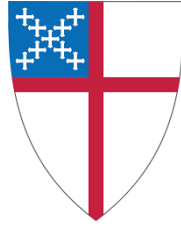


# **Mt. Zion Episcopal Church**

## *Parish Profile 2026*







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*(Cemetery not part of church property)*

## Welcome

Zion has often been used as a metaphor for Jerusalem and the Biblical land of Israel. It has come to mean a longed-for place...the “Promised Land.”

Early Settlers here in the northern Shenandoah Valley surely thought they had found this peace, safe refuge in what has become known as “Almost Heaven” West Virginia. They aptly named their church Mt. Zion here in the village of Hedgesville.

We, too, find this a place of peace. Mt. Zion is a special place to those of us who call it our spiritual home. We want others to experience this peace, love, and fellowship in God’s Kingdom. In order to help us bring others to the knowledge and love of God, and of his son, Jesus Christ, we need a leader. We need someone who can encourage us, love us, pastor us, and equip us for the work God has given us to do.

Is that person you?

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## Where We’ve Been

Hedgesville was the site of a stockade fort built during the early colonial era. A survey done in 1752 shows a log meeting house in our present location called “Hedges Chapel.” George Washington first passed through Hedgesville as a young surveyor and returned to the area many times, worshipping in the little meeting house and dining in the nearby Snodgrass Tavern, which he mentions in his diaries.

The Mt. Zion congregation grew as the area prospered. By 1817 construction began on a new brick church. In 1818 this brick church—our present building—replaced the wooden meeting house.

Over the decades the church population ebbed and flowed, though the church remained a fixture in the Hedgesville community and the Eastern Panhandle at large. The regular attendees dipped as low as 5-10 in the 1980’s when a part-time pastor led the church for 25 years. However, even then the spirit remained and eventually the church started growing again. We continue to grow in spirit and numbers.

The church broke ground in 2013 on a much-needed Church Hall. This addition changed and energized the parish in ways we never could have expected. The Church Hall hosts community events and allows us to celebrate the warmth of fellowship every Sunday after service. The “red brick church on the hill,” well known to local photographers, celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2018.

## Who We Are

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Our parishioners range predominately in age from 40 to 85. We do have youth members and we try to incorporate them into the life and worship of the parish as much as possible. At the present, our congregation is predominately white, college educated, and many have a background in the military. A fair number of our members are former Roman Catholics. Our members include Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, and liberals—we are a very “purple” parish. Our average Sunday attendance is 35. Our congregation is welcoming to all who wish to worship with us and become part of the Mt. Zion family—or those just visiting!



## How We Minister

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Members of Mt. Zion are active in the wider community through many different civic and professional groups. These are extensions of our life and witness as individual followers of Jesus Christ. Collectively, our parish serves God, our community, and each other through ministries such as:

- Meal Ministry, delivering meals to parishioners who have had surgery, injury, illness, or personal loss.
- Lay Eucharistic Visitors, taking the Holy Eucharist to those unable to physically make it to church.
- Facebook livestreaming, so that others can see and experience our worship.
- A prayer chain ministry.
- Our weekly luncheon ministry brings our congregation together every Sunday. Organized, prepared and staffed by wonderful volunteers.

- Online Bible Study, led by our clergy and open to all.
- Volunteering with the Hedgesville Heritage Days, opening our church for a yard sale and games for visitors.

In addition to these, our facilities are regularly utilized by outside groups, such as the Girl Scouts, TOPS, and others. We have also partnered with the local food bank, Loaves and Fishes, to help supply food, school supplies, and other needed items.

We are extremely interested in how to expand our outreach opportunities, while also recognizing that “burn out” could be a real issue with a congregation the size of ours. We hope our next rector will help us discern ministry opportunities in our community and can help us prioritize these possibilities.

## How We Worship

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Describing how we worship at Mt. Zion is somewhat difficult. Our church is built with a “traditional Virginia, low-church” style—that is to say, there are box like pews and no center aisle. Our services are not highly formal, but neither do they lack reverence. We value music, prayer, preaching, and the Eucharist when we gather for worship. We are not looking for any radical change in our usual practices, but would welcome experiences in expressions outside of our norm from time to time.



## Music

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Mt. Zion is blessed to have a Music Director who is an accomplished musician. Our Music Director is also a teacher and her students often come to the church to play special pieces for us. This experience has led many of her students to consider and pursue worship music studies at the college level.

While we do not presently have many children regularly in worship, many of those who do come find themselves in a makeshift children's choir. These young people give to God the gift of song and enhance our worship experience with their voices.

Our music comes from various sources, including the *Hymnal 1982* and *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*. Sometimes, in consultation with the clergy,

additional selections are made and presented to the congregation to sing as part of our worship.





