

200 Years The Episcopal Church in Wisconsin

**A Celebration Service
October 29, 2022**

**Church of the Holy Apostles,
Oneida, Wisconsin**

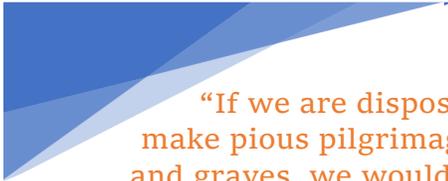


In 1821, a delegation of Oneida, Seneca, St. Regis, Six Nations, Stockbridge, and Munsee traveled to Green Bay and signed a treaty with the Menominee and Winnebago [Ho Chunk] to live among them. During this visit, the first known public Episcopal services were said, being a form of the Daily Office. Some Episcopalians may have been present in the area earlier. It was 1822 when The Episcopal Church officially entered the territory with members of the Oneida “First Christian Party” who took up residence on Duck Creek, following removal from their New York homelands. This emigration continued over the next decades. Those of the “First Christian Party” were members of an Episcopal mission in New York, dating back to 1702 with the ministry of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel missionaries. The Oneida have continued worshipping in the Episcopal tradition, on land which now is Church of the Holy Apostles.

Even with hundreds of the “First Christian Party,” the first “official” Episcopal church, Christ Church, Green Bay, was initially organized in 1826. It was followed by Holy Trinity, Prairie du Chien (1837) and St. Paul’s, Milwaukee (1838). Hobart Church, now Holy Apostles, was organized in 1838. On August 7, 1838, Missionary Bishop Jackson Kemper here laid the cornerstone of the first Episcopal church structure in the territory, an English Gothic wooden framed building. The Hobart Church building was consecrated by him on September 2, 1839. It was here Kemper ordained the first priests in 1842, being William Adams and James Lloyd Breck, founders of Nashotah House.

25 parishes had been organized by the Primary Council of the Diocese of Wisconsin, held at St. Paul’s, Milwaukee in June 1847, before Wisconsin was a state. Recognizing the influence of the Oneida in the life of the Episcopal Church in the territory, Bishop Kemper gave a seat of honor to Chief Daniel Bread (Tay-ka-wia-ti-on) in the Council.

Since The Episcopal Church arrived with the Oneida, over 200 Episcopal worshipping communities have been established at one time or another. There was first one, then two, then three Episcopal dioceses. There have been tens of thousands of baptisms, marriages, burials and confirmations. Thousands of priests and deacons with dozens of bishops have provided ordained leadership. At least one hundred thousand laity have been faithful in the life, worship and governance of the church for over two centuries. And through it all, God’s presence in this part of the Kingdom has been reflected.



**“If we are disposed in mind to
make pious pilgrimages to cradles
and graves, we would not go amiss
if some time we turn our feet
towards the blue waters of Green
Bay, for there is the cradle of the
Church in Wisconsin.”**

*- THE REV. JACKSON KEMPER, WHO VISITED
THE GREEN BAY AREA. IN 1834*

Dear Friends and Family of the Dioceses of Eau Claire, Milwaukee, and Fond du Lac,

What a rich history we have in serving God as Episcopalians in the State of Wisconsin! Ours is a sacred tradition with a past formed by marvelous leaders. The impact of Jackson Kemper retains its multiplier effect throughout the Midwest and in many southern states. I still envision him riding in a buggy on a dusty road on a summer day reading the Daily Office while his horse meanders down the trail with only the lightest touch by this great bishop on the animal's reigns.

I can't help but think of the original purpose of the founding of Nashotah House to serve both Native Americans and settlers of European origin as our State in its infancy was changing. This began a rich legacy of Native Americans becoming full members of our Churches. When other Christian denominations, the Anglican Church of Canada, and other dioceses of the Episcopal Church established Native American schools that separated Indigenous children from their families and culture, the Episcopal Church in Wisconsin (to my knowledge) refrained from this practice and strove to find a melding of Christianity with Native American culture and spirituality that respected and strengthened the integrity of all three. The result has been widespread participation of Native Americans throughout our three Dioceses.

I can't help but laugh when I have read Jackson Kemper's address to one of the early Diocese of Wisconsin conventions when he stated, "We have to work harder to make these Deaneries work!"

