



# PARISH PROFILE

2009



CHURCH OF THE  
ATONEMENT

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY TOGETHER

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CHURCH OF THE  
ATONEMENT



## PARISH MISSION

With Christ at our center, the mission of the Church of the Atonement is to worship God through rich traditions and fresh innovations, serve God's people through all stages of life, and reach out to others in faith and love.

## CORE VALUES

What we do must...

- † be life-giving
- † be Christ-centered
- † reach beyond our doors



## INTRODUCTION

The Church of the Atonement, nestled in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts, is a family-style mission sized parish, serving the greater Westfield area for over a century and a half. We are a member of the 67-congregation Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts which includes the five Western counties of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, stretching from the city of Worcester in the east to the New York State Line and Stockbridge to the west. Parishes in the Diocese are committed to being healthy, mission-focused outposts of love and transformation. We are part of the world-wide Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church, USA (<http://www.diocesewma.org/>).

As a congregation we enjoy our traditional worship style, as well as a beautifully structured stone church located in the downtown area of Westfield, Massachusetts.

Our parish life revolves around our worship, our sense of family, our music, and our involvement in outreach.

**“Be joyful always; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.”**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-19



## WE SEEK...

. . . a leader to help us to continually define our vision to meet the present and future needs of a community, a country, and a world in great need of God's love.

*Help us to reach out.*

. . . a priest whose words are drawn not only from scripture but from life experience, words which inspire us all to walk the spiritual path Jesus Christ set out for us and to take that journey together.

*Speak to us and listen as well.*

. . . an ecumenical person who will welcome working in the community with us, with our fellow Christians, and with our neighbors of all faiths.

*Do God's work with us.*

. . . a pastor who will provide a healing hand to people of all ages and conditions and who will encourage us to be healers too.

*Encourage us all to be ministers.*

. . . a teacher who will help us, wherever we are in our spiritual journey, to grow and to develop as Christians through learning, whether from scripture, from literature, from the current events in our world.

*Join us as we grow in our knowledge of God.*

. . . a person with a passion for social justice, who welcomes open and honest dialogue.

*Engage us to help and respect the needs of all our brothers and sisters.*

. . . a giver who will help us see where our gifts lie and where they are needed, one who helps us develop an urgent sense of stewardship and sharing from our abundance.

. . . a rector who leads with encouragement, who shares ministry, who sees our differences yet unites as a Christian body, and who has and appreciates a sense of humor.



## WHO WE ARE

The people of Atonement are a wonderful blend of parishioners who have been members for a long, long time and those who have joined and become active in the parish within the last few years. We know and love Christ, we love our liturgy, we enjoy fellowship, we admire and learn from our elders, we take joy and hope in our young people.

The Church of the Atonement has retained two active congregations – a quieter 8:00 Rite I liturgy and a more active, family-oriented 10:00 Rite II service. Each has its own sense of community, although we prefer to define ourselves as one parish with a unified mission. In recent years, we have had one 9:00 summer service to allow the two congregations to become reacquainted. Last summer, our interim rector introduced us to a wonderful change for the entire season, a service order from the Celtic tradition that blends worship styles of both congregations. The results: great attendance, full and joyous participation, and intergenerational fellowship.

As one of the older mainline congregations in Westfield, we have history and we have tradition, but our community neighborhood is also home to large, up-and-coming evangelical congregations with whom we share our love of Christ.

We enjoy the comfort of our traditional space, but we know that it has to provide comfort to others as well, those who don't yet know God, those who have lost God, those who are disenfranchised from a former faith.

Throughout the year, fellowship coffee hours after our services are well-attended, with parishioners sharing in the preparation. We are still working to use these opportunities to be more welcoming and inclusive of newcomers. Atonement has tried some excellent innovations – two U2 Eucharists and an Access service in the evening with modern music and relaxed liturgical style.

Although the alternative service sparked interest, without clear definition, it faded. A healing service was introduced about six years ago, and has its place on the third Sunday of each month. At first, only a few participated actively, but today it is a defining part of our parish, a time that is now shared by many who go forward for the laying on of hands, but equally shared by those who remain seated and are simply moved by the spirit.

We have many active ministries, which joyfully present in this profile. We have new folks who step into new ministries, yet we have the age-old challenge of those same faithful leaders, too few doing all the work!

We strive to be a healthy congregation, seeking diversity in our leadership and striving to encourage meaningful discernment in those who seek leadership. We keep each other informed through weekly bulletins, parish-wide e-mail, and announcements, but would like to re-establish our parish newsletter and create a vital and active parish website.

For our own health, we are striving to follow the Diocesan discipline of “Healthy Congregations” by freeing ourselves of the age-old tradition of having parishioners as paid employees, by becoming an administratively and technologically modern organization, and by getting beyond the “charity begins at home” culture that prevents us from reaching out to a world that needs us. We want to grow further in our service to the world beyond our own parish community. We have strong traditions of community outreach, as this profile portrays in the descriptions that follow. In all our ministries, at home and abroad, we are mindful of Paul’s words:

*“Be joyful always; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19*

## OUR INTERIM PERIOD

On May 31, 2007, the Rev Rick Bellows celebrated his last service at the Church of the Atonement after nine years of ministry. Fr. Rick had been diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease in 2002 at age 43, at which time Eliot Moss, a deacon at the time, joined Atonement, was ordained at our church in 2004, then served as part-time assistant priest. Fr Rick’s ministry remained fruitful and active, but his schedule, along with detailed administrative duties, became more challenging.

