



# THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

## THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA

### ST. DAVID'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CHERAW RETURNS TO THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

*The Rev. Michael Bye, an Episcopal priest who had been serving The Episcopal Worship Group of Cheraw, will lead a service of Holy Eucharist at St. David's Episcopal Church each Sunday at 10 am, beginning August 7, 2022.*

**CHARLESTON, SC – (August 3, 2022)** St. David's, Cheraw, a parish with roots in The Episcopal Church dating back more than 200 years, returned to the Diocese of South Carolina and The Episcopal Church on Monday, August 1, 2022, as a result of the South Carolina Supreme Court's April ruling that 14 churches which left The Episcopal Church in 2012 and later joined the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) did not have proper ownership based on state trust law. The Right Reverend Ruth Woodliff-Stanley, bishop of the Diocese of South Carolina, has called the Rev. Michael Bye, who has been serving the Episcopal Worship Group of Cheraw, to lead the church as interim priest-in-charge through the end of this year. The church will reopen as St. David's Episcopal Church, with a service of Holy Eucharist on Sunday, August 7, at 10 am. The St. David's Episcopal School will continue to operate and is expected to reopen on Monday, August 15, for the 2022-23 school year.

Bishop Woodliff-Stanley expressed gratitude as she looks forward to a new season for St. David's Episcopal Church and School. "I rejoice with the Episcopalians of Cheraw in anticipation of the reopening of St. David's historic parish," said the bishop. "The strong and loving Episcopal community of Cheraw has faithfully shared the good news of Jesus for generations in an area rich with the history of our diocese and state. Now, guided by their wise leadership in Cheraw, we look forward to welcoming new friends and old to worship with us at St. David's. I give particular thanks to the lay leaders, and to Father Mike Bye, for their leadership. We are excited that the important ministry of the St. David's Episcopal School will continue; we look forward to serving children and their families. All are welcome to join us as we share the gospel of Jesus Christ together in a new season in Cheraw."

The Rev. Michael Bye is hopeful for the future as he continues to lead Episcopalians in Cheraw. "We are both happy and grateful to be returning to the St. David's building," said Father Bye. "We are eagerly looking forward to fostering reconciliation and healing as we proclaim, by deed and word, the gospel to all people."

After nearly 10 years of litigation, the South Carolina Supreme Court determined that 14 of at least 36 churches which had claimed possession of their properties and left The Episcopal Church, including St. David's in Cheraw, had created an irrevocable trust in favor of The Episcopal Church and its associated diocese, The (Episcopal) Diocese of South Carolina. St. David's, Cheraw, is the second church to be returned to the historic diocese since the Court's decision in April.

When the congregations broke away from The Episcopal Church, many members of these churches expressed an interest in continuing to worship in the traditions of the larger Church. Groups of people from these displaced congregations led the effort across the eastern half of South Carolina to begin new mission churches and worshipping communities. In Cheraw, a group of loyal Episcopalians established the

Episcopal Worship Group of Cheraw, in full union with the Diocese of South Carolina. For years, this worshipping community, with many members who previously attended St. David's Episcopal Church before the schism, worshiped together regularly, most recently gathering in a local bank for Sunday services and hoping for a day they could return to St. David's as Episcopalians.

Sarah Spruill has served as Junior Warden (lay leader) of The Episcopal Worship Group of Cheraw, and while she has longed to return to St. David's Episcopal Church, she understands well the depth of emotions felt on both sides. "The Episcopalians in Cheraw are very mindful of how much St. David's Church means to all of us who have worshiped there," said Ms. Spruill. "We were deeply saddened when part of the congregation left the Episcopal Church, and we know well the pain of leaving a building that holds many memories— as it happened to us. We are thankful that the long legal battle is finally over, and we can now go forth and continue to do God's work as we return to our historic worship space. We want to reunify and build with all of God's children, rejoicing in the power of the spirit in a place where all are welcome."

St. David's Church was established in Cheraw in 1768 and became part of The Episcopal Church in 1819. The original parish church, known locally as Old St. David's (circa 1770), is owned by the Chesterfield County Historic Preservation Commission, but the section of the cemetery immediately around the old church is owned by The Episcopal Church. In 1916, St. David's Episcopal Church moved to its current location at 420 Market Street in Cheraw where it served the community as part of The Episcopal Church for nearly 100 years.

### **About The Diocese of South Carolina**

*The historic Diocese of South Carolina (DSC), also known as The Episcopal Church in South Carolina (TECSC), is the local diocese in the eastern half of South Carolina and part of The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. According to The Episcopal Church's statistics, the DSC was the fastest-growing diocese in the United States, with more than a 21 percent increase in baptized members since 2014. For more information, view [A Historical Timeline](#) of the Diocese of South Carolina and the [Frequently Asked Questions](#). For the latest on DSC, visit [episcopalchurchsc.org](http://episcopalchurchsc.org) or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) @DioceseofSC.*

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