Gloria Dei (Old Swedes’) Church

PARISH PROFILE

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Gloria Dei was built between 1698 and 1700 to serve a parish of Swedish settlers who lived along the banks of the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers. In 1845, it joined the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. The interior was renovated, and balconies were added.

In 1942, Gloria Dei was named a National Historic Site.
Statement of Purpose:
We, the congregation of Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Church, existing by and for the Glory of God, knowing that God, through this congregation helps us to find our way and to use our gifts, gather together.

— To honor and celebrate the acceptance of our differences and uniquenesses,
— To be an inviting, welcoming, sustaining, loving community
— To respond to the needs of others
— To preserve and build upon the beauty, tradition and heritage of this sacred place

Introduction:
Gloria Dei (Old Swedes’) Church is conducting a search for a new rector to succeed the Reverend David B. Rivers who served the parish for more than 32 years. Gloria Dei has a history of few rectors. In 300+ years, Gloria Dei has only had 21 rectors. We look forward to a long, rewarding and enjoyable relationship with our new rector.

We started our search by creating two church committees, one to conduct a self-study of the congregation, and a discernment committee to find the rector that God has chosen for us. This Parish Profile is the result of an extensive written survey and thorough conversations. The sections encompass our history, who we are, our facilities, Christian education at Gloria Dei, our feelings about liturgy and worship, our rich and varied music ministry, our outreach programs, the skills, talents and ministry we seek in our new rector, and finally, parish finances.

After reviewing this profile, we hope that you will take away the message that Gloria Dei has a welcoming, varied, stimulating, congregation that enjoys each others’ company and delights in the worship and community that is, and with God’s help will continue to be - Gloria Dei (Old Swedes’) Church.
On April 6, 1638, the Kalmar Nyckel and the Fogel Gryp, sailing from Gottenburg, Sweden, dropped anchor at the site of Wilmington, DE. So began the Colony of New Sweden in what is now the USA. When the Swedes arrived they purchased from the Minquas tribe the west bank of the Delaware River, from Cape Henolopen to a site across from the falls of Trenton and as the records read, “as far west as the setting sun.”

In 1642 two more ships arrived and by 1646, the first Christian Church in the Delaware Valley was dedicated. Within a few years the Swedes began moving to points farther up the river. They settled in an old Indian Village called Wicaco, meaning “A pleasant place.” At the river’s edge a blockhouse was erected in 1666. When Governor Printz disbanded the colony at Wilmington, a landowner by the name of Sven Svenson gave land to the Swedish church. The blockhouse was modified to become the church called Gloria Dei. Here in 1677 the first Christian worship was held within the boundaries of what is now the city of Philadelphia. By the year 1693, the Swedish colony at Wicaco numbered 139 families totaling 939 individuals.

(A quite complete historical timeline can be attained from http://www.colonialswedes.org/History/Chronology.html)

In 1697 three clergymen arrived from Sweden – Dr. Eric Bjork, Rev. Jonas Auren and Rev. Andreas Rudman. Under their leadership the people began to build their churches. When the time came to build a more permanent place of worship, the choice of location was made difficult by the fact that the Swedes were living as far south as Tinicum as well as along both the Delaware and Schuykill rivers. After much debate, not all of it peaceful, the names of two possible sites were written on slips of paper and a drawing held, with Wicaco as the winning site. Rev. Rudman settled here at Wicaco and in 1698 the cornerstone for Gloria Dei was laid. Rev. Rudman helped build the church with his own hands and is buried in the floor of the church in front of the altar.
Who We Are

Gloria Dei (Old Swedes’) Church is an inner city church blessed with the beauty and charm of a garden-like setting. This lovely church, surrounded by historic buildings, spacious grounds, and ample parking has attracted many members of the congregation.

The Gloria Dei congregation finds great joy in coming together for worship and various other events and gatherings. Almost every member of the community view themselves as friendly, open, accepting, relaxed and welcoming. These attributes are what most new members site as their reasons to join Gloria Dei. This fun-loving, friendly group enthusiastically looks to attract new members while maintaining the warm nature of the existing community.

All the components of life at Gloria Dei are equally cherished by the congregation. The combination of worshipping together, mixed with the opportunity to socialize with one another, remains vitally important to everyone. At Gloria Dei, you quickly become a member of this extended family.

Our service is comprised of uplifting music, Episcopal worship and spiritual/biblical teachings by our Rector. All parts of the service are considered important aspects of the whole experience.

