



Welcome

In an era when many churches are withering, something amazing has been happening at an idyllic midcentury parish in one of Los Angeles' most vibrant suburbs. It's here that Holy Nativity Episcopal Church has created a new model for growth that engages both the congregation and surrounding community.

Instead of a traditional Sunday-centered schedule, Holy Nativity has morphed into a hub for activities, events, groups, and much more. There's a

community garden that has donated thousands of pounds of fresh produce to a nearby food bank – come say “Hi” to Adam and Eve, our bunnies! – a neighborhood park carved out of our ample lawn, which attracts loads of kids and their caregivers; a yoga studio; and an upstairs meditation center.



– but by how busy the church is during the week. (The former rector had a more colorful, though cruder, catch-phrase for our formula – available upon request.) It is borne of a philosophy that, if you throw open the parish grounds to those of all faiths and those yet to find faith and let them pursue their interests and passions, parish growth and engagement will follow. And it has, with Sunday attendance increasing dramatically over the past two decades.

We are home to groups ranging from twelve-step programs to a children’s Shakespeare program. Through the month, the bread bakers light the wood-fired outdoor oven, and the gardeners meet to exchange seeds. The acoustics in the church are considered so good that not only do they give a boost to our own choir but attract an outside Gospel group, Welsh choir, and a monthly jazz combo meetup as well.

As you can see, success is measured not just by how many parishioners fill the pews on Sundays – a growth story in and of itself



We are the church home to parishioners of all races, sexual orientations, and levels of prosperity. Diversity is our greatest strength, and inclusion is our calling card. One of Holy Nativity's most distinctive elements is the exchange of the Peace during the service. It goes on and on as parishioners hug and shake hands with one another as well as greeting visitors. Usually, it won't end until the celebrant breaks out in song. We are not, as Episcopalians have sometimes been called, the "frozen chosen."

Holy Nativity has become a community treasure and resource center for the spiritual needs and daily lives of our neighbors. We are outward-looking and socially engaged, devoted to working and striving to share love extravagantly. We are a warm and caring community that joins not only to worship on Sundays but to celebrate and share traditional, progressive, and unique spiritual paths and journeys.

We pray we find a new rector who can build on our growth while leading us in new directions.



Mission Statement and Core Values

We are a deeply spiritual community and believe in the inclusive, transformative love of Jesus Christ. We are mission-focused and practice being the hands and feet of Christ in the world. As a community, we believe in loving each other and coming into a different way of being in the presence of God.

In our Parish Survey, we asked why people attend Holy Nativity. Here are a few responses that illustrate our values:

- This is a sweet, engaged community that offers enough comfort for rest and enough discomfort for action
- “Make a joyful noise” was the motto when I first met Holy Nativity, and the church continues to be a musical, welcoming, and inclusive place
- Open to other religions and socially conscious
- Christianity is in crisis, and Holy Nativity is actively trying to find ways forward



The Story of Holy Nativity

Holy Nativity Episcopal Church was established during World War II as a place for the burgeoning neighborhood to gather on Sundays for family worship. At the time, the neighborhood was built to house workers in the thriving aviation industry, sandwiched between what would become Los Angeles International Airport and a sprawling Hughes Aircraft plant.

Today the airport remains, and the aircraft plant has gone, replaced by one of the region's most vital digital business hubs, Silicon Beach, where high-tech business from YouTube to Yahoo have established offices. The thousands of new jobs they are creating have attracted a legion of new families settling in the neighborhood – what we hope will be a next generation of parishioners.





The first worship service was held in a converted tool shed on Thanksgiving 1942 after lay worker Margaret Brown generated enough neighborhood support. The main church building groundbreaking was in 1946, and the Parish Hall (formerly West Hall) opened in 1952. The church continued to grow under the Reverend Ernest Scully, vicar from 1945-1956, and became a Parish



in 1956. The first rector, the Reverend Roy B. Davis, served until 1969. The next years were a challenging time for Holy Nativity until the Reverend Clifford Gain was selected as the fifth rector in 1983 and served until his death in 2002. The Reverend Peter Rood was selected as the sixth rector in 2002 and was one of the most successful, having created the new church model with which we have seen so much community growth.

