

Christ's Church Episcopal

*4th and Vine Streets
Boonville, Missouri 65233
Phone: (660) 882-6444*

Township:	T-49-N	Organized:	1835
Range:	R-17-W	Disbanded:	No
Section:	35	Active:	Yes
Latitude:	38.973510	Longitude:	-92.744551
Map:		Updated:	March 8, 2020

Cemetery: There is no cemetery associated with this church

Area: Boonville, Missouri

Records: The location of the records is unknown at this time. However, it would probably be safe to assume that they are located in the church office.

History:



Photograph courtesy of H. Stone

Christ's Episcopal Church

From "History of Howard and Cooper Counties Missouri", 1883

Christ's Episcopal Church - The date of the organization of this church at Boonville, is not definitely known. We made every effort to ascertain the fact in reference thereto, and have arrived at the conclusion, after several interviews with some of the oldest living members of the church, that it was organized about the year 1835. The church edifice was erected about the year 1844, at which time the Rev. Almond David Corbyn, became the rector. It is known that Rev. F. F. Peak held services about the year 1839. Who preceded him, is not known. He may have been the pioneer preacher of that church in Boonville.

Among the constituent members were Dr. E. E. Buckner and wife, Richard Thompson and wife, Mrs. Tompkins and C. B. Powell and wife.

Christ's Episcopal Church

From "History of Cooper County Missouri" by W. F. Johnson, 1919

Christ's Episcopal Church was probably organized in 1835 and a first church building was erected in 1844 under the leadership of Rev. Almond David Corbyn, rector. It is thought that the Rev. F. F. Peak preceded him and was probably the first Episcopal pioneer preacher in Boonville. Among the early members were Dr. E. E. Buckner and wife, Richard Thompson and wife, Mrs. Tompkins and C. B. Powell and wife.

**Christ Church Episcopal
From "Memorabilia of Cooper County", 1990**

In 1835 a dozen or more devout Episcopalian families had established homes in Boonville. They had no building of their own in which to worship, but they kept the fires of their faith burning. It must have been good news for them when they learned that the Rev. Jackson Kemper of Connecticut had been chosen to serve as a Missionary Bishop for the church in the West and that Boonville was in the vast territory over which he was given jurisdiction. In due time he became established in St. Louis. Soon after his arrival there he wrote in a letter, 'You wish to be furnished with a statement showing the number of churches in my charge. The only one in Missouri is Christ Church in St. Louis of which I am rector.'

When he considered his field of work before him, he decided upon Boonville as the center for the interior. He visited the town on April 16, 1836. Of the town he reported, 'It is a pretty looking town with many of its houses built of brick and about 900 inhabitants.

Shepherding the families of the faith he found Rev. F.F. Peake who was principal of a girl's school. Since 1835 he had been holding services at the Jefferson House on the corner of 6th and High streets.

There were six Episcopal parishes in the state when the Diocese of Missouri was organized in 1840. Boonville, one of them, was farthest west. At that time Rev. James D. Meade came and he too held services at the Jefferson House. Nothing is known of his work or that of anyone who preceded him as there are no records extant for the years prior to 1863.

For such information as we have relative to those early years, we are deeply indebted to Miss Jane Gregg. In preparing a history of Christ Church of Boonville upon the occasion of its one hundredth anniversary in 1935 she spent long hours of research in libraries.

She staked out claims on all of the early newspapers in existence which had been published in Boonville, the earliest in 1840. In them there was pay dirt from which she panned many a gold nugget of information pertaining to the first 28 years of the church's existence. For that matter she found many which implement the records since 1863 when have been preserved.

A lot was bought for the church in May 1841 and the deed of record reads as follows: 'Grant, bargain and sell and convey unto Jackson Kemper, James G. Martin and Chester B. Powell, Trustees for Christ Church, Boonville, Missouri, and to their successors in office forever Lot No. 7, Hendrick's Addition to Boonville, fronting 70 feet on Fourth street and running back 180 feet of even width.'

A church building was not begun until 1844 after Rev. Almon D. Corbyn became rector. When he arrived the meeting place had been changed to the northwest corner of Main and High Streets but a short time later they were using a long frame building on the southeast corner of Main and Spring streets. It was in this building, on Christmas morning of 1844 that the first pipe organ music in Boonville was heard. Someone in Jefferson City had loaned Rev. Corbyn a pipe organ and he had sent Mr. C.F. Ahle who could and did play it, to bring it back. It is said that as many people heard the service from the outside as from within on this memorable occasion.