## How We Fellowship

Being in community with each other is an important part of the life of Mt. Zion. To help us keep connected, celebrate each other, and support one another, we:

- Have luncheons every Sunday after service with food prepared by our members
- Have pre-service coffee get-togethers on Sunday morning
- Have a birthday celebration the first Sunday of each month those who have birthdays that month
- Stream our services so that members who cannot physically make it to church can still worship with us

## Where We Gather

The Mt. Zion Church building is a historic landmark in Hedgesville. The red church with the green roof has served as a place of worship for more than 200 years. The church itself can hold roughly 100 people. Maintenance issues are consistent with a 200-year-old building but there are no major outstanding structural issues and, as far as is discernable, there are no major repair needs to this structure.

The Church Hall was built on to the side of the historic church in 2013 and designed and constructed to match the aesthetic of the church. This hall can easily accommodate 100 to 110 people. It includes a modern kitchen and two restrooms. The Hall is used weekly for fellowship. Throughout the year it is utilized for wedding receptions, yard sales, and community meetings.

The church also has a separate building named the Christian Learning Center, or CLC. This building is across the gravel parking lot from the church itself. It houses the church offices and serves as a meeting place for smaller groups.

We are hopeful that our next rector can assist us to better use our space to meet the needs of our parish and local community.

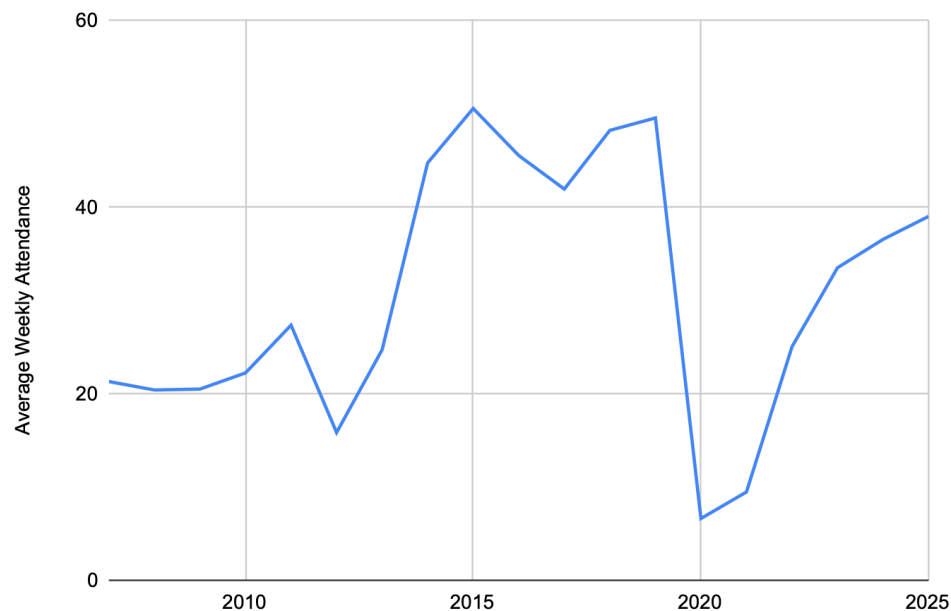


# Our Strengths and Weaknesses

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Mt. Zion, like all churches, has strengths and weaknesses—those things going well, and those that need work. We believe this to be a fair and honest summary of these positives and negatives.

Average Weekly Attendance From 2007 - 2025



## STRENGTHS:

- **A Welcoming Atmosphere:** Mt. Zion fosters an inviting and friendly environment where newcomers and long-time members alike feel comfortable and valued.
- **Family Atmosphere:** The church is characterized by a strong sense of family, promoting close relationships, support, and care among its members.
- **Fellowship:** Opportunities for fellowship are abundant and encourage members to connect spiritually and socially.
- **Involvement:** Members are actively engaged in church activities, decision-making, and service, all of which contribute to a vibrant church life.
- **Endowment:** Mt. Zion benefits from an endowment, providing financial stability and support for its ongoing operations and initiatives.
- **Grow Church:** Our parish has participants in the Diocesan congregational development program, Grow Church.
- **Our attendance has significantly recovered since Covid and continues a positive trend.** Income also shows a similar trend.



#### **WEAKNESSES:**

- **Small Church Issues:** As a small congregation, Mt. Zion faces challenges such as limited resources, fewer church members and volunteers, and restricted programming.
- **Reliance on Endowment:** The church's financial dependence on its endowment could present risks if the endowment does not perform as expected or if other sources of income decline.
- **No Sunday School or Youth Opportunities:** A lack of Sunday School and other programs for youth hinder the church's ability to attract and retain young families and nurture future generations.
- **Committee Organization:** Issues with committee organization may affect decision making efficiency, communication, and the implementation of church initiatives.

## What We Seek in a Rector

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Mt. Zion needs a dynamic and compassionate pastor to lead our parish. We believe God is calling us into ministry with a priest who:

- Possesses strong leadership and pastoral skills to help our “purple” congregation navigate the very divisive political climate in our society today
- Can cast a vision we can be inspired by
- Can help us reach out and actively engage our rapidly changing community
- Is relatable, accessible, and can inspire spiritual growth
- Can build relationships

- Be a steadfast presence in the lives of our members
- Will work collaboratively with us as a servant leader
- Can facilitate healthy and transparent communications throughout the parish
- Can continue to foster a deep appreciation for fellowship
- Can craft engaging worship experiences that encourages participation and spiritual reflection
- Will help us develop a Christian Education program for all ages

Above all, the Rector we seek will love us and walk alongside us as we serve God and our community.



## How We Steward Our Resources

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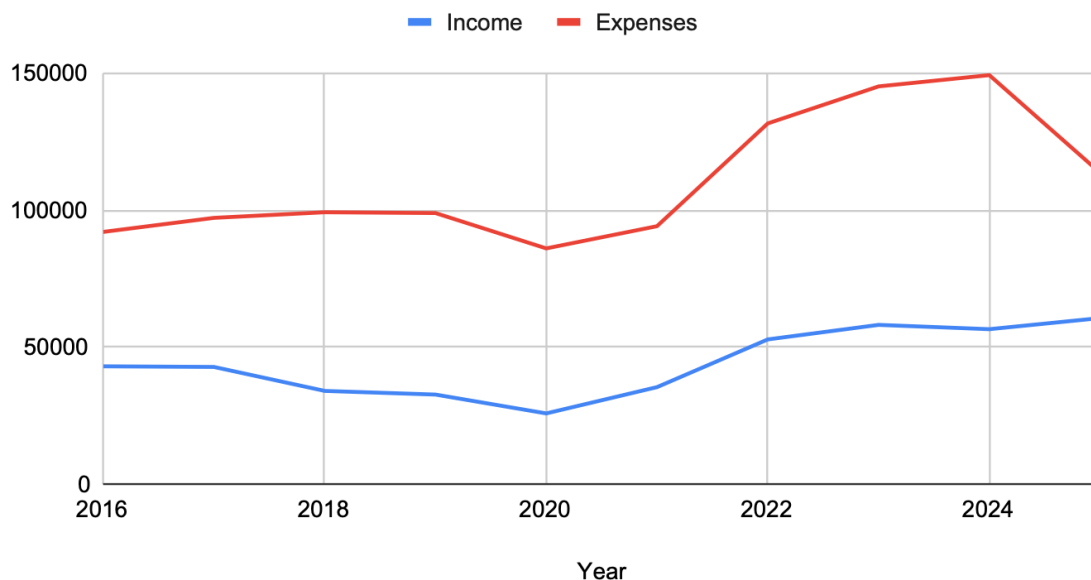
Mt. Zion was, for many years, in the late 20th and early 21st century, an extremely small parish. This began to change in 2014 when we were able to hire a priest in a “yoked” charge with another nearby Episcopal parish. The ministry we did together with our last rector was good and our congregation flourished. Our “yoked” congregations separated for a variety of reasons in 2022 and our rector, the Rev. Brian Shoda, became full-time at Mt. Zion. Parishioner support increased to meet the need when this transition occurred. (See Addendum)

It had not been our normative practice to have a fall pledge campaign. This changed in 2024. Our stewardship campaign that year was successful enough that we were able to increase our budget. This was repeated in 2025.

We have approximately 25 pledging units in our parish.

We are blessed to hold an endowment that allows us to meet our financial needs. In the almost 13 years since it was first established by a generous bequest, this endowment has allowed us to purchase additional property, construct our parish hall, and maintain our facilities. This endowment currently holds approximately \$1.79 million. The amount of our yearly draw is dependent on need. It is our desire to increase our congregational giving so we rely less on the endowment for support.