Fr Eliot remained with us for six months after Fr. Rick left. This was a blessing for us, as it provided an already-familiar face in the wake of our full-time rector’s departure. We were able to spend adequate time in a search for a full-time interim. The Rev. Mark Hatch was called as full-time interim in December 2007. During this year and a half, we have not only experienced some growth in new members, but Mark has also challenged us to keep

moving forward, to try the things that we had only talked about in previous years. As a result, we have become more efficient in many ways.

- We sold our rectory, which was a large 10-room house in enough disrepair that it would have taken many valuable financial resources to update.
- We razed an old building adjacent to the church which was used as our office building, which was also in great disrepair and needed many costly fixes.
- We renovated our main building, creating a new office space, a new rector’s office, and converting a chapel into a combined chapel/music library/choir room.

In addition, we have enriched our summer worship service, enlivened our Christmas Eve family service, added a book study, had a ministry fair, and offered a Kerygma Bible study. Our Vestry meetings have become not only more efficiently run, but they are being more centered on the spiritual needs of the parish, making it less of a business meeting.

We also participated in the Church Innovations Church Future Finder program, from which we learned a lot about who we have been and who we are today and which gave a wonderful structured way to look at ourselves, our history, our community, our geographical area, and in general, what makes us “tick.”

We have done some tough discernment on financial matters, and are moving towards prioritizing mission before money. We have dealt with large deficit budgets and some cash flow issues, and realize that it is difficult to “move on” when constantly grieving over finances. To that end, we approved a balanced budget for 2009 which includes moving to a part-time/supply interim priest model until we call a full-time rector. This allows the financial freedom to achieve our goal of calling a full-time rector. Some things that have diminished, not necessarily because we wanted them to, are our healing service and our monthly newsletter “Seek.” The one has begun to occur sporadically, and we miss its consistent presence; the other has suffered from a lack of volunteers to make it happen.

We feel that Mark has helped us prepare to seek a new rector. We know our strengths, we recognize our challenges, we are eager to continue on our journey.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT OUR PARISH

### **Ministries to Support Our Worship:**

‘We worship God through rich traditions and fresh innovations’

### **Music**

At the Church of the Atonement, worshipping the Lord through the power of music is an integral part of our parish life. The choir is one of our greatest joys, a thing of beauty, bringing anthems of praise

We vary our musical selections among the traditional hymnal, *Wonder, Love and Praise*, and *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. Our 10:00 worship ends each week with a Navajo peace song which, in unity, we sing with hand motions. It has become the signature close of our worship service and somehow unites us as a congregation.

### **Altar Guild**

*“Almighty God, grant we beseech Thee, that we may handle Holy Things with reverence and perform our work with such faithfulness and devotion that it may rise with acceptance before Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen”*

The Altar Guild is responsible for care of the many vestments and vessels used for worship services in the church. After serving for twenty-three years, the current leader has resigned and the Guild is seeking a new leader and new members. Currently, five members prepare the altar and sanctuary for each service and clean the vessels and vestments following each service, including Sundays, funerals, weddings, and special services.

### **Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Lectors**

Lay Eucharistic ministers have been trained and licensed by the Diocese to assist the clergy in the administration of the elements of bread and wine during the Eucharist and to conduct certain services

in the absence of clergy. Lectors, many of whom are also Lay Ministers, read the Old and New Testament lessons during the service, the Psalms, and sometimes the Prayers. There are currently twelve Lay Eucharistic Ministers, ten Lectors, and two psalmists in the parish.

### **Lay Eucharistic Visitors**

*In the name of this congregation I send you forth with these holy gifts, that those to whom you go may share*



that transcends ordinary worship into extraordinary worship.

We are incredibly blessed to have, as our director of music, an accomplished professional pianist, who is equally comfortable performing soft classical anthems as he is working with our children as they sing *Our God Is an Awesome God!* His gifts extend to concerts offered to an appreciative community that have helped fund special projects.



*with us in the communion of Christ's Body and Blood. We who are many are one body, because we share one bread and one cup. Amen.*

We now have seven caring people in our parish who bring Holy Communion to those unable to attend regular services, either in their homes, in hospitals, or in nursing homes. We help them to worship our Lord and to know that they are not forgotten in this busy world. When we come with Communion, we spend time with them and bring word of the church and friends they miss. Although we are sad when their time comes to go home to the Father, we cherish what they leave with us. They are friends who have enriched our lives and give meaning to living. As we walk with the Lord in this ministry, we truly come to know His great love for all of us. Lay Eucharistic Visitors are trained by the Diocese and licensed by the Bishop.

This license is renewed and reviewed annually. The Rector coordinates home communions and also makes visits to the homebound or those who request his presence. In addition, unlicensed volunteers make pastoral visits when we are aware of a need. Our greatest challenge is that many people in need hesitate to ask for help. We now have a team that makes a call to the hospital each Sunday and midweek to check if there is a parishioner in need.