Equally important to the worship, are the various events and occasions that allow us to gather and celebrate in the name of Christ. We will seize every opportunity to come together and EAT! We also have fun with our FUNdraising events - and of course they always include food and drink!

Our largest annual fundraiser is the Lucia Fest, a Swedish advent pageant. This long-time community favorite features our own Gloria Dei children and members of the Swedish and local community. Girls and boys from throughout the Greater Philadelphia Region, Maryland, Connecticut, and Vermont, come to Gloria Dei to participate in this three-day marathon of performances, St. Eric’s Fair (holiday market) and of course - the bake sale!

The Top 10 answers to the question, Gloria Dei’s Greatest Strengths Are:
— The congregation and its sense of caring
— It’s history including a beautiful church, buildings and grounds
— The worship style. Focus on Jesus’ message, not just following biblical rules
— Close knit, strong community
— Variety of Eucharistic services and flexibility
— Fun and laughter in church, the ability to have a good time
— Respect and acceptance of differences
— Lay members, including vestry, are very active and committed
— Enjoy children participating in the service
— Beauty and variety of music
Our Facilities

The cornerstone of the church building at Gloria Dei ‘Old Swedes’ was laid in 1698 and was dedicated on July 2, 1700, at a cost of less than 30,000 Swedish dollars, the equivalent of $3,879.73 today. Old Swedes is the oldest brick building in Philadelphia, the oldest church building in Pennsylvania and the second oldest in the United States. Although those directing the building of the church had emigrated from Sweden, they chose to use Philadelphia builders trained in the English craft guild tradition. Hints of the Georgian style, which was common to Philadelphia building for most of the 18th century, can be seen in the building’s symmetrical composition and in the Flemish bond brick pattern. The steeply sloping roof is reminiscent of Swedish churches as is the semicircular wall at the east end of the building.

As originally built the church was a simple rectangle, 30 feet by 60 feet. Although the walls were quite thick, they began to bow in 1704, under the weight of the steep sloping roof. To arrest this process and preserve the building, a sacristy was built onto the north side of the church and a vestibule onto the south side. These acted as buttresses and also gave the building a cruciform footprint. By the 1840’s the congregation had grown so large that the church was in danger of demolition. Rather than build a new structure, the decision was made to renovate the existing building by raising the floor and adding balconies, a center pulpit and the stained glass window. The building remains essentially unchanged since that time.

The Church contains many elements with historical significance. The Swedish style baptismal font was crafted in 1731 and is one of the oldest fonts still in use in the country. Hanging from the ceiling are models of the two ships that brought the Swedish colonists to these shores, the Kalmar Nyckel and the Fogel Gryp and a chandelier, all designed and given to the church by Carl Miles, a noted Swedish sculptor.

The buildings of Gloria Dei border the cemetery on 3 sides, with the church to the east, closest to the Delaware River, the rectory, parish house (now Riverside Hall) and sexton’s house to the north and the Roak House, containing church offices, meeting rooms and a secular nursery school, to the west. The rectory and the sexton’s house were built in the 1830’s, the Parish Hall in 1863 and the Roak House in 1969. All the buildings are of brick construction with entrances facing the cemetery.
The rectory is a lovely colonial home with a private English-style garden. In 2003 the kitchen was completely renovated and the Vestry is looking to do additional renovations in this building. The parish house was renamed Riverside Hall in 2002 in honor of our previous rector’s 30th anniversary at Gloria Dei. A new kitchen was installed in the hall in 2000 to accommodate the many functions that are held there. The Roak House has a beautiful meeting room that was renovated in 2001. Riverside Hall and Roak House are available for rental to persons from the community and to the members of the congregation. These multi-purpose rooms have hosted everything from teen dances, to weddings, bridal showers, birthday parties, christening celebrations, retirement and memorial gatherings.

The cemetery has been in continuous use since the early 1700’s and is one of the oldest burial grounds in Philadelphia. Its “tenants” include sea captains, scientists, Revolutionary and Civil War soldiers, artists, and ministers. A Memorial Garden was completed in 2004 and will be dedicated on May 1, 2005.

Gloria Dei was designated a national historic site in 1942. The legislation called for the federal government to give us “an appropriate setting” which eventually resulted in the removal of all non-church structures on the block. The original 2 acres of open space was enlarged to 5 acres, landscaped and surrounded by a perimeter wall.