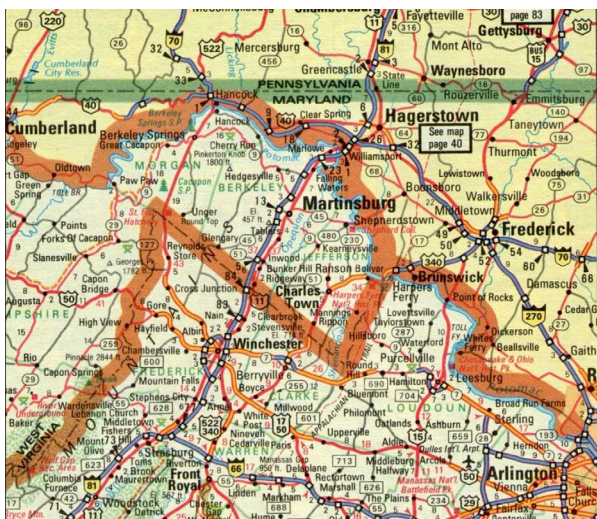
### Pledged Income & Expenses





## Geography and Location

Nestled between the rolling Allegheny Mountains and the fertile valleys of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia is a place where the past and present intertwine within a landscape both tranquil and dramatic. This slender stretch of land—lying east of the state's main body and wedged between Maryland and Virginia—offers a unique blend of historical significance, natural beauty, and rapid growth unlike any other region in the Mountain State.



## Economic and Demographic Growth

The Eastern Panhandle has experienced remarkable growth over the past few decades. Its proximity to Washington, D.C., and other urban centers has spurred population increases and economic development. Berkeley and Jefferson counties, in particular, have seen new housing developments, schools, and businesses spring up in response to the influx of commuters and new residents. This growth has brought both opportunities and challenges. While the region enjoys increased investment, improved infrastructure, and expanding job markets, it also faces the pressures of preserving rural character, managing traffic, and meeting the needs of a changing population.

## Culture and Community

The region's communities blend small-town charm with cosmopolitan influences. Local festivals, farmers markets, and art fairs reflect the area's agricultural heritage and creative spirit. The Eastern Panhandle's culinary scene is similarly diverse, ranging from farm-to-table restaurants and bakeries to breweries serving locally crafted ales. Residents value their tight-knit neighborhoods and celebrate

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their heritage, whether through historical societies, reenactments, or town parades.

### Transportation

The region is well-connected by highways, railways, and public transportation. Interstate 81 runs through Berkeley County, linking the panhandle to Virginia and Pennsylvania. MARC commuter trains connect Martinsburg and Harpers Ferry to Washington, D.C., offering a practical option for daily commuters. The proximity to Dulles International Airport and other major airports further enhances the region's accessibility.

### Education

West Virginia offers free public education starting with pre-kindergarten aged children. Four high schools, six middle schools, six intermediate schools and sixteen elementary schools serve a student population 19,722 strong and growing in Berkeley. These schools are well ranked and resourced. The robust Blue Ridge Community and Technical College and Shepherd University provide advanced education opportunities.

## Our Diocese

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The Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia consists of 54 parishes and 2 worshipping communities (with additional worshipping communities expected in the coming years). Our Diocese is led by the Rt. Rev. Matthew Cowden, Bishop of West Virginia since 2022. The boundaries of the Diocese include all of West Virginia.

Our Diocese has active Youth Ministries that include programming, events, and service opportunities. Peterkin Camp and Conference Center, in the eastern panhandle, near Romney, is our summer camp where young people from across West Virginia and the east coast come for quality spiritual, cultural, and emotional education across roughly 1,400 acres.

The Highland Educational Project (HEP) has been an outreach of the Diocese of West Virginia for 80 years in the impoverished southern coalfields of our state. It serves some of the poorest residents of our state and affords service opportunities for groups in and out of West Virginia to come and assist relief efforts.

Sandscrest Conference and Retreat Center is located just outside of Wheeling in the state's northern panhandle. This 285-acre property is home to a historic home and renovated barn and includes conference facilities and accommodations for retreatants. Sandscrest recently hosted a retreat with Cynthia Bourgeault.

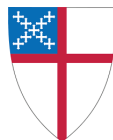
The Diocese sponsors Summer Reading Camps across the state to broaden literacy goals among young people.

Recently, the Diocese has been the recipient of two significant Lilly Grant awards. The Seeds of Faith Initiative (a \$1.25 million grant) seeks to foster prayer and the spiritual life of children under 10 and their families. Seeds of Hope Storytelling (a nearly \$4 million grant) will support faith sharing in Appalachia over the next five years.

These wonderful opportunities, and others, make West Virginia an exciting place to live, work, and minister.

If you are discerning a call to be our priest,  
please submit your resume,  
a copy of your OTM or Vocation Hub profile,  
and a letter of interest to:

**The Rev Canon Chad Slater**  
**Office of Transitions**  
**Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia**  
**P.O. Box 5400**  
**Charleston, WV 25361**  
**Email: [cslater@wvdiocese.org](mailto:cslater@wvdiocese.org)**



**Mt. Zion Episcopal Church**  
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