*"Have you made a visit or sent a card to a shut-in lately? A nursing home or an empty house away from family and friends can be a very lonely place to be."*

### **Acolytes**

Acolytes ages 9-90 assist our priests in the preparation for and celebration of the Holy Eucharist. at the 8am and 10 am services as well as assist in baptisms, weddings , funerals and other services during Holy Week. This ministry is as old as the Christian Church and is very important. The goal of the acolyte coordinator is to have each one of God's children feel the love in serving God's gifts to the people of God. In doing so, the acolyte will feel the enrichment of faith by serving as Gods minister. In September 2008, we began the fall schedule with eleven acolytes.

In October on a recruitment Sunday, five new young people were recruited. They were each were assigned an acolyte mentor and were trained by our interim rector on a learn-by-doing Sunday. Presently we have four teams of four acolytes with a once a month rotation. The Acolytes are in a continual acolyte educational process. Last December, we served as acolytes at the Cathedral for the 10 am service.

### **Ushers**

Currently there are approximately 10-14 ushers who minister before, during, and after our services to make sure the worship flows smoothly. Ushers serve quietly in the background to enhance the worship experience. Ushers are frequently the first people a newcomer sees upon entering the church, so they offer a warm and friendly welcome to the service as they distribute the service leaflets. People who are in need of physical assistance or directions will find an usher always willing to help. The ushers encourage visitors to sign

our guest book so the rector can follow up with a contact if one is appropriate. They prepare the church by lighting candles and placing hymn numerals on a board where they are visible.

While the service is in progress, they take attendance in all parts of the church, pass the offering baskets, and arrange for the presentation of the elements by members of the congregation. They solicit volunteers to participate in leading the Prayers of the People and usher people forward during Communion. They assist the priest by identifying people who need the elements brought to them in their seats.

Following the service, the ushers make sure the church is left in order, rearranging prayer books and hymnals in pews, picking up trash left behind, and organizing bulletins for the next service. Although they are not highly visible, the ushers serve an important purpose in tending to the small details so worshippers are free to celebrate in a spiritual environment.

### **Healing**

We offer healing prayer both at monthly church services and privately, with the laying on of hands and anointing. Our prayer ministers are channels of the holy Spirit's power and grace to bring wholeness and healing to those who ask. We believe that we have a healing God, revealed by Jesus Christ, who wants us to be whole and whose power is the same yesterday, today and forever. Jesus commissioned us not only to teach and preach the goodness of God's kingdom, but also to heal the sick.

While some of us have trained under the order of St. Luke, others simply feel called by God to participate faithfully. We listen, love, and pray with thanksgiving. Our prayer chain also receives confidential calls for those in need.

*“Almighty God, who inspired your servant Luke the Physician to set forth in the Gospel the love and healing power of your Son: graciously continue in your Church the love and power to heal, to the praise and glory of your Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” Prayer for Saint Luke's Day*

### **Ministries to Foster Spiritual Growth:**

*“We serve God's people through all stages of life.”*

### **Cribbery**

*“As adults... we have the joy of their presence each week and are amazed at their understanding of being ‘little Christians.’ Jesus does indeed love them and we celebrate His love each time we are with his little children.”*

Two loving volunteers joyfully care for the youngest members of our parish during the first half of our 10:00 family worship. The little ones hear about Noah and Jonah and Baby Jesus in a safe environment. They learn to pray for the needs of others in remembering those in sickness, pain or trouble, then join their families to share the Eucharist

### **The Preschool**

In the year 2009, the Church of the Atonement will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Preschool. Since 1959, it has served families in Westfield and the surrounding communities with quality childcare. The Preschool is a state-licensed childcare facility which has a director appointed by the Vestry, which oversees its operation and budget. With a staff of eight serving an average enrollment of 100 children aged 2 years 9 months to 5 years, this gem is a gift to both the parish and the community.

We take the protection of all our young people seriously. All the leaders in our children's and youth programs are Safe Church trained.

It is our hope that our new rector will develop a relationship with the children and the youth of the parish, open their minds to the endless possibilities of God's love, encourage them to participate in the ministries of our parish, invite them to serve God in the community and in the world. It is our goal to continue to oversee the Atonement Preschool.

### **Church School**

*“Our young people are gifts from God whom we have the responsibility to nurture, but even more to excite about being disciples of Jesus Christ. We are truly blessed to have parishioners who are deeply involved in the care and formation of our young people – from nursery care to church school to youth group – all exciting and vital programs. Also, there are events throughout the year where the older folks of the parish work side-by-side with our kids, participating in intergenerational events like preparing corn pudding*



*for Thanksgiving, joining the church team in a cancer walk, delivering palms to shut-ins, serving at the Community Table, vacation Bible school. And our senior generation is endlessly generous in supporting our youth programs.”*

It is a joy to support our children’s relationship with God by developing skills such as the ability to wonder, a sense of belonging, and a lifelong love and desire to know the Lord. Our purpose is to love and support our children on their journey with the Lord and to teach them to live a Christian life.