The church building houses a 1903 Hook and Hastings tracker organ. The organ was removed and completely restored in 1994. In 1999, an almost total restoration of Gloria Dei was completed in time for the 300th anniversary of the church building. The bricks were all pointed, the brick faces were treated, the steeple spire was regilded and a new cedar shake roof was installed. The interior renovation was even more complete; painted surfaces returned to their colonial colors, the stained glass window and the replicas of the Kalmar Nyckel and the Fogel Gryp were cleaned and repaired.
Our Sunday School at Gloria Dei has flourished in recent years with registration at about 30 current students, not including our Youth Group which consists of 10 young adults. There are two Sunday classes, one meeting in between our 9 & 11 am services (Young Swedes) and the second class meets during the 11:00 service (Little Glorias). Young Swedes ages range from 7 to 12 yrs. old; Little Gloria’s preschool to 6 years old.

Our schedule is arranged so that parents may attend service while the children are meeting; children join parents for Communion. Each month we try to plan an event or activity for the Sunday School classes. These events consist of celebrating Children’s Sabbath during Service, Bake Sales for ECS, “Souper” Bowl Sunday (proceeds go to the Heifer Project), March Madness (proceeds go for supporting our sister congregation in Guatemala), Easter Egg Hunt, Easter Sunday, Ice Skating, and a special day with St. Barnabas, a shelter for women and children.

The curriculum we use in the classroom comes from Living The Good News, Episcopal Lectionary-based and Faith Formation Resources. This provides us with an up-to-date Christian education based on the ancient cycle of Bible lectionary readings. We also use “The Sunday Papers” in church for the children. These materials for Christian Education Liturgy are written by Gretchen Wolff Pritchard.

Our Youth Group works together with 3 area churches. This is a recent addition to our church, consisting of our Confirmation students (8th-12th grade). They meet once a month and plan service projects. The projects consist of Seeking Servants Events, AIDS Walk participation, Youth Dances (proceeds go to a community organization and homeless shelter). Some Youth Group individuals also help with babysitting during services.

Overall our goal is to help our children and teens to understand Bible stories and literature in light of modern and contemporary life and issues, and to be able to apply it in their daily lives.

Comments from respondents to our survey include:

— The church school program for children adequately meets the children’s religious education needs.

— It is the obligation of the parish to make child care available for very small children (younger than four years) during church services.

— Children and youth programs should be a high priority with resources accordingly allocated.

— Adult Bible Study should address a wide variety of topics during the year, some intellectual, some spiritual, some of practical import.

— It is important that there be opportunities for spiritual development for adults other than Adult Bible Study alone. This is an area we have identified for improvement.
The Gloria Dei congregation prefers a relaxed use of ritual, and values flexibility and informality. Gloria Dei incorporates elements from Catholic traditions such as celebrating the Eucharist at both regularly scheduled services, but with a distinctive character to each celebration. The 9 o’clock service opens and closes with a hymn and is more traditional in its orientation. Whereas the 11 o’clock service incorporates more music, including a choir piece, and other, less traditional elements from time to time. These have included dance and tableaux performed by the children, prayers drawn from other Christian and non-Christian traditions and forms created for specific occasions.

During the months of July and August there is one service at 10 o’clock. When the Rector is on vacation, members of the parish have exercised their own creative imaginations to produce services based on Morning Prayer.

The Liturgy at Gloria Dei is truly the work of the family of Gloria Dei. Without question, it reflects the openness and flexibility which characterize our parish community as a whole.

Gloria Dei-Old Swedes also celebrates its historic roots in its life of worship. There is an annual celebration with the Swedish Colonial Society; the Lucia Fest is both religious and cultural in content; services in Swedish and Norwegian are conducted monthly by clergy from the respective New York Churches; a Swedish “Julotta” service is conducted at 7:00 a.m. on Christmas Day; and services in Finnish are held as requested.

The Rector of Gloria Dei is also invited to become a Board Member of the Swedish Colonial Society.

How often do you worship?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Annually
- Occasionally

Parish Survey Results 2005
The respondents to our survey strongly agreed with the statements below:

— The prayer options offered in the Book of Common Prayer should be rotated frequently, rather than using the same prayers most of the time.
— It is important to use Rite I occasionally.
— It is important that there be opportunities for spiritual development for adults other than just Adult Bible Study.
— The Service of Morning Prayer should be conducted on occasional Sundays.
— It is important to use gender-inclusive language in the liturgy, even if it means departing from the language printed in the prayer book.
— There should be more opportunities for additional services of worship, such as Evening Prayer, Evensong, and weekday Morning Prayer.

