



A History of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee

While the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee came into being in 1886, it would not take its final form until 1928 when it assumed jurisdiction over the southern third of the state. Having several of its parishes located within a larger urban environment would help shape the character of the diocese. As Milwaukee industrialized, greater wealth, poverty, and immigration brought new and unique challenges to the churches there, and, in the post-WWII period, social justice issues centered on poverty, race, and gender would find resonance within the diocese. One of the enduring strengths of the diocese has been its ability to adapt to cultural and intellectual challenges, which can be seen in its Anglo-Catholic worship and approach to faith, as well as in its openness to gender and sexual diversity within its leadership and active membership. In 2024, the Diocese of Milwaukee joined the Dioceses of Fond du Lac and Eau Claire to reestablish the Episcopal Diocese of Wisconsin. As we look forward to a reunited future, we still cherish our distinct history.

1836—First evidence of an Episcopal service conducted in Milwaukee by a priest.

1838—St. Paul's, Milwaukee comes into being under the title St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church.

1847—First Convention of the Diocese of Wisconsin held in Milwaukee and presided over by Bishop Jackson Kemper.

1886—The Diocese of Milwaukee officially comes into being when General Convention gives permission to change the name of the Diocese of Wisconsin to Milwaukee.

1898—All Saints receives full cathedral status, making the “cathedral idea” fully concrete and solidifying the influence of Anglo-Catholicism.

1987—Bishop White ordains the first female priest in the Diocese of Milwaukee.

1993—Bishop White affirms the Milwaukee Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic Covenant to promote unity and cooperation amongst the denominations.

2014—The Standing Committee recommends to Bishop Miller “...a local option for a rite of blessing of same-gender couples living in committed, lifelong, covenant relationships.” This puts the diocese on the path toward full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons.

2024—In May, the Dioceses of Milwaukee, Fond du Lac, and Eau Claire vote to reunite into the Diocese of Wisconsin. In June, the 81st General Convention finalized the reestablishment of the Episcopal Diocese of Wisconsin.

Good and gracious God, we give thanks for your grace and wisdom during our time of discernment, allowing us to hear your call for the Church in Wisconsin. Thank you for keeping our ears, hearts, and minds open to one another in order to always seek your will and discern your vision and mission for the church. Grant us now, Almighty God, that same grace and wisdom to fulfill your mission as the reunited Diocese of Wisconsin. Strengthen us in unity and faith to be that church—that church that opens its doors to all people, shares the good news with all people, and brings the love of Christ to all people. Let us be Christ in Wisconsin and the world. All this we ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.