We are proud of our large and ever-growing Church School, about 40 children from preschool age through grade eleven. The program participates in UNICEF, Heifer International, creating Lenten cards for area nursing homes, and providing Sundaes Sunday for all the kids of the parish, from 9 to 90!

Two summers ago, we began a joint venture with the Southwick Community Episcopal Church in offering

**Vacation Bible School.** Its success has thrilled us, the second year’s attendance doubling the first. Proceeds

from VBS donations have helped our sister village in Uganda, and have also purchased mosquito nets. What a gift this has become for our communities!

### **Youth Group**

Two youth groups – middle school and high school – provide age-appropriate fellowship for our tweens and teens. Bringing them into a fuller relationship with God is both a joy and a challenge. In the midst of their full and active lives, the youth program offers a safe place for them to share what’s going on in their lives and how God is there to be a part of it. Twelve 15- and 16-year-olds began a wonderful program of preparation for confirmation in the fall of 2008.

Faith interviews with mentors, visits to other Christian denominations and other religious houses of worship, and participation in community service helped deepen the understanding of our young people to walk with Christ. In January 2009, it was with much joy and celebration that our Bishop confirmed all twelve.

### **Adult Education and Bible Study**

Bible study and book study groups have been a part of Atonement’s spiritual life; some have been clergy-led,



some led by lay leaders. Most recently, two Epiphany book discussion groups were offered as well as a Kerygma Lenten Bible study.

These groups offer an opportunity to explore and discuss our faith in a casual and trusted environment.

**Ministries to support fellowship and the support of our greater community:**

***”We reach out to others in faith and love”***

*“We as a parish are in a place where we need to keep those traditions that continue to bless us, but to let go of those that hold us back from reaching out - even further than before, way beyond the traditional arms we have so generously wrapped around the greater Westfield area. If we let Him, God will take us to all the places where the need is greatest. If we trust Him, we’ll go willingly. If we love Him, we’ll go and not look back.”*

**St Margaret’s Guild**

Founded in 1901 by the women of the parish, this continues to be an active group who not only contributes to the life of the parish but also provides social support to its members through joyful fellowship and care for each other. Guild members

meet regularly. Twice a year a rummage sale is held, open to the entire Westfield community. The event raises funds for ongoing church projects.

We hope that our new rector encourages the continual contributions made by and for the adult members of our parish, seeking to serve God and love and respect each other.

**Prayer Chain**

*“Being a member of a Prayer Chain opens doors of opportunity ‘to be there’ for people at the right time. Many times we have been told by people we prayed for that ‘they felt our prayers in our time of need.’”*

Fourteen people serve as intercessors for prayer requests. This group is dedicated to serving our Lord Jesus Christ through the special ministry of praying for individuals with special prayer requests.

**Boy Scouts**

Church of the Atonement is the proud host to Boy Scout Troop 101, the oldest Boy Scout Troop in the country. It is a small but active group of boys, from grade five to age eighteen, led by talented and dedicated adults. Through the Boy Scouts of America program, the boys develop character, gain leadership skills, and become active and caring citizens in their communities and families. More recently, a

very active Venture Crew 101 has formed to include girls and boys from at least age fourteen. Under the supervision of adult advisors, members run the unit and have gained the reputation as a model for others to follow. Programs of both units include outdoor adventure.

### Outreach

Serving the greater Westfield community, participating in programs of social need, and reaching across the globe is the mission of the Outreach Team. An active and enthusiastic group encourages participation in many life-giving projects, and the parish always responds!

### Outreach Committee

“This is what Yaweh asks of you: only do this, to do justice, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

The mission of the Church of The Atonement Outreach Team is to create and nurture compassion both within and outside our church walls by promoting social justice, supporting and sustaining programs that reach out to the poor and dispirited, the hungry and homeless, the powerless, the voiceless, and the unprotected. This spirit is articulated in the

guiding prayer of the Outreach Team: *Grant, O God that your holy and life giving Spirit may so move every human heart (and especially the hearts of the people in this land), that barriers that divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatred cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

The Outreach Team at Church of the Atonement is responsible to the Vestry for oversight of programs and activities that serve individuals and communities in need. Goals and responsibilities of the Outreach Team include:

1. To facilitate and oversee the effective

operations of established programs and services.

2. To encourage exploration of new program of outreach ministry.
3. To share information about Outreach programs within the parish and local community; and

The Outreach Team has a core group of more than a dozen active members. This is a passionate and dedicated group of parishioners who bring a variety of personal and professional experience to enhance Church of Atonement’s outreach efforts. Several members have been involved with Outreach for



decades, while others are relative newcomers to the church.

The Church of The Atonement Outreach Team supports those in need within our congregation, our local community, and the world. It does this through direct sponsorship or financial and prayerful support of a variety of projects. On-going projects include the Strawberry Festival which raises funds for local human service organizations, providing educational gifts to youth in the congregation who are pursuing a college education (with special consideration given to students studying in areas that align with the Outreach mission), a backpack program for children entering foster care, twice annual rummage sales that raise funds for Outreach projects, fund raising for the

NAMI (the Nations Voice on Mental Illness) through Iris Sunday, Thanksgiving Baskets for families in need, the Palestine Project to collect first aid and daily living items for families living in war torn areas, and the Christmas Angel Tree—an opportunity for members of the congregation to provide gifts to the underprivileged children in the community.