The top answers to the question, Do you prefer the sermon to usually be:

— Encouragement to explore and grow in faith
— Illustrated by personal stories/ experiences/humor
— A tool to instruct in the Bible, faith, church history, liturgics
— Provoking/challenging
— Comforting/assuring
— Informal (extemporaneous)
— Illustrated by literary or scholarly references
Gloria Dei’s commitment to music is deeply rooted in its past (first pipe organ in America) and continues today.

Under the direction of our talented, and highly creative, Music Director, Paul Fejko, we have maintained a varied and interesting musical program. At times, it is astoundingly venturesome! (You can learn more about Paul at: http://www.fejko.com/)

A volunteer choir (once described as small but valiant) is occasionally supplemented by instrumentalist and/or by professional talent brought in for special services.

Our musical adventures have not, however, been restricted to liturgical activities. Musicals such as “Godspell” and “Jesus Christ Superstar,” as well as original musicals based on the lives of Moses and David have been performed at Gloria Dei. We have also enjoyed Gospel choir concerts, harpsichord concerts and selections from the film “O Brother Where Art Thou.” During the postlude each week, we enjoy a brief organ “concert.”

The music program at Gloria Dei is part of our parish life that we both value and look forward to continuing.

The top answers to the question, What is your preference for music and how it is performed:

— Hymns with choir and congregation

— Inclusion of instrumental music when appropriate

— Traditional – including hymns, psalms, and organ voluntaries

— Participatory: congregation sings service music

— Performed by others: choir-led responsive singing, psalms, service music

The respondents strongly agreed with the following statements:

— The quality and range of the music at services enhances my experience of worship.

— It is important to actively support special choir and music events throughout the year.
The commitment to, and zeal for, the outreach program at Gloria Dei comes from its members. If someone has an idea for an outreach program, they can share the idea with others, and get the program started. This is true for both the adult and children’s programs.

Gloria Dei “adopted” two sister parishes in Guatemala. Money was raised through the sale of items that were made by a women’s co-operative in Guatemala. Also, proceeds from one of last year’s parish flea markets was designated for our sister parishes. The money has been used in Guatemala for the education of children and for a part time doctor who travels to the town once per month to treat the residents. Some members from one of the sister churches have visited us, and we have visited them. Our sexton’s Jim and Paula Minacci were able to take them on a shopping spree courtesy of Jim’s connections at Wal-Mart! And of course there must be food! Our guests from Guatemala cooked some traditional dishes for our parish members and enjoyed sampling our cooking as well.

As part of our community outreach, we collect food each week for the St. Peter’s Church food cupboard. Members of Gloria Dei volunteer to help sort and distribute this food at the Food Cupboard. The food directly benefits people in need in our surrounding zip codes.

Much support is provided to the Diocese. This may mean buying a toy as a Christmas present for a family that is being helped by Episcopal Community Service (ECS), or it may mean supporting the UTO or the children’s hunger initiative. The parish also makes unrestricted annual contributions to the diocese.

The Sunday School is very active in its outreach. Classes raise money for the Heifer Project. They hold bake sales to support ECS. They collect contributions on “Souper” Bowl Sunday for the Food Cupboard. The Youth Group participates in the AIDS Walk through ECS and other Seeking Servants projects.

Friends help each other to implement these programs, at the same time they are helping others in need. And as we do all this, we have fun. The kids laugh as they make cookies for the bake sale. The adults share drinks (of all kinds!) and good conversation as they prepare for the flea market which will raise money for the Seamen’s Church Institute and other important initiatives. Join us!
New or expanded outreach activities of interest to the congregation include:

**New Programs**
- Support for our rector
- Outreach to our neighborhood to those in need
- Expand food cupboard support
- Environmental cleanup/recycling
- More involvement in the area homeless shelters

**Inreach**
- More attention to elderly and homebound
- Transportation for the elderly and homebound to Church services
- Support and encouragement for inactive members to become active members
- More in reach, tend to home first
- Encouragement ministry
- Visit newcomers

**Church life activities**
- Trips/outings
- Monthly suppers and programs
- Activities for the children
- Programs that get the entire family involved
- Youth and young adult programs
- