, Mother Travis, several staff members, and two-thirds of Advent's parishioners left the Episcopal Church to form an Anglican parish.

Like many parishes in Tallahassee, the split and several years that followed were very difficult for our Advent family. We were few in number, but abounded with love for each other and for Advent. Thankfully, we were sent an excellent interim priest, the Rev. Joan Pitcher. Mother Joan brought a fresh, joyful, inventive presence that facilitated much healing and joy.

In 2008, the Rev. Randall Sartin was called to be Rector. Our parish was challenged by his excellent sermons. Father Randall had multiple serious health issues during his time as Advent's shepherd. These issues affected his ability to successfully serve the parish resulting in his early retirement in 2017, after which he was named Rector Emeritus.

We were blessed by the service of the Rev. Dr. Rick Effinger as our Interim Priest. Father Rick fostered normalcy, and provided stability in our worship and in our Parish life, allowing for continued healing and growth.

In early 2018 we began a search process for our next Rector. Little did we all know that the COVID pandemic would interrupt and seriously hamper life as we all knew it; especially our search process.

Parish life in general was affected as we shut down weekly services for approximately 13 months. The search process was slowed, but In July 2021, we called the Rev. Bret

Hays to be our eighth Rector. Fr. Bret was very learned in the areas of the Bible, church history and rituals of the Episcopal Church. We returned to a sense of stability. Then, he accepted a call to be Rector of another church in October 2024.

Since Fr. Bret's departure, we have relied upon a variety of "supply" priests, deacons and lay members to conduct our weekly and special worship services. The congregation has enjoyed the unique character each person has brought to the services.

Who We Are

We are a small congregation, diverse in our views, yet united in our love and respect for one another. Our theologically progressive congregation greatly values traditional worship, a vibrant music program, diverse educational opportunities, and participation in community outreach. Church members find fellowship and participation in church activities to be very meaningful in their lives. Thirty-eight percent of the members have worshipped at Advent for more than 20 years and 64% have been at Advent for more than ten years. Sixty-five percent of our parish members are 65 or older and 39 percent of members have postgraduate degrees.

Average Sunday Attendance				
2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
54	74	69	70	64

Our Worship

Advent celebrates two weekly Eucharistic services. On Sunday, early worshippers gather at 8:30 am in St. Clement's Chapel for a quiet, contemplative service without music. At the 10:30 am Eucharist, the service includes a full choir. Both services typically follow Rite II, except for special occasions.

Our worship is greatly enhanced by an excellent music program. During the 10:30 am Sunday service, music is provided by our choir director and choir members who perform works by Schubert, Durufle, and Mozart, among many others. Although most music is accompanied by organ and piano, other instruments are included on special occasions. Special music has

included Advent Lessons & Carols; Morning Prayer; Evensong; and choir concerts, often accompanied by instrumentalists, including a string quartet, French horn, trumpet, and cellos. Most hymns are selected by the choir director from the Episcopal hymnal.

Special services throughout the year include graduation Sunday, blessing of the backpacks, and blessing of the animals.

Advent Parish Day School

Advent Parish Day School is a thriving, vital ministry of Advent. Established in 1971, the school has a long history of excellence. The Day School offers accredited early childhood educational programs for students 18 months to 5 years of age and has a well-educated and experienced staff. In addition to the foundational classroom curriculum, the Day School offers a unique program of special activities (cooking, science, art, music, movement, and chapel) that enhance the regular school day. Currently, 137 students are enrolled in the Day School with 112 on the waiting list.

Advent supports the Day School in several ways. The largest fundraiser of the year is a Silent Auction in the fall that brings together parishioners, parents, and community members for a fun evening to raise money for needed renovations and upkeep of the school property.

Parish members support the Day School families by hosting Muffins for Moms for Mother's Day, Grandbuddies Day, and two welcome-back teacher appreciation meals per year. ECW volunteers have provided childcare in the parish hall to allow day school parents to have a "Date Night." One parishioner makes pizza with the students once a month, a very popular activity.