The work of James DeKoven cannot be underestimated. In such a short time he developed Racine College into a dynamic Church institution of higher learning. Through the national upheaval and adjustments of and following the Civil War in the 1860's and the rebuilding of the campus after several fires in the 1870's, DeKoven prevailed. This small college became the place Episcopalians and others from both the East and West Coasts chose to provide a quality education for their children. Whenever I walked up the steps to Nicholson House, the diocesan center of Diocese of Milwaukee, I could not help but think of James DeKoven who slipped on ice at the steps of the Diocesan office on a very cold day in January of 1879. He lay there in agony with no one around to help him for several hours. As a result of this accident, he developed pneumonia and died in April of that year.

As I look to the future of our three dioceses and the prospect of their returning to become again the Diocese of Wisconsin, I thank God for serving in the State for over 30 years as seminarian, priest, and bishop. I am thankful for the many friends I have from all those years. While I now live and serve the Church in Florida, I still have two daughters, two sons in law, and four young grandchildren connected to the Episcopal Church in Wisconsin. I am thankful that the teachings and love of Jesus permeate our Churches and will continue to form my family to make them the people God wants them to be and become. In appreciation and thanksgiving for our past and with hopes for a great future, I remain,

The Rt. Rev. William Jay Lambert, VI Bishop of Eau Claire, resigned

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Please know of my prayers as you gather to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Church in Wisconsin. What a heritage we have, a heritage that reminds us of our indebtedness to and the faithfulness of the native peoples of this continent. It is a blessing that the history of the Church in Wisconsin begins with the Oneida. As the Church celebrates this milestone may God grant us the grace to continue in the mission to restore all people to unity with God in Christ who is our life.

The Rt. Rev. Steven A. Miller, XI Milwaukee, resigned

Grace to you and peace, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I write to send greetings as you gather to celebrate the Bicentennial of the Episcopal Church in the State of Wisconsin. Your celebration at Holy Apostles Church, Oneida, the place Bishop Jackson Kemper called the Cradle of the Church in Wisconsin, I know will be an event of great solemnity. We are with you in spirit and our hearts remain with you. Our prayers will be offered this weekend for you, for the work you undertake, and the joyous celebration that you will all experience.

It has always been my honor to have served as the Bishop of Fond du Lac with its history and traditions that have brought many to a deep faith in Jesus. It is continually my prayer that the same deep faith in Christ may continue through all of you in the Diocese. Blessings to each and every one of you.

The Rt. Rev. Russell E. Jacobus, VII Bishop of Fond du Lac, Resigned



Episcopal Diocese of Rochester

The Rt. Rev. Stephen T. Lane

October 21, 2022

To the People of God Gathered in Convention in the Diocese of Fond du Lac

Grace and Peace in Christ Jesus.

As Bishop Provisional of Rochester, I'm pleased to send you my greetings on the 200th Anniversary of The Episcopal Church in Wisconsin. Here in western New York, we've been celebrating the 200th Anniversary of Hobart and Williams Smith Colleges founded by the then Bishop of New York, John Henry Hobart.

John Henry Hobart was an interesting man. He was Anglo-Catholic in orientation, but also a committed evangelist. With his deacons he founded more than 40 Episcopal Churches in western New York. He had an expansive view of the church and believed that baptism was the sole criteria for membership. He wanted working folks, laborers, and shopkeepers, to be members, and so transformed The Episcopal Church from a church of East Coast urban elites to a church of farmers and landowners in market towns across the state. Hobart College was founded to educate these church leaders in what Hobart called "Christian Humanism", an approach to life and leadership that joined Christian faith and science.

Hobart's expansive vision also included Native Americans, and he founded a congregation among the Oneidas. Unhappily, Hobart was in some ways a man of his time, and he did not oppose either slavery, for which he was roundly criticized, or the forced removal of the Oneidas to Wisconsin. The very congregation he planted was forced to leave.

By the grace of God, the light Bishop Hobart struck was not extinguished, and we can be grateful that the community endured and became the fragile beginnings of what is now The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Fond du Lac. We offer our thanks to God for this, even as we see this as a cautionary tale concerning our present-day struggles with races and cultures.

We in Rochester are mindful of these struggles in our own life, and we send to your Convention and especially, the people of Holy Apostles Church, Oneida, greetings and love on this occasion. May your Convention spirit-filled and mission driven. And may we all live into Bishop Hobart's vision of The Episcopal Church as a community for all people.

Faithfully,

+ Stephen T. Lane

The Rt. Rev. Stephen T. Lane
Bishop Provisional in Rochester



The Episcopal Diocese of Central New York
The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe

Dear People of Wisconsin,

It is with joy and hope that I write to congratulate you on 200 years of faithful witness to the love of Jesus Christ in Wisconsin. In a time when there is so much suffering and loss in our world, it is inspiring to be reminded of God's faithfulness in ages past and to be renewed for God's ongoing call in our midst.

I am especially mindful that our connection began with the forced migration of indigenous persons from New York to an area near Duck Creek. Then as now, God is present to us in the most challenging and grievous of times. The living witness of the People of the Standing Stone, the Oneida Nation, is a testimony to God's redemption and grace, exemplified these 200 years in the dedicated ministry of Holy Apostles Episcopal Church.

Your witness inspires our own ministry of reconciliation in Central New York; I am reminded of a statement from Pope John Paul II in 1986:

"We do not pretend that life is all beauty. We are aware of darkness and sin, of poverty and pain. But we know Jesus has conquered sin and passed through his own pain to the glory of the Resurrection. And we live in the light of his Paschal Mystery – the mystery of his Death and Resurrection. 'We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!'"

And so congratulations on 200 years of ministry, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! May God's mercy and grace continue to embolden your ministry of reconciliation and may your celebration be filled with joy.

Blessings of peace as the journey continues,

+ DeDe Duncan-Probe

The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe
Bishop of Central New York

Ten oldest parishes in Wisconsin in order of formation

Dates are founding and organization, not first services.

1. Christ Church, Green Bay, 1826, reorganized 1829
2. Holy Trinity, Prairie du Chien, December 1837
3. St. Paul's, Milwaukee, February 1838
4. Hobart Church (Holy Apostles), Oneida, September 1838
5. Holy Trinity, Mineral Point, December 1839
6. St. Matthew's, Southport (Kenosha), April 1840
7. St. Paul's, Beloit, February 1841
8. St. John's-in-the-Wilderness, Elkhorn and St. Luke's, Whitewater, October 1841
9. St. Luke's, Racine, September 1842
10. St. Alban's, Sussex, October 1842

Some dates and events of the Episcopal Church in Wisconsin

1836 Wisconsin become a territory and the Bishop of Michigan claims ecclesiastical authority. The clergy of the new territory request to be under Bishop Kemper's missionary jurisdiction.

1838 General Convention gives jurisdiction of the territory to Kemper. Kemper enters Wisconsin territory for the first time as bishop. As priest, he had visited the Green Bay area in 1834.



Christ Church, Green Bay



Holy Trinity, Prairie du Chien

- 1842 Breck and Adams are first ordinations in territory at Oneida by Kemper. Nashotah House granted charter by the territorial legislature.
- 1844 Kemper moves his residence from St. Louis to Nashotah.
First pipe organ is installed at St. Matthew's Kenosha.
- 1846 The first Episcopal missionary is assigned to St. Croix County by the General Missionary Board in what would become the Diocese of Eau Claire.
- 1847 Diocese of Wisconsin formed.
- 1852 Racine College formed as an Episcopal institution.
- 1859 Kemper becomes diocesan Bishop of Wisconsin (previously kept missionary bishop status).
A.B. Peabody ordained priest in Hudson.
James DeKoven becomes Racine College Warden.
- 1866 First choral Eucharist sung at Racine College.
- 1867 Kemper divides jurisdiction into 4 convocations, hoping they will become 4 dioceses.
- 1871 DeKoven defends ritualism at General Convention, providing fame (or infamy) in the Episcopal Church.
- 1873 Diocesan Council adopts resolution to accept property/ structure purchased for use as a Cathedral
- 1875 Diocese of Fond du Lac formed (see map).
- 1876 Bishop Brown of Fond du Lac names St. Paul's, Fond du Lac as Cathedral. It was a "free" church (no pew rents) and train hub in diocese.
- 1886 Diocese of Wisconsin changes to Diocese of Milwaukee.
- 1893 St. Monica's School, Fond du Lac renamed Grafton Hall, quality finishing school for young ladies from the Midwest and East Coast.
- 1900 Consecration of Weller as Fond du Lac Coadjutor known for "Fond du Lac Circus" photo with bishops in cope and mitre (smacked of "popery" by one paper) and ecumenical guests.
- 1905 Sisters of the Holy Nativity comes to Fond du Lac.
- 1914 Episcopal Students Association formed at Madison.
- 1928 Diocese of Eau Claire formed (see map).
- 1929 Christ Church, Eau Claire named as Cathedral.
- 1930 St. Francis House dedicated in Madison.
- 1935 Community of St. Mary purchases closed Racine College, now DeKoven Foundation for Church Work.
- 1949 Buffington Home Bundy Hall Conference Center established in Diocese of Eau Claire.
- 1980 Susan Clark become the first woman ordained a deacon and priest in Wisconsin.

