

History of Christ Episcopal School, Nacogdoches, TX

In 1948, exactly one hundred years after the first Episcopal service was held in the Nacogdoches Courthouse on June 14, 1848, Christ Episcopal Day School was established by The Reverend Scott Field Bailey, rector of Christ Episcopal Church. Father Bailey and the parishioners of the century old church sought to devote attention to and dedicate an environment of learning for the children and youth of the congregation. Miss Lucette Alexander Sharp, was recruited by Father Bailey to serve as the first Coordinator of the first Protestant private school in Nacogdoches.

Lucette Sharp was well-suited for the job, having received her baccalaureate from Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College and her master's degree from the University of Wisconsin. With support of the parishioners, a kindergarten program was established and taught by Lucette, and soon thereafter a pre-kindergarten for four year olds and a first grade program were added. Miss Sharp loved teaching young children and was known as the teacher who always had a twinkle in her eye and was full of surprises. She taught from a rocking chair, never using a desk.

From 1964 to 1971, Mrs. E. Branch Patton (Florence Fitch) became Principal and first grade teacher, expanding the Day School to encompass two pre-kindergarten classes, two kindergarten classes, one first grade class and a newly added second grade class to the school.

In 1971, Mrs. John Ruckel (Deborah) became Coordinator of the Day School. Mrs. Ruckel added a third grade in 1973 and was responsible for harnessing accreditation for the Episcopal Day School of Nacogdoches, incorporated in 1974, by the Southern Association of Elementary and Secondary Schools. Grades four and five were added and Mrs. Bailey Nations (Frances) served as Coordinator from 1975 to 1978. Mrs. George Barham, III (Patsy) held the position of Coordinator from 1978 to 1981. Mrs. James Reese (Shirley) served as Principal from 1981 until her death in 1997. Grade six was added in the fall of 1989.



Grade seven existed in 2000-2001 and in 2004-2005. Grade eight plans were discontinued. The last year the school had a sixth grade was in the school year 2017-2018.

Completing a self-study during the 1983-84 school year under the leadership of Mrs. Reese, the school became accredited by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and became a member of both the National and Southwestern Associations of Episcopal Schools (NAES and SAES). In 1989, the school was accredited by SAES, after the state's education agency no longer accredited private schools, and assumed the name Christ Episcopal School (CES), incorporating as such in 1994.

Mr. Ralph Morgan became Headmaster in 1997. Headmistress Mrs. John Dahmus (Loretta) served 1998-2005; Headmistress Mrs. Sam Bass (Linda) served 2005-2008; and Head of School Mrs. Barry Russell (Audrey) served 2008-2016.

Classes are now housed in two buildings: the main school building and the Reese Pre-School Building. The main school building houses kindergarten to grade 5, the library, the computer lab, a multi-purpose room (the Bailey Room), the art room, music room, administrative offices, and the School Hall, which is used for lunch and special events. The Reese Pre-School Building, across from the main building, houses the Pre-K programs.

The Reverend Karl Griswold-Kuhn began his rectorate at Christ Episcopal Church in August 2020, with The Reverend Michael Caldwell serving as Associate Rector and Chaplain to Christ Episcopal School since 2016. Head of School Mrs. John Lawrence Oliver, Jr. (Catherine Fenci) began in 2016 and serves currently. The school serves students in Pre-Kindergarten (3 & 4 year olds) to grade 5, is accredited by the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools, and retains its membership in the National Association of Episcopal Schools and the Texas Private School Association. CES is a parish day school operating within the Diocese of Texas.

