A Spirit of Warmth. A Sense of Belonging.
Welcome to Our Church

St. Francis is a friendly, open, faithful Episcopal parish committed to serving the people of our church and our community. We love Jesus, we love each other, and we try hard to follow the teachings of our namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, who gave up family riches to engage with the world as a servant. We don’t believe there are many absolutes in the church, and there is really no barrier to being a member here or in the Episcopal Church generally, except a desire to worship God and serve Christ in others.

We worship in a liturgical style, using the 1979 Book of Common Prayer which, according to the Episcopal Church, "is a treasure chest full of devotional and teaching resources for individuals and congregations, but it is also the primary symbol of our unity. We, who are many and diverse, come together in Christ through our worship, our common prayer."

Episcopal churches typically welcome people from all walks of life, and our parish is no different. We have diversity in our thought and in our people, so no one should feel less than what they are — fully human and beloved in the eyes of God and of the church. This philosophy makes us unique in our local Christian community.

Our Prayer

Almighty God,
You know the needs of your Church in every place: look graciously upon us, the people of St. Francis, and grant us the guidance of your Holy Spirit as we seek a new Rector for this parish.

Give us discernment, wisdom, and confidence in your timing.
Guide the members of our Search Committee, as they labor to be faithful in seeking your will.

We pray for the life of our parish, that we may continue to be strengthened in our mission to be Jesus Christ’s heart, hands and feet to our neighbors no matter where they are on their journey of faith.

Bless us with mutual trust and respect, courage, and foresight as you shepherd our community through its journey.

Grace us with continuous direction and inspire us toward genuine self-reflection.
All this we ask as we walk in your ways to the glory of your name.

Amen.
As diverse communities are apt to do, we have very different ideas of “what is best”. However, recently through a series of parish dialogues (Holy Conversations) we have heard the Holy Spirit in the voice of consensus affirming our shared values.

We are seeking someone who loves people without condition and with abandon. Welcoming everyone to Holy Communion is a core part of who we are, and we need someone who feels “everyone is welcome at God’s table”. We are a passionately diverse group seeking someone who values and promotes diversity. Not only in gender, class, sexual orientation, and background, but also thought and opinion. We seek someone who can be a guide in the difficult virtue of open-mindedness and seeking to value other’s ideas. We seek someone who can meet the challenges that define our divisive time with spiritual leadership and compassion.
Inclusivity! We pride ourselves on being a place that is safe, welcoming, and affirming for people of all walks of life. As one of the only churches in our community who openly welcome and celebrate members of the LGBT community we value this diversity. Our congregation is fully diverse with members who are conservative and traditional who pray (and drink coffee!) with members who are liberal and progressive. We truly feel we all make each other better for knowing one another, and that everyone is loved and uniquely created by God. We are now, and forever want to be, the place where everyone is welcome.

The Preaching! Many members new to the church comment about how uplifting the sermons are at St. Francis, regardless of which priest is preaching. The focus on the liturgy and finding personal spiritual messages each week is special. At St. Francis, we value not being shamed or told what to believe, but being challenged to think about what the word means in our life.

Coffee Hour! Coffee hour is traditionally held in the Fellowship Hall after both the 8:00 and 10:00 service. We have volunteer hosts each week to make the coffee and provide delicious refreshments. It is a time for fellowship and catching up with old friends and getting to know new ones. The children will grab a treat and an apple juice then congregate in the Kid’s Creativity Center. The din of laughter, children, and conversation is a highlight for many in our church.
BLESSING OF THE PETS
St. Francis is the patron saint of animals, so each year we welcome pets of all kinds and all denominations to a local park and give a blessing.

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE DINNER
The men of the church collaborate to make a pancake and sausage feast. It is a fantastic tradition that many of us look forward to and is a sure sign that Easter is just around the corner.

WEDNESDAY STUDY WITH DINNER
Generally two times each year parishioners organize a Bible study or a book study meeting once a week for 6-8 weeks. Most come for the delicious variety of soups and stay for the fellowship and spiritual growth that occurs.

MOTHER’S DAY BRUNCH
Each year the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) hosts a brunch in honor of mothers. You don’t need to be a mother to attend.

RUMMAGE SALE
ECW collects donations and organizes a Rummage sale corresponding with Oregon Trail Days. Oregon Trail Days is a popular time to have a garage sale and St. Francis is known for “having the good stuff”. The proceeds of this help to support outreach ministries and local nonprofits.