Our most recent accomplishment was the opening of the greater Westfield Free Health Services clinic.

*PRAYER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: Grant, O God, that your Holy and life giving Spirit may so move every human heart (and especially the hearts of the people of this land), that barriers that divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatred cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in peace; through Jesus Christ our lord. Amen.*

### **Strawberry Festival**

The Strawberry Festival is a 145+ year tradition of serving a large home-cooked family style meal, complete with homemade strawberry shortcake, to approximately 800 people at the height of strawberry picking season. Held in Stanley Park, the jewel of Westfield, the Festival takes weeks of preparation and organization – tasks too numerous to mention – and it all comes together on the third Thursday of June with amazing precision. It has been Atonement’s greatest gift to the community for as many years, not only bringing people together to share a meal, but also by donating the net proceeds to a local human service organization. We are very proud of this tradition, and it is our hope that our new rector becomes a significant part of it.

### **Greater Westfield Free Health Service**

Begun as the vision of an Atonement parishioner, the Greater Westfield Free Health Service opened its doors on January 7, 2009 as a clinic to provide free health care to the uninsured, or the under-insured. This non-profit, incorporated organization saw its first patients on January 14th. Through the support of our parish and a grateful community, GWFHS raised over \$6000 in start-up funds, secured a donated location on Main Street in downtown Westfield, recruited a staff of volunteer physicians, nurses and lay people, and acquired basic medical supplies/equipment.

While the GWFHS is an organization independent

of Church of the Atonement, the Outreach Team and church parishioners have given generously of their time, talents and prayers to help this Christ-centered and life-giving vision become a reality.

### **Community Table**

On a rotating basis, members of this outreach ministry prepare and serve a meal of shepherd’s pie, salad, cupcakes and milk to approximately 50 – 60 people on the fourth Sunday of each month at the Community Table of Westfield. One of many other faith-based and non faith-based organizations, we are strengthened by the opportunity to help those whom life has left aside.

### **The Village-2-Village Project**

The Church of the Atonement generously supports, through Village-2-Village, the children of the village of Serere, Uganda. Laurie Kroll, the daughter of a former parishioner, is the director of the project which directly supports the children of Serere, orphaned by the AIDS epidemic in Africa. The proceeds of both our U2 Eucharists were given directly to V2V. A terrible flood in the spring of 2007 nearly destroyed the village, and we were able to raise funds for water purification equipment and mosquito netting. We would like to continue to be involved in this very special project.

### **Heifer International**

Whether it is through the Outreach team or the church school, Heifer International is supported by our parish. Each year, funds are raised to help villages in need, but more importantly, to increase the awareness of the importance of sharing our abundance with those who need it most. We are participating in the *Fill the Ark* Program during the month of March 2009.



# PARISH FACTS AND FIGURES

## *Membership and Budget*

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 budget
Average Sunday Attendance	143	108	128		
Church School Students	39	39	30		
Baptisms	10	10	10	5	
Confirmations	0	0	7		
Received	0	0	6	4	
Marriages	2	2	0		
Burials	12	12	13	8	
Pledge Dollars	\$134,288	\$144,789	\$141,632	\$138,012	\$119,296
Pledge Households	142	120	105	98	93
Average Annual Pledge	\$ 946	\$ 1,207	\$ 1,349	\$1,380	\$1,283
Plate and Pledge Offerings	\$209,751	\$221,698	\$190,733	\$144,074	

It should be noted that the figures for 2009 are provisional. Additional pledges are expected at the time of writing this Profile. More information about the parish budget for 2009 and historical information regarding our budget are available in our Annual Report for 2008 and in our profile at: [www.churchfinder.org](http://www.churchfinder.org).

### **Endowment**

Thanks to generous giving over the years, we have been blessed with an endowment comprised of several funds, many of which are designated for specific purposes. The parish has relied on the unrestricted portion of the endowment to cover operating deficits for many years, but in recent years reliance on the endowment has diminished significantly. Still, we anticipate making use of endowment funds to help support us through 2009 while we also embark on a three-year plan to increase pledge income while controlling expenses. More information about our endowment is available in our Annual Report for 2008.

### **Property and Physical Plant**

We have a strong tradition of opening our space to the community as well as for use by the congregation and the diocese. At least 6 days a week, both inside and outside groups are using the building. Several years ago, an elevator was installed to make our great hall

and all floors handicap accessible, making all rooms available for use. The vestry, executive committee and various committees of the church hold their meetings in the church. Groups such as St. Margaret's Guild and Bible Study also use the church on a regular basis. A rummage sale is held twice a year on Friday and Saturday. During the school year we have a preschool which uses the building Monday thru Friday from 9-3. In addition, the preschool holds workshops, screenings and other activities occurring during the day or evenings.