Worship

Holy Nativity is a diverse community that embraces varied worship styles in our 8:00 A.M. and 10:30 A.M. services. An integral part of both worship services is the dialogue after the sermon when the church responds to the sermon, events of the day, or whatever is on our hearts.



8:00 A.M., Spoken Eucharist

This spoken service features readings, prayer and sermon, and Holy Communion. While this early service generally attracts more senior worshipers, there are some regular millennial congregants.

10:30 A.M., Choral Eucharist

This festive service of Holy Communion features piano and choral music each week and special music monthly, which can range from a Latin jazz band to folk singers, harpsichord, or string trio. The Holy Nativity choir, made up of church members, performs



every Sunday. Our congregation loves to sing, and the service usually concludes with a gospel song from *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, an African American hymnal. Though we strictly follow the service, the mood is usually informal, reflective of being a suburban parish.



The Holy Nativity Triptych

In keeping with our goal of renewing the church, we have turned to a talented local – our artist-in-residence, [Steve O'Loughlin](#) – to decorate the chancel in a distinctive way, a counterpoint to the church's otherwise

traditional architecture. We are blessed with a stunning piece of art. It is the first triptych to be constructed in a Los Angeles church in many years. At the dedication last year, we celebrated with the music of “Slap of Rapture” and a light repast. It's only the start. The plan is to dramatically expand it.

Our Ministries

The ministries and community groups offer many “points of entry” for the church and community.

The Community Garden at Holy Nativity

The [community garden](#) is the signature ministry at Holy Nativity. We are known throughout the neighborhood and the Episcopal church as well as the community at large as the “church with the garden on its front lawn.”

In response to the growing concern about food insecurity within Los Angeles County, Holy Nativity wrestled, in the early months of 2008, with making a radical conversion of heart and property. What if we began to convert our conventional landscaping into edible landscaping?

Teams of volunteers coordinated by the local organization [Environmental Change-Makers](#) tore



up the expansive lawn on the church's east side to create a massive community garden – well before others were doing the same. The result is a community garden that sends food to the local food pantry.

The main production garden, inside the blue fence along Dunbarton Avenue, was built in early spring 2008. A few years later, we expanded the garden all the way to 83rd Street. Today volunteers work with our Garden Manager to tend the garden and to harvest the fruits and vegetables to deliver weekly to LAX Food Pantry.

Safe Place for Youth

[Safe Place for Youth](#) (SPY), based in the nearby community of Venice, provides a safe haven for homeless youth, offering supportive services in a safe environment. SPY aims to create public awareness, build coalitions, improve rights, and impact policy for youth in need.

The first Tuesday of each month, the Holy Nativity community prepares a hot meal – usually of chili, cornbread, rice, and salad – which we take to SPY to serve between 60 and 80 youth. In addition, we collect needed items several times a year – socks, underwear, blankets, small-sized toiletry items – to distribute to the youth who come to the center.



This is a powerful way to connect with youth in need in our local community – more than just food and supplies, we hope to create community and provide those we serve at Safe Place for Youth with a sense of belonging, often hard-won among those on the margins of society.

Food Pantry LAX

Each week we send the harvest from our Community Garden to our friends at [Food Pantry LAX](#), a volunteer-led emergency food resource for our neighbors in the surrounding communities of Westchester, El Segundo, Inglewood, Hawthorne, and parts of Los Angeles. The community also brings food, including fruit from backyard trees and home gardens.



Food Forward

We also partner with the folks at [Food Forward](#) in gleaning food, which would otherwise go to waste, to help feed those in need.

Westchester Community Bread Oven

Holy Nativity is the home of the [Westchester Community Bread Oven](#). The [Oven](#) was hand-built in spring/summer 2015 by nearly a hundred members of the community, using homemade adobe bricks as the base and using cob-style building for the dome. Every second Saturday of the month, the community gathers to make pizza together, and we conclude the afternoon by baking loaves of bread. This is a great opportunity for pizza and bread lovers of all varieties to share their secret sauces and techniques as well as their scrumptious recipes.

Prison and Jail Ministry

Mass incarceration is at the nexus of racism, poverty, addiction, homelessness, and mental illness. Holy Nativity is involved in several areas from jail and prison chaplaincy to advocacy and support for reentry.

Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)

Holy Nativity has partnered with [Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice](#), or CLUE, on fair wages for hospitality workers at the hotels near LAX and on immigration. CLUE is a broad, interfaith coalition.



Faith Enrichment and Spiritual Training (FEAST)

Faith Enrichment and Spiritual Training (FEAST) is our adult education program. Our annual **Soup and Spirituality** Lenten series features speakers on a chosen topic. The book for this year was *God Can't* by Thomas Jay Oord, a provocative look at God and love after tragedy, abuse, and other evils. After a light dinner of soup and salad, we enjoyed the speakers from different faith communities including Mohammed Aleem, Rabbi Jason, Roshi Scott, and Swami Omkarananda. They have almost become ex-officio spiritual leaders at Holy Nativity. This year, we also had a professor from nearby Loyola Marymount University, who just happens to be a parishioner. We try to make the most of our close proximity to the university and the tremendous opportunities that presents.

Our Campus

Holy Nativity is a church in the middle of a community center. The main buildings are the church sanctuary, community hall with kitchen, yoga studio, and classrooms.



Church Sanctuary

The sanctuary at Holy Nativity is filled not only with people on Sunday mornings but during the week. Many groups rent the sanctuary, including the Welsh Choir (several decades), students from LMU and Otis, recitals, jazz concerts, gospel choir rehearsals, and speakers. On the top level of the church the [Westchester Zen Circle](#) meets weekly.



Community Hall with Kitchen

The community hall comfortably holds up to 80 people on chairs or 50 people at tables. The recently renovated kitchen provides Holy Nativity with the opportunity to attract a wider range of users and partners.

Yoga Studio

Holy Nativity created a yoga studio in 2010, which is utilized by [LiveYoga Wellness](#). A typical week has about a dozen scheduled yoga classes, including a community class offered for a donation only. On Sundays the yoga studio is used by a local Pentecostal community, which has been meeting here for 25+ years.

Classrooms

Originally built as a local school with progressive values, now the classrooms have many functions. Two rooms are dedicated to the church administrative office and Rector's office. Two other classrooms are multipurpose rooms for Sunday school, a weekday infant care provider, Girl Scouts, other groups, and daily twelve-step meetings.

The Rector We Seek

We seek a servant leader willing to grow with us; to learn with us; to love with us; to be willing to roll up sleeves and work with us; to be actively interspiritual; and to lead us in worship, fellowship, and prayer.

Our most important church need is to regenerate our children and youth Sunday school program to welcome both the kids of parishioners and those in the neighborhood who might feel drawn to Christ. Our pocket park is filled with children and their parents and caregivers seven days a week.



The neighborhood is changing as housing prices continue to increase and the demographics of Westchester are influenced by the nearby high-tech companies. The rector we seek must be able to find and welcome new residents to Holy Nativity and be able to demonstrate our relevance in their lives.

Mission is the rhythm of Holy Nativity, and we seek a rector to strengthen, deepen, and renew our commitment to the community garden, peace and justice, and ending food insecurity.

Our Finances

Holy Nativity practices faith-based giving. Our stewardship is based on the principle that God gives us exactly what we need to do the work that God has given us to do. We have faith that, through our prayerful and generous giving, God will provide the resources the church needs to share Christ's love in the community through our worship, music and education programs, and more.

Holy Nativity receives generous financial support of more than \$150,000 from over 40 pledging families and other contributors. In addition, we receive income from use of the church's space and from other facilities-use fees, which totals about \$60,000 per year.

This year Holy Nativity established an endowment with the Episcopal Church Foundation, funded primarily through the transformational gift of longtime parishioner Henry "Ted" WeidemueLLer.

This year the endowment distribution will be used for capital improvements. On-going, the intention is to use the annual distribution from the endowment for mission.