JOYFUL NOISE
The first Sunday of each week the children of our church take tin buckets and ask the congregation for their loose change. The coins are noisily dropped into the buckets and the children make sure no coin is left uncollected! Then the buckets are all dumped into a larger metal bucket making a joyful noise. Once the large bucket is filled the children get to decide what they will use their money to do. The children have chosen many causes from the Episcopal Relief and Development and also local nonprofits that support animals.
Our Outreach

SACK LUNCH
This is a ministry that started in the early days of the pandemic and continues strong. Each week a group of volunteers from our parish and some of our friends from the Methodist church meet in the kitchen to make brown bag lunches. Many in our community have come to rely on this meal once a week.

LAUNDRY OF LOVE
Every human being deserves the dignity of cleanliness. This ministry is volunteer-led and provides coins, detergent, and hope at a local laundromat.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
When there is a project happening in our local community, St. Francis can be counted on to send a group of volunteers to help with this worthy cause.

SOUP KITCHEN
Our Presbyterian friends across the street host a soup supper weekly for anyone in our community in need of a warm meal. St. Francis parishioners assist when called upon and handle making the meal once a quarter.

EBAY
We have a thriving eBay ministry that collects donated items to sell. The proceeds from this ministry are used to financially support other outreach ministries and local non-profits.

BACKPACKS
This is likely our most successful ministry. It was originally started by a member of our congregation, Debbie Hogue, who wanted to make sure school aged kids would not go hungry over the weekend. This ministry is now found throughout our community distributing Cat Packs (to our Scottsbluff students) and Pup Packs (to our Gering students). Collection bins are found in most grocery stores and businesses, and it is not uncommon at all to see local newspaper articles announcing a large donation from a business to the Cat Pack and Pup Pack program. We are so proud that this ministry has become an integrated part of our community with humble beginnings at St. Francis.

COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL
St. Francis has a committed group of parishioners who are passionate about this international charity.
LEADERSHIP
Regarding leadership, the St. Francis parish is a member of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska, led by Bishop Scott Barker. We follow the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church of the USA, the Canons of the Diocese of Nebraska, and our vestry. Our Vestry consists of 11 members either elected by the congregation or selected by the Rector and confirmed by the congregation.

We are lucky enough to have two non-stipendiary priest associates who are valued leaders in our parish, Mother Karen and Father Bob. Both have been faithfully serving our church and communities for many years. Prior to becoming priests, they served as Deacons at St. Timothy’s Church.

PASTORAL CARE
Pastoral Care is the primary responsibility of our clergy, and is also shared with lay ministers.

Prayer Support- Prayers for healing are offered at every Eucharist and members regularly submit names of loved ones in need of prayers.

Home Visitation- Clergy and lay Eucharistic ministers take Communion and offer companionship to the home-bound in our parish.

Life After Loss- We provide funeral services for those who have died and include visitation during illness, visitation with the family, the funeral, and follow-up visits.
As with any church, our community at St. Francis has its own set of challenges, some old and some new. We believe our congregation is equal to the task of meeting these challenges and see them as opportunities for our church to learn, grow, and emerge successfully as a more resilient community.

COVID-19
The Coronavirus pandemic has challenged us in many different ways. It has shined a light on our areas of weakness and pushed us to creatively adapt to meet the physical, social, and spiritual needs of our congregation. Some of the ways we have responded to the pandemic include: online streaming of services, collaborating with local and state health officials to follow the most recent guidelines, offering a book study through Zoom, and offering drive-through communion. While we have resumed in-person worship, an ongoing challenge continues to be getting members back to church in a safe and responsible manner. We look for a rector who can continue to not only inspire resilience in the face of an ongoing global crisis, but also draw out creative solutions to novel problems.

CONGREGATION NUMBERS
During our holy conversations, many parishioners communicated that growing our church attendance was a top priority. This priority has been made even more paramount since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our church now faces the two-fold challenge of getting current members back to church and simultaneously bringing new members into our congregation.

APPEALING TO YOUNGER PEOPLE
The demographic trends of the Episcopal Church are reflected in our community, with a disproportionately low number of younger adults relative to the nationwide percentage of young adults in the United States. We value the experience and wisdom of our older adults and at the same time recognize the significance of having an active young adult community at St. Francis as well. We want to develop ways of engaging and appealing to this younger audience with meaningful, effective outreach.