We have community groups meeting weekly in the evenings in our building. These include AA, OA, NA and a Boy Scout Troop. A Boy Scout Venture Crew meets bi weekly; Little League Board meets once a month; and a Girl Scout troop uses our facility for special projects. We have provided space for all of these groups to meet for many years. AA has been meeting for over 30 years at our church and our Boy Scout Troop is one of the oldest in the country. In addition to the community groups, we have a piano teacher who gives lessons in our church and faithfully makes a donation for use of our facility.

Our church is always open to host diocesan meetings and workshops. These often happen several times a year. We are also open to new community groups using our facility for their activities.



As mentioned in other sections of this profile, we made some very big decisions during our interim period. A great portion of our financial budget in recent years has been directed to some major physical plant projects, at our rectory, our old office building and the main church building.

We divested ourselves of two major pieces of property – the rectory and the office building. Both were in great need of not only renovations but also basic structural updating. These decisions were not made lightly. We did our homework, did the comparison shopping, compiled the numbers, and most importantly, included the whole parish in the decision making.

This has had two outcomes: First, it made us do some major renovation to a tired main church building in need of brightening and modernizing, and secondly, it has left us a large empty area next to the church building where the old office building used to be. We have intentionally let this area lie, giving us time, as a parish, to pray, to watch, to wait, and to let us be inspired about how best to use this space for God's work.

Our challenges? We have an elevator that currently doesn't work and we have a stone tower that leaks.

## OUR HISTORY

The Church of the Atonement was organized and named in 1865, and in celebration the women of the parish held a strawberry festival, an event which has continued over the years and is now a major outreach event.

In 1879, the Rev. Henry James Sheridan came to lead the parish, and in 1880 the cornerstone of our first church building on King Street was laid. The first service in the new church was on Good Friday, 1882. A group of young women actively involved in the life of the church, became "the junior auxiliary" in 1901. That group, now named St. Margaret's Guild, still continues today.

The Diocese of Western Massachusetts was created in 1906, at which time the Rev. Robert K. Smith became rector, and served for 20 years. In 1910 the Rev. Smith

organized Boy Scout Troop 101 – the first troop in Western New England. It has been continuously rechartered and still meets at the Church of the Atonement. Rev. Smith designed the black walnut woodwork in the sanctuary which was built with wood supplied by parishioners from household furniture. The parish purchased the property on which our church now stands in 1923, and the existing house was remodeled as church and office. The Church of the Atonement was admitted to the Diocese as a parish in 1928 and, after the debt was cleared, the building was consecrated in 1944. The altar, rood screen and figures, the cross from the roof and the old cornerstone were all brought from the King Street building.

Upon the death of Mrs. Louisa A. Keep in 1926, the church received a sum in excess of \$200,000. In 1937 after a period of considerable growth under the Rev. Wolcott C. Treat and later under the Rev. Stanley C.S. Shirt, it became evident that the church building was too small. Through the leadership of the Rev. Paul T. Schultz Jr., the generosity of Frank S. Beveridge, and efforts of the whole parish, a new church building was realized in 1953.

The Rev. Paul Schultz served the Church of the Atonement from 1946 – 1956. During this period the service of Holy Communion was celebrated each Sunday morning only at 8:00 AM and the first Sunday of the month at 11:00AM. Morning Prayer was the service used at the later service the rest of the month.

In 1947, the Diocese and the Church of the Atonement ‘adopted’ a group of Protestant parishes in Berlin – Schlachtensee, Germany, giving support, friendship and goods to help refugees after the devastation of the war. Mary Heilner served as assistant to the Rev. Schultz from 1946 – 1950, and in 1950 went to Schlachtensee for 2 years to coordinate aid and pastor the refugees.

Rev. Schultz was replaced by the Rev. William M. Hale in 1956, and he guided the parish through the next 18 years of growth. This growth required additional clergy leadership and the church began a tradition of training newly graduated seminarians as assistants. A total of 15 clergymen began or developed their ministry as assistants at Church of the Atonement.

The Mary A. Fuller Memorial Fund was established

by William and Richard Fuller in 1961 and the home at 60 Western Avenue became the rectory of the Church of the Atonement. In 1962, the parish purchased from the Durkin family vacant property adjoining the church. Later three adjacent houses were purchased, one to use as offices, another to house assistant clergy and the third to become a rental.

In 1976 Father Hale left the parish to become Dean of the Cathedral in Syracuse, N. Y. and the Rev. Robert Anthony undertook pastoral leadership of the parish. He helped develop youth activities, expand the Christian Education program, increase Outreach and the role of lay ministers. In 1988 he left to return to his home parish in Rhode Island.

The Rev. Marilyle Sweet Page was called in 1989 as rector, and she began an ambitious program of strengthening parish structure and policies, along with engaging parishioners in the issues of the day. Although her tenure began with much excitement and support, controversy and conflict developed. After discussions with Bishop Robert Denig and other Diocesan staff, and an outside consultant, in 1994 the vestry voted to request the mutual ministry be dissolved.

In 1995 the Bishop appointed the Rev. Alfred Zadig as Priest in Charge. He led the parish through a much needed healing process, emphasizing a more intense worship experience and improved pastoral care. Due to continuing erosion of the endowment, he also introduced “team ministry” suspending the full-time assistant clergy tradition and instead hiring part-time assisting clergy and lay youth and church school staff. With the election of a new Bishop and Father Zadig’s resignation in 1996, the parish began an interim period of self study and search for a new rector.

