

# LISTEN AND LEARN SESSIONS

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## Are We All Saints?

How One Church has Strived for Radical  
Welcome and Inclusion in  
Their Congregation

Presented by Suzanne Wille, Episcopal Church of All Saints of Indianapolis  
Report by Donna Wells, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

**ABSTRACT** In this session, sponsored by the ATLA Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the Reverend Suzanne Wille shared the history of the Episcopal Church of All Saints of Indianapolis, a church with a long history of diversity, integration, and social action.

The Episcopal Church of All Saints of Indianapolis was founded in 1864. It has been an Anglo-Catholic congregation since 1948. The services are very Roman Catholic in nature, and the congregation has a long-standing reputation for serving the poor. The church became integrated in the 1950s and installed stained-glass windows that were modern and highly symbolic. One portrays a crucified man hanging on street signs.

The church was an early trendsetter in cultural issues. They had their first woman priest in 1977. In 1985 they had their first African-American woman rector, Nan Peete, an internationally known and respected bishop and social justice advocate. Peete established a homeless ministry at All Saints in the 1980s that provided dinner

and breakfast, and allowed the homeless to sleep in the sanctuary on the pews. This ministry evolved into the Day Spring family shelter.

Homosexuality and specifically the AIDS crisis were huge issues in the 1980s. All Saints welcomed the gay community, even though it cost them many of their long-time members. It became known as a church of and for gay men. The church provided funerals for AIDS victims, many of whom had been abandoned by their families. To the present day, All Saints continues to appoint gay rectors.

The church continues to be active in social issues by, for example, initiating marches and being a voice. They have provided shelter for immigrant families during this current immigration debate.

All Saints faces new issues as its neighborhood becomes more gentrified. With their long history and strong convictions, they are firmly rooted and will face each new challenge with courage.