YOUTH PROGRAMMING
The programming and opportunities we currently have are enjoyed by both the volunteers who make these programs possible and by the children who attend. We would like to expand the options and scope of our youth programming to offer more variety for children, teens, and their families.
Our congregation is passionate about the instruction, outreach, and opportunities for spiritual and social engagement at St. Francis. We are thankful for the immeasurable benefits these things have had on our congregation, both individually and collectively as a whole. The following are areas we continue to develop and have identified as goals for future growth.

One exciting area we have identified as a growth opportunity is our music department. At our 10:00 a.m. Sunday service, we sing hymns from a variety of sources, most often the 1982 Hymnal, accompanied by piano or organ. We want to grow our music program to offer more robust music for our 10:00 a.m. Service, including, but not limited to, adding a music director and choir.

Additionally, we would like to expand the number of lay leadership opportunities available. We want to enlist more involvement of lay members in different capacities

- heading service committees
- being involved with different groups
- utilizing their unique talents and gifts to their fullest potential

We believe strongly in the call to be Christ's hands and feet to bind up the wounds of this aching and suffering world. Taking the charge to “be doers of the word and not hearers only”, we have several missions focused on serving our community. We want to continue maintaining and growing these programs and also creatively develop new and meaningful opportunities for service to our community.

In short, we are a congregation who is growing and wants to continue seeing this trend. As a congregation we believe this is both possible and necessary. Growing by improving outreach, using the gifts and talents of current parishioners, and providing a welcoming atmosphere for visitors are crucial in this process.
FOR OUR CHILDREN

Sunday School
We have Godly Play Sunday School pro-
gramming for elementary aged children ta-
tought by a faithful team of volun-
teers. This group meets during the 10:00
service upstairs in our classroom
space. Starting this school year, we also
have a group of upper elementary aged
children who meet at the tables in the
Fellowship Hall during the same
time. This group doesn’t have a set cur-
riculum but the creativity of the volun-
teers teaching it has produced wonderful
results.

Youth Group
Our faithful volunteers are also lead-
ing the charge de-
veloping a vibrant
place for our
youth to come to-
gether. Our hope
is to add fun ac-
tivities as well as
working hands to
love and honor
Christ’s love.

FOR OUR ADULTS

Women’s Bible Study
For many years the women of St. Francis
have met once a week to grow in and
honor the work of God. Due to the pan-
demic they have not met as often, how-
ever they are looking forward to starting
up again soon.

Men’s Bible Study
The faithful men of St. Francis contin-
ue to meet on Friday mornings to en-
rich their learning of Our Lord.

Zoom Bible/Book Studies
Zoom Bible and Book Studies have al-
so been available for those that want
to join. They have been on Thursday
evenings. Most recently we looked at
a book on racism.
**Active Groups Within Our Parish**

**Episcopal Church Women (ECW)**
ECW is a champion for all causes in our church. All are welcome to join and help with these causes and enjoy the fellowship of faithful women. Raising money to support our ministries and various local non-profit organizations.

**Daughters of the King**
Volunteer parishioners organize faithful women of St. Francis to pray for the church.

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**Installation of new Daughters of the King members**
During this time frame (2012-Present), our parish grew in in-person attendance until we shut down due to COVID-19, from March 2020 until February of 2021.

During our shutdown, St. Francis worked to create an on-line service going from Facebook to YouTube and adding a state-of-the-art video system to broadcast our services. We are having in-person worship services at this time with a mask mandate and some of our parishioners have chosen not to come back to church yet. This is evident in our 2021 in-person average.

Moving forward, our parish looks to welcome everyone back to in-person worship and we are confident our new rector will help us attract new members who will help us to sustain and increase the financial growth of our church.
Our Parish Finances

Our financial position, as noted on the St. Francis Episcopal Church Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Assets as of September 30, 2021, is very strong. We continue to be blessed by a congregation committed to the financial health of our parish. We just concluded our Stewardship Campaign for the year 2022, and our Parish continues to have faith that we will find a new rector and build on the success the current rector had, as the pledge revenue only dropped $5,837.00 and our parish has known for several months that current rector will be retiring in May 2022. We had a handful of new people pledge and several increased their giving.

The Vestry and the current rector have worked hard and stayed focused on the management of our income versus expenditures to get our parish into the black financially. Graph B depicts our last 10 years financially, both income and expenses. From a low of $128,977.00 in income in 2012 to a high in income of $239,186.00 in 2020, the year of COVID. The best part of the visual is in 2017, when our parish finances went into the black and has stayed this way through 2020 with a financial gain of $32,586.00 that year. This financial growth we see during this period has been coupled with our growth in congregation attendance. Moving forward we are confident our new rector will help us attract new members who will help us to sustain and increase the financial growth of our church.

St. Francis also has a Foundation which exists solely to benefit St. Francis Parish. In 2021, the Foundation has marketable assets of $2,106,413, made up of US Equities, Foreign Equities, Bonds, and Cash and CD’s and in addition to these marketable assets, the Foundation owns two lots in Scottsbluff (currently for sale, listed at $29,900 each) and has an equity ownership in the private MN Charities, the value of which is currently booked at $250,000.
**St. Francis Episcopal Church**

**Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Assets – Mod Cash Basis**

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<tr>
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<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Current Assets</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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|                       | **EQUITY**                                  |                                        |
| CD-Torrington         | 17,488.39                                   | Net Assets w/donor restr.              | 864.15 |
| CD Altar Guild        | 4,738.80                                    | Net Assets w/o donor restr.            | 900,852.45 |
| CD-ECW                | 5,313.04                                    | Net Income                             | 8,654.16 |
| Vanguard Acct.        | 156,200.23                                  |                                        |        |
| COOP-prepaid          | 1413.91                                     |                                        |        |
| **TOTAL OTHER ASSETS** | **185,154.37**                              | **TOTAL EQUITY**                       | 910,370.76 |
| **TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS** | **329,786.11**                             |                                        |        |
| **FIXED ASSETS**      |                                            |                                        |
| Property              | 547,366.32                                  |                                        |        |
| Capital Improvements  | 33,496.17                                   |                                        |        |
| **TOTAL FIXED ASSETS** | **580,862.49**                             |                                        |        |
| **TOTAL ASSETS**      | **910,648.60**                              |                                        |        |
As the North Platte Valley became inhabited and the cities of Gering (established in 1887) and Scottsbluff (established in 1900) were founded, a missionary, George Allen Beecher, who was headquartered out of Ft. Sidney, about 80 miles east, would travel on a circuit to conduct church services held in the homes of early settlers and in buildings borrowed for such purposes. Gering and Scottsbluff, separated by the North Platte River, would continue to grow, and become the two largest communities in the Panhandle of Nebraska.

In 1904, the parishioners of Gering erected a small church building and services were conducted by several missionaries. On Sunday, August 28, 1910, Deacon Henry Ives held his first services at the chapel in Gering. George Beecher became Bishop of the Missionary District of Western Nebraska and in 1936, dedicated the Gering church in honor of St. Timothy.

The town of Scottsbluff had only had a few attempts at Episcopalian services until Bishop Graves had Deacon Henry Ives preside at evening prayer in September of 1910. In 1910, the bishop sent Deacon Ives to establish an Episcopal mission in Scottsbluff. On Sunday, November 13, 1910, regular services were started at Rice Hall and St. Andrew’s Mission was organized. St. Andrew’s mission was granted parish status in 1920 and the lot where our church building still proudly stands today was purchased in 1921. St. Andrews church was completed in time for Christmas services in 1922.
From their early beginnings both churches in the Valley flourished and were served by many outstanding Rectors who were responsible for the spiritual and foundational growth of their respective congregations. Church services, men’s groups, Altar Guild, children’s ministries, and choirs as well as community ministries kept both parishes busy in their respective communities.

In 1993, St. Timothy’s became part of a cluster with Holy Apostles’ Church of Mitchell, Nebraska. Mounting costs along with a decline in participation made it difficult to sustain programs and outreach endeavors. St. Timothy’s experienced an increase in clergy turnover and a lengthy search process for a rector. After much discussion, in 2006, the congregation of St. Timothy’s Church prayerfully made the decision to merge with St. Andrew’s Church in Scottsbluff.

Father Kelsey Hogue was called to St. Andrew’s in Scottsbluff in 2006 with the vision of combining these two historic parishes. The first joint worship service of the new parish was held at St. Andrew’s on September 10, 2006. That day members of St. Andrew’s welcomed the members of St. Timothy’s at the North Platte River Bridge with a joyful greeting of balloons, banners, and welcome signs. The two congregations proceeded to the church and shared Holy Communion together for the first time followed by a festive celebration. After much collaborative work and many prayerful meetings, on January 13, 2007, Bishop Joe Burnett formally changed the name of the patron saint and rededicated the new parish as St. Francis Episcopal Church. In 2007, the two Deacons from St. Timothy’s, Karen Anderson and Bob Manasek, were ordained into the priesthood at St. Francis where they both continue to serve as priests today. Fr. Hogue retired in 2013, and in September of that same year, Fr. Mark Selvey, who was originally from Scottsbluff, was called to be our new Rector. We have seen an increase in membership the past eight years with the two churches truly becoming one parish, blessed to have their individual heritages, but living fully and joyfully into the future as one strong faith community.
Our Community

St. Francis Episcopal Church is in Landmark Country. This area is home to nationally recognized Chimney Rock, Scotts Bluff National Monument, and the Wildcat Hills. Our area is home to campfires and nights under the stars, hunting and fish caught at Lake Minatare and local streams, trails hiked around town and out in nature, celebrations that include the longest running parade in Nebraska, the Oregon Trail Days parade, and hot air balloon competitions. Besides the opportunity to spend time in nature, our area is home to the Western Nebraska Arts Center which hosts different types of arts shows throughout the year, the Midwest Theatre which brings in movies as well as musical guests and plays, and the Riverside Zoo and Discovery Center which is a wonderful zoo and play area for the youth of our area. Anyone who visits can make all kinds of new discoveries while checking out and residing in our home.

St. Francis Church is located in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. Scottsbluff was founded in 1899 across the North Platte River from its namesake, a bluff that is now a U.S. National Park called Scotts Bluff National Monument. The monument was named after Hiram Scott, a fur trader with the Rocky Mountain Fur Company who was found dead in the vicinity on the return trip from a fur expedition. The smaller town of Gering had been founded south of the river in 1887 and Gering serves as the County Seat. Scottsbluff and Gering have grown together to form the 7th largest urban area in Nebraska with over 23,000 residents. Scottsbluff and Gering have an unemployment rate of 3%. Our major industries and employers include Western Sugar, Regional West Medical Center (a level II Trauma Center), Platte Valley Companies, CS Precision, Scottsbluff and Gering Public Schools and the farm and ranch community. Gender ratios for Scotts Bluff County are 94 males to 100 females. In the most recent US News and World Report, Nebraska ranks as the 6th Best State to live in.
We believe a major selling point to Western Nebraska is our proximity to major shopping and areas of interest in the surrounding states. Scottsbluff and Gering have Western Nebraska Regional Airport which has multiple flights to Denver scheduled daily. Within driving distance (under four hours) is Rapid City, South Dakota and Mount Rushmore, Cheyenne and Laramie, Wyoming and Laramie Peak (for those that like to ski), and Fort Collins, Denver, and Estes Park, Colorado.

Scottsbluff and Gering both have Class B School Districts with newly remodeled and renovated high schools. Each town has a middle school and numerous public elementary schools. The surrounding towns of Minatare, Mitchell, Morrill, and Banner County in Harrisburg have public schools and students can be picked up and taken to Banner County and Morrill from a Scottsbluff/Gering location. Two private schools are located in Scottsbluff. Our area is also home to Western Nebraska Community College. At WNCC, they offer endless educational, training, and growth opportunities for their students, partners, and community members throughout the 12 ½-county service area in the Nebraska Panhandle. WNCC also partners with Chadron State College and Bellevue University to extend four-year degree opportunities. The University of Nebraska Lincoln also has a nursing and dental program located in our area.

In Scottsbluff and Gering, there are approximately 30 churches. The area is home to multiple Lutheran and Catholic parishes as well as many other denominations. St. Francis is in a neighborhood rich with parishes that continue to stay alive and contribute to our communities. Our church families live in Scottsbluff and Gering and the surrounding areas. These families love this area, and we welcome you to take a look and make a memory in our Landmark Country.

Please look at the following websites:
www.scottsbluffgering.net
www.scottsbluffcounty.org
We appreciate you taking time to read our profile and for your interest in St. Francis Episcopal Church in Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

If you would like more information or you feel called to apply please contact
The Canon to the Ordinary,
The Reverend Canon Liz Easton
leaston@dioneb.org.

We are praying for you, your decision, and your arrival at our church.