Advent Day School has a Board of Directors, which is led by a dedicated group of day school parents and Advent leadership. The Board was created in 2018 with a goal of fostering good communication between the Church and the Day School, providing solid leadership, and allowing more input in Day School decision-making by parents. By-laws adopted by the Church govern the operation of the Day School. Advent is represented on the Day School board by the Rector, one warden, one vestry member and two at-large parishioners.

Fellowship and Ministries

A strong web of friendships unites the congregation of Advent. There are many opportunities for Advent parishioners to participate in ministries and fellowship activities with one another.

Adult Education: Sunday Adult Education is offered weekly immediately following the 8:30 am service.

Bible Study: Each Thursday morning, Advent offers Bible Study, a popular program that often fills the Vestry Room. The group usually discusses the readings for the upcoming Sunday and get insights and interpretations from our Rector and other biblical scholars.

Sunday Breakfast: Breakfast is prepared and served on the first Sunday between services by the Mighty People of Advent and is available for a nominal fee.

Fellowship Luncheon & Coffee Hour: Adventers love to gather and break bread with one another. From September through May parishioners host, either individually or in pairs, a Fellowship Luncheon on the third Thursday of each month to socialize or enjoy a program. Coffee Hour is another opportunity for fellowship. Individuals sign up to host and provide light snacks after the 10:30 service.

Sunday School (Godly Play): Through a generous donation of two parishioners, Advent purchased the Godly Play curriculum offered to children for Sunday School. Each Sunday before the 10:30 am service, children experience the stories of Scripture through storytelling, reflection, and play. They join their families in church in time to participate in Holy Communion.

Episcopal Church Women: The Episcopal Church Women (ECW) meet at 6:30 pm the fourth Tuesday of the month and provide support to Advent and the Day School. The group holds fundraising opportunities to support local and international charities. ECW also serves as a “Caring Committee,” sending notes of encouragement, congratulations, or condolences to parishioners and their families.

Forums: Parish members occasionally meet on Wednesday evenings for an opportunity to gather after a meal to learn about and discuss timely topics. Programs have included Lenten Study during Lent, book studies, and presentations.

Church Ministries: There are many ways in which our parish members serve Advent for each service. Parishioners serve on the Altar Guild, as choir members, lay ministers, lectors, acolytes, ushers, and offering counters. Eucharistic ministers deliver the Eucharist to members who are not able to attend church.

Vacation Bible School: Advent's children aged 5-10 are invited to participate in Holy Comforter Episcopal Church's Vacation Bible School during the summer.

Annual and Seasonal Activities

Advent has several large programs that allow parishioners opportunities to give their time for the benefit of others.

Silent Auction: The annual Silent Auction is the biggest fundraiser in support of Advent Day School. The ticketed event offers an evening of dinner and drinks with the opportunity to sponsor the event, donate services or goods, or bid on dozens of donated items. The event regularly raises more than $25,000, which is used for technology updates, renovations, and other improvements to the Day School.

Trunk or Treat: ECW hosts this free, community-wide event which attracts many children and adults of all ages. Advent parishioners enjoy decorating vehicle trunks and handing out candy while the children enjoy a scavenger hunt, games, crafts, and wearing costumes.

Breakfast with Saint Nicholas: This event began in 2018 with the goal of teaching children about the gift-giving of the historical Saint Nicholas. Advent parishioners serve a complimentary breakfast, provide music, and arrange for a surprise visit by St. Nick. This free community-wide event typically draws about 150 guests.

Bowls & Brews: Begun in 2019, this event is an opportunity for anyone in the community to compete in a chili cook-off. The church provides childcare and supervised activities for the children. Parishioners donate breads and desserts, and volunteers organize the logistics. Between 15 & 20 teams participate each year, including other local Episcopal Church teams and students from local culinary schools. Money raised during the event supports Advent's many outreach ministries. Bowls & Brews typically has approximately 185 people in attendance.

Outreach Ministries

The Outreach Committee coordinates the various local, national, and international outreach missions of the church community.

Grace Mission: Advent contributes financially and through volunteer work to Grace Mission, an Episcopal mission in midtown addressing the physical and spiritual needs of low income and unhoused people in Tallahassee. One Sunday each month, Advent sends a team of volunteers to prepare breakfast for those who visit Grace Mission. A representative of Advent sits on the board.

Emergency Care Health Organization (ECHO): On the first Sunday of every month, we collect cans of chili to contribute to ECHO, the leading faith-based social service agency in the area. For that we are known as "The Chili Church."

A Full Summer: Advent provides assistance to A Full Summer, an organization that holds a food packaging event bringing together volunteers who donate time and money to package meals for children who do not receive school lunches over the summer.

Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD): A percentage of our offerings support Episcopal Relief and Development, an organization which facilitates healthier, more fulfilling lives in communities struggling with hunger, poverty, disaster, and disease. Parishioners also individually designate offerings to specific local or international relief efforts. Advent holds a Hot Dog Sunday each year to raise awareness and money for ERD.

Care Portal: In 2025 Advent joined the Care Portal Network. Through its technology platform, CarePortal connects churches to children and families who need help in our community. As a church partner, our team of four responders receives information on the specific vetted needs of these families and can decide if we can help meet those needs with new or gently used physical resources.

Cuba Companion Church: In 2018, Advent established a companion parish relationship with La Trinidad in Los Arabos, Cuba. In January 2019, a group of missionaries from Advent and St. Johns Episcopal Church visited our companion parishes and were able to develop relationships, lead children's activities, attend a Vestry meeting, and take much needed financial support. We also provide maintenance and upkeep of Living Waters of the World, a water filtration system that provides safe water for the entire community.

Beginning in December 2024, through the generosity of Advent parishioners, Advent sends a monthly food supply through an on-line food delivery system to LaTrinidad, which provides community meals for the approximately 45 mostly elderly parishioners.

In November 2025, Advent and St. Johns planned a mission trip to our companion parishes; however, the trip was cancelled due to illnesses from mosquito borne illnesses, hepatitis and an aggressive variant of COVID.

In addition to the monthly food supply, we continue to work with Friends of Episcopal Church of Cuba (FECC) to send financial assistance and ship over-the-counter medications to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

When an outreach need is identified, parishioners are quick to provide monetary and in-kind support. One such need was recently identified at Gretchen Everhart School. Advent now collects “treats” for the teachers to reward positive behaviors by students, something the teachers have had to purchase in the past.

Historically, Advent has participated in other programs, including Habitat for Humanity, Kairos Prison Ministry Teams, the Tallahassee Equality Action Ministry, Refuge House, Food for the Poor, and disaster relief through the Red Cross. We hope to continue to expand our program of outreach and giving and feel this outward focus to do God’s work in the community helps bring us closer together as a church family.

Stewardship and Financial Information

Below is a four-year summary of pledge revenues and parish expenditures. The parish currently carries virtually no debt and has paid off its mortgage.

Item	2025	2024	2023	2022
Pledging Units	69	69	71	71
Pledge Totals	$235,670	$240,345	$236,335	228,953
Church Operating Budget	$254,028	$246,068	$260,414	238,278
Day School Operating Budget	$1,433,334	$1,433,334	$1,249,919	$1,115,154

Our Hopes and Dreams

In a recent survey of Advent's congregation, our members expressed the following:

Preserve What's Special: Honor the family culture, traditions, and relationships that define Advent.

Welcome New Families: Actively invite and embrace children, youth, and young families into parish life,

Build on Family Culture: Let our identity as a family be the foundation for everything we do next,

Grow with Integrity: Pursue growth in ways that honor our traditions and deepen our faith and,

Strengthen Outreach: Increase Advent's visibility and engagement in the broader community.

The Rector We Seek

We would like to call a Rector who has strengths in five important areas:

Strong Preacher & Teacher - Parishioners want a rector whose sermons inspire, challenge, and deepen faith — someone who brings scripture to life with clarity and conviction,

Caring & Approachable - A pastor who is genuinely warm, easy to talk to, and makes every person feel valued and heard in their moments of need,

Visible & Engaged - Someone who shows up — at events, in the community, and in the everyday life of the parish — not just on Sunday mornings,

Strong Pastoral Presence - A rector who prioritizes pastoral care and is present with parishioners through life's most significant moments and,

Relationship Builder - Someone with a natural gift for building genuine lasting relationships across all ages and backgrounds within the congregation.

Facilitator of Growth & Outreach – A leader who helps the church grow through outreach, community visibility, and engagement with newcomers.

Staff and Leadership

During this time of transition, our parish is led by our Vestry. The Vestry comprises 11 members who are elected for rotating three-year terms at the annual parish meeting in January or February of each year. Our staff also includes a full-time parish Administrator/Bookkeeper, full-time Sexton, part-time Director/Organist, and a part-time office volunteer. The Day School has a full-time Head of School, and, reporting to her, an office manager and more than thirty teachers who staff both school year and summer programs. The Head of School reports directly to Advent's rector. Advent Parish Day School provides cost sharing for salaries of the Parish Administrator and Sexton.

Our Parish Grounds

Advent is located on six beautifully landscaped acres in a middle-class, suburban, residential area of northeast Tallahassee, between Live Oak Plantation and the Waverly Hills neighborhood.

The parish property is adjacent to Roselawn Cemetery. The physical plant consists of five buildings: Advent Church, St. Clement's Chapel, two buildings housing Advent Parish Day School, and a combination church office/activities building/parish hall. There is on-site parking available on both sides of the property.

A Memory Garden for cremated remains is on the grounds, which was renovated in 2019. In 2025, the St. Clement's Chapel roof was replaced with cedar shake shingles, preserving its historical carpenter gothic style.

Our Community

Tallahassee, located in the Florida panhandle, is the capital city of Florida. It is home to Florida State University and its National High Magnetic Field Laboratory. It is also the home of Florida A&M University, the fifth largest historically black university, and Tallahassee State College, which serves as a feeder school to both universities. With its population of more than 200,000, Tallahassee is known for its inviting hospitality, beautiful parks and gardens, and canopy roads, including Maclay Gardens State Park. There are numerous opportunities to enjoy Tallahassee's history, heritage, culture, and festive nature, including Opening Nights, Springtime Tallahassee, the Tallahassee Museum, LeMoyne's Chain of Parks Art Festival, the Word of South Literature and Music Festival, the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, and a beloved downtown Winter Festival.

Tallahassee is located less than two hours from beautiful, white sand beaches. Countless family vacations and day trips are enjoyed on St. George Island, St. Teresa, St. Joseph State Park, St. Vincent Island and St. Marks all preserving Old Florida charm. Wakulla Springs State Park, located on the Wakulla River, is where winters bring manatees upstream to enjoy the warmer waters of the springs.

Diocese of Florida

The Episcopal Diocese of Florida, which covers 25 counties in north Florida, comprises 76 congregations, 13 parochial schools, and more than 30,000 members. When originally formed in 1838, the Diocese comprised the whole state of Florida. It is now one of four Dioceses in the state. While the Diocese is actively searching for a new bishop, the Standing Committee serves as the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese. A new bishop will be selected at the Diocesan General Convention in September 2026. Since 1951, the cathedral church has been St. John's Cathedral in Jacksonville. The Diocese is the home to the Camp Weed & Cerveny Conference Center, centrally located on approximately 500 acres near Live Oak.

ADVENT
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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