One of the parishioners Mr. Chester B. Powell, a trustee, fired with enthusiasm about building the new church made a trip to several eastern cities where he solicited help to make the project possible. He collected \$2000.00 but unfortunately on the way home lost it. (There is nothing to show how.)

This was a great blow to the congregation, a disheartening one. But they rose above it and through further efforts gathered together enough money to start on the building. No one knows who chose the architectural plan with its square center tower. It has many Gothic characteristics but Miss Gregg says: 'It is no ordinary type and may be patterned after some rural church in England.'

Of the building one of the newspapers said: 'It was erected and completed during the past and present years under the auspices of the Rector A.D. Corbyn, and presents one of the most beautiful specimens of church architecture to be found in the west - being sufficiently commodious for the largest congregations in this section of the country. It is constructed of brick - eight large windows - the glass is tastily painted, which supercedes the necessity of blinds, gives a soft light and quite a handsome effect to the whole room.'

The service of consecration was held September 24, 1846.

Under the rectorship of Mr. Corbyn the church held a highly respected position in the community. He married a Boonville girl, Miss Virginia Teackle Buckner, and their descendants for many years were members of Christ Church. He remained rector until 1852, and in appreciation of his work here the congregation erected to the left of the sanctuary a tablet to his memory which reads:

This tablet is placed here by his former Parishioners. In memory of the Rev. Almon D. Corbyn the faithful Pastor, the learned Divine, the zealous Christian under whose ministry this church edifice was erected. He "fell asleep in Jesus" at Jackson, Miss., Oct. 18, A.D. 1855 aged 45 years, 6 months. "He being dead yet speaketh."

Bishop Jackson Kemper was succeeded in 1844 by the Right Reverend Cicero Stephen Hawks who was the first Bishop of Missouri. He is of particular local interest because he married Miss Ada Leonard of Fayette. The increasing prestige of the church in the state is shown by the fact that in 1847 the University of Missouri conferred upon Bishop Hawks the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Mr. Corbyn was succeeded by the Rev. D. Gordon Estes who remained but a few months, and Mr. Harrison preached his farewell sermon in 1854, when the Rev. R.E. Terry became rector. The following account in the Observer is an indication of his popularity. "We need not speak here of the merits of Mr. Terry as a lecturer; he is well known to all our citizens and has won golden opinions by his course as Pastor of Christ Church."

Mr. Terry had been principal of a Female Seminary in Kentucky, so it was not surprising that toward the end of 1855 he bought Adelphia College which was across the street from the rectory on Vine Street. The school was in a very bad financial condition when he took it over, and he was unable to save it from failure.

In 1856 the Rev. George P. Giddinge succeeded Mr. Terry until 1859 when the Rev. Samuel L. Southard came to serve Christ Church. During the time Mr. Southard was in Boonville, several improvements were made in the building and a marble font was added.

The early 1860's were difficult at Christ Church. Rectors remained only a few months, and one Rev. F.R. Holeman was banished to Canada during the war for refusing to "take the oath." However, in February 1867 the Rev. Mr. Holeman again accepted the vestry's call. The report of Bishop Charles F. Robertson in 1868 said that Mr. Holeman was carrying on a very excellent parish school with about fifty scholars, and that the average attendance at Sunday School was one hundred and

twenty-five. Until 1870, Christ Church flourished under Mr. Holeman's lead. It was during his service that the windows were replaced with stained glass.

The Rev. George H. Ward was called to the parish in 1870 and united the church and regained its standing in the community. The Weekly Eagle of October 24, 1873, printed: "The Episcopal Church is noted for its brotherly love one for the other, and its kind regard and attention to the stranger within its gates. Aside for a few 'peculiar' views we believe its tenets are in harmony with the true faith laid down in the Sacred Records, and its standard of morals, through high, is not so far beyond the nature of man, as to be utterly unattainable by him. Taken altogether, this branch of the 'vine' is a power for good, and numbers in its membership many of the most devout worshippers of Him who 'doeth all things well.'" Because of ill health, Mr. Ward resigned in 1874 after which the Rev. Abiel Leonard, who later became Bishop of Nevada and Utah, came to Christ Church for a year.

Serving for only four months, the Rev. George Moore was replaced by Dr. Judson W. Curtis, who was described in the Boonville Advertiser as "an earnest and energetic worker in the cause of religion . . . We commend him to the city of Boonville as a man worthy of their highest esteem and confidence." Dr. Curtis led Christ Church to great activity with socials in the homes of such well known people as Mr. Edward Lee, Captain James Thomson and Judge Washington Adams as well as at the City Hotel and at Stephens Hall. With the proceeds the rectory was enlarged so that Dr. Curtis' family could occupy it in Jan. 1877.

After Dr. Curtis resigned in 1881, the congregation was led by various visiting clergy such as Dr. Foster of Sedalia and the Rev. J.L. Gay of St. Mary's, Fayette. From 1882 until 1886 Mr. J.J. Wilkins, a lay reader licensed by the Bishop Robertson and later ordained to the priesthood, served Christ Church. Bazaars and entertainments were among the activities of the congregation. A fire at the rectory was extinguished with little or no damage in 1885. Changes were made in the building when a recessed chancel and new vestry room added.

Until 1888, Dr. Henry Truro Bray imposed his theological views, which were not favorably accepted by the congregation. However, before he departed, he married Miss Mary Wormald, a member of the Boonville parish. Several years later he asked the bishop to depose him because his views were no longer in accordance with the teachings of the Episcopal Church.

The Rev. J.M. Fulton became rector for a year after which Captain S.W. Ravenel was appointed lay reader and read services each week. In 1889 the Diocese of West Missouri was formed; Boonville was in the western district.

From 1890 until 1900 the Rev. Henry MacKay reunited the congregation and encouraged the musical talent by forming a choir, presenting organ concerts, and giving an operatic presentation, Esther, at the opera house. The following account shows to what extent he had endeared himself to Boonville: "The Advertiser sincerely regrets to hear that the Rev. Henry Mackay has tendered his resignation and will leave Boonville July 1st. He will have been the rector of Christ Church for ten years. He says that those ten years have been a delight to him and have been spent with a delightful people, whom he has the satisfaction of leaving perfectly united."

Mr. E.A. Sharrod, a candidate for Holy Orders, very ably led the congregation for two years. Parties, musical entertainments and dinners were given by the Women's Guild. With the help of Mrs. Sherrod, a boys' choir was organized. Mrs. Colwell gave five hundred dollars toward the purchase of a new organ, and when it was installed several changes were made in the building. A choir room was added on the north side, the organ was placed on the south side with the chancel and altar between. The interior of the building was painted and the floor carpeted.

After two years prosperity under the rectorship of the Rev. Henry I. Fick, the church was again vacant but not closed. Lay readers M.E. Schmidt, G.T. Irvine, and S.W. Ravenel carried on services and the guild and vestry met regularly.

The next few years the congregation was financially prosperous, but in certain other respects it was an unfortunate period. The rector from 1905 until 1908 was the Rev. C.R. Steams. He was followed by the Rev. Silas Cooke Walton, who died in the rectory on May 25, 1910. For the next three years there was another vacancy in the parish. Finally, in June, 1913, the Rev. George Churchill Rafter became rector for one year, resigning because of ill health.

During the tenure of the Rev. A. Corbett from January 1915, until December, 1918, many gifts were presented to the church. These included linen eucharistic vestments, a pair of altar candlesticks given by C.P. Gott, a silver bread box given by the vestry, and a pair of cruets given by Mr. and Mrs. M.E. Schmidt. Also, a pair of offertory basins made from a black walnut log taken from thirty four feet below the river bed and estimated to be one thousand years old were presented by Captain George T. Boyce.

Again the rectorship was vacant until May 1923, when the Rev. George E. Wharton accepted the call of the vestry. During his stay, the Diocesan Convention in West Missouri met at Christ Church, and a beautiful processional cross was presented to the parish in memory of Tompkins Bradley. Mr. Wharton resigned in June, 1926.

In March 1927, the vestry invited the Rev. J.R. Gregg to hold a service. On September 1st he became the rector. In 1929 a new parish room was added to the church which facilitated and broadened the work of the parish. Several memorials were added during Mr. Gregg's thirty years of service. The candelabra were given in memory of Carl Olon Reincke by his parents, Dr. and Mrs. C.H. Reincke. An altar service book was presented by Mrs. J.R. Gregg in memory of her mother, Mrs. Anna Peet Bartlett. A beautiful alms basin was given by Mrs. M.E. Schmidt in memory of Mr. M.E. Schmidt, to whom the people of Christ Church cannot pay a high enough tribute for his loyal support and service for many years as vestryman and lay reader. At the convention of the diocese in 1934 it was decided that it would be very fitting for the council to meet at Christ Church, Boonville, in 1935 in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of this, its mother parish. Under Mr. Gregg's leadership the choir ably supported by an excellent organist attained a reputation of unusual quality for so small an organization. Mr. Gregg retired from active service in 1957, a man beloved by the whole congregation.

The Rev. Jim Viggers served as vicar of Christ Church, then a mission church in the diocese, from 1957 until 1959. He sponsored placement of a cross on the tower. Mr. Viggers worked closely with the youth of the town and sponsored a center for them in the downtown area, called The Blue Room. He continued to encourage music in the church.

Lay readers Albin Schmidt, C.P. Malone and John Bell filled the vacancy well by leading worship each Sunday, holding regular vestry meetings, and helping the guild with projects.

In November of 1960 Major W. DeFay Jackson, USAF, a postulant for Holy Orders, began coming to Christ Church from his home in Belton, Missouri, each Sunday to read Morning Prayer. After ordination to the priesthood, Mr. Jackson was appointed Vicar of Christ Church by Bishop E.R. Welles. The vicarage was completely redecorated before the Jackson family moved in. During the six years they were in residence, the interior of the church was redecorated, and storm windows were fitted to the outside of the stained glass windows. Prior to the redecoration of the church, walnut paneling given in memory of George G. Rotan by Kate Rotan Bell, matching reredos given in memory of Anna M. Bell by John J. Bell, and choir pews and railing given in honor of Mary King Estill by her son (Gentry) were in place. Also added as re-decoration progressed were memorial lanterns in memory of: Mr. and Mrs. Albin Schmidt by friends; Marion Bates by Merilew Miller; Arthur Bradley by Mollie Bradley; Mary Mills Hoefer by Marilyn Selck and George Hoefer; Mr. and Mrs. M.E. Schmidt by Albin J. Schmidt; William Clinkscales by Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Clinkscales. A Flower Board was placed near the narthex in memory of Irene Gross Meredith. A ministry to the Kemper cadets who were Episcopalian on Sunday nights, bazaars, antique shows, ice cream socials kept the guild busy- Mr. Jackson died in March, 1966, suddenly at age 49.

Later that same year, S. Allen Watson was called by the vestry and was appointed Vicar of Christ Church. His wife, Martha Watson, was a talented musician. Her organ playing enhanced the worship for the three years Mr. Watson remained at Christ Church.

For three years the stalwart lay readers faithfully read services each week. Charles P. Malone and John Bell alternated, and for at least one Sunday a month the Rev. E. Clarendon Hyde came from Columbia to celebrate Holy Eucharist. Mr. Hyde endeared himself to the congregation with his patient, soft-spoken manner.

Finally, in 1972 the Rev. Larry B. Lewis accepted the call and became the rector of the church. Strides forward in spirituality were made with Larry Lewis. Here again is a priest with musical talent. During his stay the organ was rebuilt, a public recital by the re-builders was held, and a glorious George Herbert celebration was sponsored by the church. It was before Mr. Lewis' stay that Christ Church became again an independent parish, making Mr. Lewis the rector. By the time Mr. Lewis left Boonville in 1979, another lay reader, Rick Smith, had been trained.

Again, the lay readers, Charles P. Malone, John Bell, and Rick Smith carried on the business of the church services with the vestry's support until the Rev. Richard Elberfeld came to be the Rector of Christ Church. Mrs. Elberfeld's personality attracted many families to the church. However, in spite of the enlargement of the congregation, Christ Church was returned to mission status by the Diocesan Council. Church School flourished in the former rectory, in which the pastor had his study and to which improvements were made. Mr. Elberfeld's adult classes were excellent and informative about church history and dogma. Late in 1985 the Elberfeld family accepted a call to Richmond, Kentucky.

Early in 1986 the Rev. Steven A. Miller was asked by the vestries to serve as Vicar of Christ Church and St. Mary's, Fayette, at Bishop Arthur Vogel's suggestion. His youth was a breath of fresh air. The parish hall has been refurbished, the pastor's study moved there, the worn rectory razed, the sacristy enclosed. More improvements are planned. Church School is meeting in the parish hall under a new schedule; adult class meets with Deacon Bill Bellais, a welcome addition to the clergy priestly staff. Lay readers include Ann Stout, Maggie Elliott, Norman Land, Marsha Higginson, Dennis Donahue.

It is very difficult to give the vital statistics of the parish for these one hundred fifty-four years because there are no records of this kind before 1867. With these limitations the number of baptisms may be said to be between nine hundred and nine hundred fifty and confirmations close to three hundred fifty or four hundred.

In conclusion it might be said that this narrative records the sacrifices and fidelities of men and women zealous in upholding the faith of their fathers, even down to the present day.

Thanks to Jane Gregg, Historiographer, and Lilburn A. Kingsbury, Margaret Jackson, Editor and supplement writer.

by Margaret Jackson

Christ Church Episcopal
From "Cooper County Church Sketches" by F. Chesnutt, 1993

Among the early settlers from the eastern United States were Episcopalians who had separated from the Church of England during the American Revolution. Prior to the Louisiana Purchase non-Catholic worship was forbidden West of the Mississippi River due to its occupation by French and Spanish.

In 1835 Bishop Jackson Kemper from Connecticut was assigned to the Western Territories for mission work. When the missionary Bishop arrived in Boonville he found Rev. F. F. Peake, a teacher, already leading a congregation which met at Jefferson House at Sixth and High Streets. This group became Christ Church, the oldest Episcopal Church west of St. Louis.

The lot was purchased in 1841 and the deed lists Jackson Kemper, James G. Martin and Chester B. Powell as trustees. Building did not begin until 1844 after Rev. Almon D. Corbin became rector. Services had been held at the northwest corner of Main and High Streets and later in a frame building on the southeast corner of Main and Spring.

Rev. Corbin married Miss Virginia Buckner of Boonville, and when the Church was built a one-story rectory to the rear of the lot was included for their living quarters. All were made of hand-built brick possibly on the lot next door. Thomas Donnell, John Matthews and Timothy Flint. Elder E. Hempstead had a fort named for him across the river.

Rev. E. Hollister organized the first church at Franklin April 28, 1821, with 23 people. After the flood of 1826, the population divided and Dr. Francis MacFarland (from Virginia) with Rev. Alexander (from Kentucky) served both sides of the Missouri River, spreading Christianity and teaching schools. Westminster and William Woods survive today as colleges.

The bell was cast in Britain and is inscribed "I praise God, I call the living, I toll for the dead." Architecturally, the Church recalls country churches in England. The square bell tower once had four small spires at each corner representing the four Evangelists.

In 1844 the first pipe organ music was heard in Boonville played on an instrument loaned by a member from Jefferson City. In 1854 a new organ was purchased, the "largest west of the Mississippi River."

The rectory added a second story in 1876 and was again enlarged in 1908. It was recently demolished. Glass fragments found indicate that the Communion wine could have been obtained from Mr. Hain, a vintner who lived a few yards away in the 1850's.

Among the many memorial gifts of interest are the chalice and paten, gifts of Bishop Jackson Kemper and the collection basins. These latter were made of black walnut from a tree found 34 feet below the Missouri River bed, believed to be over 1000 years old. Donated in 1915 by Capt. G. T. Boyce, one assumes this came from excavations during construction of the highway bridge.

The 1860's were difficult for the area's churches. The Union occupation and war cruelties resulted in a rapid turnover of ministers. Rev. F.R. Holeman was banished to Canada for "refusing to take the oath." He returned in 1867 and conducted a successful parish school of 50 scholars. During this time the painted windows were replaced with stained glass.

Rev. Abiel Leonard, who later became Bishop of Nevada and Utah, served at Christ Church.

The addition of the vestry room to the north took place in 1929. The walnut panelling around the altar was completed in 1965, a gift of the Bell family.

Christ Church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