	2016 Actual	2017 Actual	2018 Actual	2019 Budget
REVENUES				
Pledge Revenue	\$153,510	\$147,588	\$154,381	\$155,750
Plate Cash	\$7,689	\$8,250	\$12,275	\$13,000
Facility Usage Donations	\$45,299	\$61,739	\$58,513	\$64,600
Fundraiser & Misc. Gifts	\$8,105	\$18,676	\$21,183	\$9,500
Sub-total	\$214,603	\$236,253	\$246,352	\$242,850
Endowment Distribution	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$185,000
House Rental	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$30,000
TOTAL REVENUES	\$214,603	\$236,253	\$246,352	\$457,850
OPERATING EXPENSES				
Clergy Compensation	\$79,680	\$91,550	\$94,805	\$20,028
Clergy Pension & Health	\$24,466	\$36,870	\$38,076	\$47,677
Supply/Other Clergy	\$1,378	\$2,785	\$15,103	\$54,750
Mission Share	\$21,000	\$23,232	\$28,128	\$30,000
Campus Expenses	\$62,460	\$80,132	\$78,524	\$83,650
Campus Staff	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$43,270
Service Music	\$11,730	\$12,193	\$12,625	\$13,000
Sub-total	\$200,714	\$246,762	\$267,261	\$292,375
Capital Improvements	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$155,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$200,714	\$246,762	\$267,261	\$447,375
OPERATING INCOME (LOSS)	\$13,889	(\$10,509)	(\$20,909)	\$10,475

Westchester and the Greater Los Angeles Region

Westchester is a neighborhood in Los Angeles with a population of 43,315 and is one of the best places to live in Southern California. Living in Westchester offers residents a suburban feel. Although many residents rent their homes, older, smaller homes are being torn down to make way for new, massive ones. In Westchester there are a number of restaurants, coffee shops, and parks. Many young professionals live in Westchester, and residents tend to lean liberal.



Westchester includes Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), whose runways and service facilities, along with the associated hotels and travel services, dominate the southern portion of the neighborhood. In contrast, the northern half is largely residential and retail. It is also home to Loyola Marymount University and the Otis College of Art and Design.

Westchester is located in the eastern part of the Del Rey Hills, also known as the Westchester Bluffs. The Westchester community is separated from the Pacific Ocean by Playa del Rey on the west. Its northern border is defined by and includes the area now known as Playa Vista as well as Culver City and the unincorporated area of Ladera Heights.

Our Parish Survey

We are a church of about 200 adults and children with an average Sunday attendance (ASA) of 80. About half of us have been attending Holy Nativity for more than ten years, and two thirds attend church every week or almost every week. Most of us live within a 30-minute drive (on Sundays) of Holy Nativity.

To begin our transition, on the Sunday of the announcement that our Rector was leaving, we filled out 3x5 cards with our “hopes” on one side and our “fears” on the other side.

- I **hope** that this congregation will continue to love and support one another and will continue to care about the community.
- My fondest **hope** is that we find a wonderful new priest that believes in inclusion, mission, and love.
- My greatest **hope** is that we love each other more in Jesus’ name and grow spiritually with God’s blessings.



- I **fear** that I will lose confidence and support.
- I **fear** we will lose purpose.
- I **fear** the loss of all the projects and outreach that make our church part of the community

We conducted a short survey and received 46 responses.

When did you first come to Holy Nativity Church?

- 17% in the past four years
- 37% between 5-10 years ago
- 46% more than 10 years ago



How often do you attend church?

- 67% attend every week or almost every week

Why do you attend church? (top 5)

- I like that the church is welcoming to all people and all faith traditions (86%)
- I believe in the mission of Holy Nativity (79%)
- I like the people and the community (76%)
- I like the way the church helps me know more about God (56%)
- I like that it's not formal/high church – it's relaxed and comfortable (56%)

What activities are you doing at Holy Nativity? (top 5 responses)

- Lector/reader (56%)
- Sunday food (44%)
- SPY Safe Place for Youth food prep (28%)
- LAX Food pantry (25%)
- Choir; yoga; prayer (tied at 22%)

If you could change anything about Holy Nativity, what would it be?

- Nothing. Everything is okay. (Most common response.)
- Nothing. It is lovely. A beacon to the neighborhood and the world and a safe harbor amidst the tumult within and without.
- To go even more deeply in the same direction we are going now.
- Nothing, but I wish more neighbors would peek in and become part of our church.
- As you make changes, don't become insular like other places – don't lose the welcome mat.
- Get a sustainable youth program going. Kids are our future.