In 1997 The Rev. Richard Bellows became pastor of the Church of the Atonement. Under the guidance of this young priest, some changes began to take place. A healing service once a month, and in Lent, a Wednesday service and lunch were begun. During this period, the Durkin property was sold, and an assisted living facility was built on the site.

In 2004, Eliot Moss, a Candidate for Holy Orders, came to assist Father Bellows, and subsequently was ordained in the parish. Over a period of time Father Bellows’ health deteriorated, and he eventually retired in May 2007. Eliot Moss assumed all clergy duties



until our interim rector, Fr. Mark Hatch, was called in Advent 2007.

## OUR COMMUNITY

### **Westfield and Surrounding Communities**

Westfield, Massachusetts, population approx 40,800, is located on the western end of the Connecticut River Valley in Western Massachusetts in a three-county area known as “The Pioneer Valley.” It sits at the foothills of the Berkshires, and is bordered by Southwick to the south, West Springfield to the east, and Russell and other smaller “hilltowns” to the west, all of whom the parish serves. Westfield is conveniently located at the crossroads of Route 20 (east-to-west) and Routes 10/202 (north to south) [www.cityofwestfield.org](http://www.cityofwestfield.org).

Founded in 1669, Westfield has a historical heritage dating back to the Revolutionary War era. The city had, and still maintains, an agricultural base, but became an industrial center in the late 19th century, and because of its access as an exit on the Massachusetts Turnpike, remains one.

Westfield has a good public school system and also is home to Westfield State College, founded in 1892

as a teachers’ college ([www.wsc.mass.edu](http://www.wsc.mass.edu)). There are two major parks in the city, the 35-acre Hampton Ponds State Park and the 180-acre Stanley Park. Westfield was once the world headquarters of Stanley Home Products, the founders of which were great benefactors to the city of Westfield. Frank Stanley Beveridge was a major contributor to the Church of the Atonement, including its current building.

In addition to the Church of the Atonement (Episcopal), the greater Westfield area is served by Episcopal churches in the neighboring towns of Agawam, Easthampton and West Springfield, as well as these churches of other denominations: First Congregational, Westfield Evangelical Free Church, Central Baptist, Second Congregational, Advent Christian, St John’s Lutheran (ELCA), First United Methodist, St. Joseph’s RC, Blessed Sacrament RC, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Westfield Alliance Church, Genesis Spiritual Life Center, in addition to two large Russian evangelical churches. Also, the Episcopal Diocese of Western Mass started a new mission church in Southwick, the Southwick Community Episcopal Church.

The downtown area of Westfield has a ‘green’ where the community tends to gather for common events - Atonement and three other traditional mainline

parishes are located on or near the green. However, the business area has declined and has an old, tired appearance. Recently, the College and the local business community have been working to enhance town/gown relationships to the benefit of both entities ([www.thedistrictwestfield.com](http://www.thedistrictwestfield.com)). On the eastern end of the city is a large shopping area along Route 20 which houses many mall-type retail stores.

The Pioneer Valley, or “The Valley” as it is known, is an area rich in cultural and recreational opportunities of all sorts. It is home to numerous institutions of higher education, both public and private.

The most well-known are the members of the Five Colleges consortium:

- Amherst College
- Hampshire College
- Mount Holyoke College
- Smith College
- University of Massachusetts Amherst

Other four-year colleges include:

- American International College
- Bay Path College
- Elms College
- Springfield College
- Western New England College
- Westfield State College

Dedicated Graduate Schools include:

- Conway School of Landscape Design

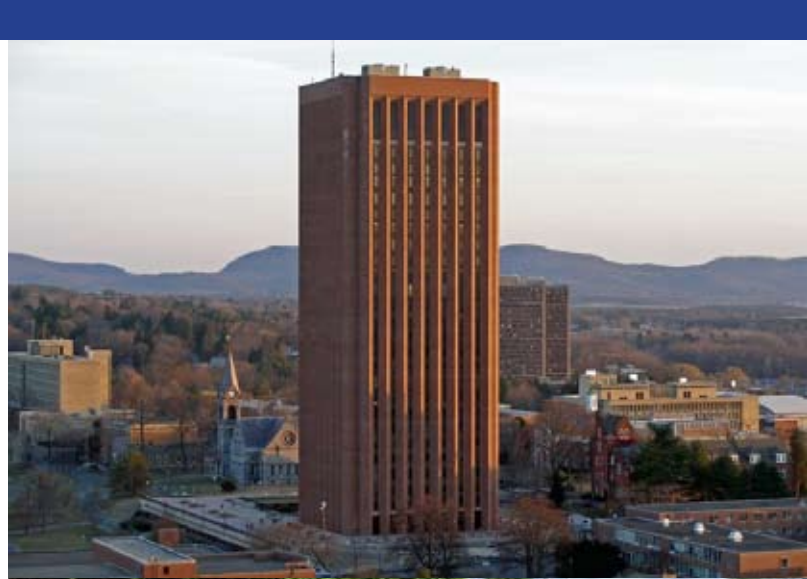
Community colleges in the area include:

- Greenfield Community College
- Holyoke Community College
- Springfield Technical Community College

In addition, there are private middle and high schools in the area, including:

- Deerfield Academy
- Stoneleigh-Burnham School
- Northfield Mount Hermon
- Williston Northampton School
- The Bement School
- Academy at Charlemont
- Eaglebrook
- Cathedral High School (Springfield, Massachusetts)

Museums abound in Western Massachusetts, most



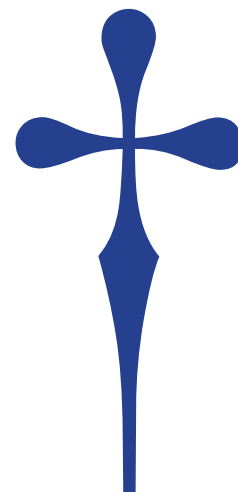


notably the Quadrangle Museums of Springfield, which includes a memorial to local resident Dr. Seuss ([http://www.newenglandtravelplanner.com/go/ma/springfield/sights/museum\\_quad.html](http://www.newenglandtravelplanner.com/go/ma/springfield/sights/museum_quad.html)) ([www.springfieldmuseums.org](http://www.springfieldmuseums.org)), the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, the Norman Rockwell Museum, the Francine and Walter Clarke Museum in Williamstown, and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams.

Many nationally known cultural organizations have their home in the Berkshires, such as Jacob's Ladder Dance Festival, and Tanglewood, summer home of the Boston Symphony orchestra.

Appreciation of the natural environs is a big part of Valley life, with numerous non-profit nature sanctuaries, as well as state and municipal parks and forests. One notable area consists of Mount Tom State Reservation, Mount Holyoke Range State Park, and Skinner State Park, which, joined with the 600-acre Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary held by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, form a long wildlife corridor stretching across the Connecticut River.

In addition, there is a vast network of recreational trails, including the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail which stretches from central Connecticut to Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire, and the East Coast Greenway, an interstate connection of rail trails which will eventually stretch from Florida to Maine. To the west, in the Berkshires, is the Appalachian Trail. Life in the Pioneer Valley and Western Massachusetts is abundant with opportunities.





**OUR STAFF**

The Rev. Mark H. Hatch, Interim Rector  
 Charlotte LeBlanc, Financial Secretary  
 Sue O'Hare, Interim Parish Administrator  
 Joel Martin, Minister of Music  
 Rich Silva, Sexton  
 Catherine Bannish, Youth Minister  
 Annette Isner, Director, Church of the Atonement Preschool  
 The Rt. Rev. Gordon P. Scruton, Bishop  
 Ministers – All the People

**OUR VESTRY**

Lois Coffey, Senior Warden  
 Bob Legalos, Junior Warden  
 Margo Halton, Clerk  
 Gary Cole (Delete “,” after “Cole”)  
 Gene Giacometti  
 Tammy Joseph  
 Chris Steger  
 Donna Tatlock-Calkins  
 Jean Turgeon

**SEARCH COMMITTEE**

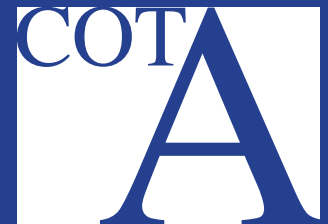
Steve Adams  
 Deans Casamento  
 Ryan Dodge  
 Gene Giacometti  
 Neil Gibree  
 Deborah Randzio  
 Carmel Steger  
 Tom Walsh

**PARISH PROFILE COMMITTEE**

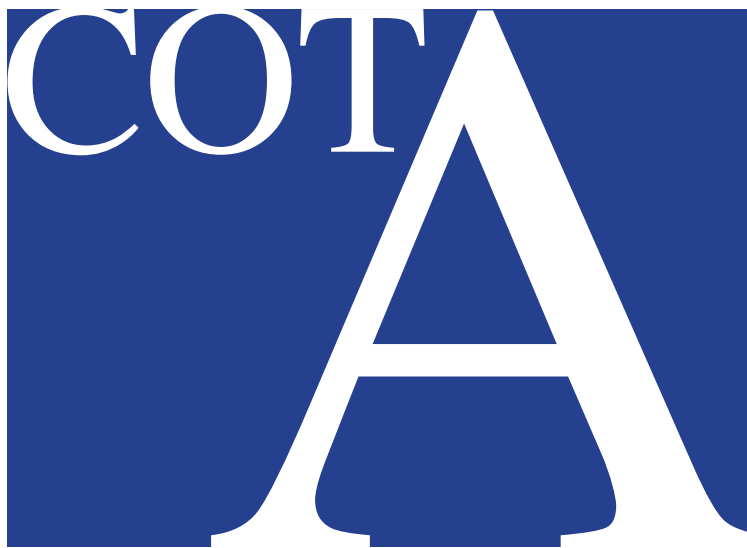
Eleanor Bystrynski  
 Kathleen Damon  
 Deborah Randzio

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Lois Coffey  
 Cinda McKinney  
 Lisa Bernardara  
 Thanks to all the parish leaders who contributed.



**CHURCH OF THE  
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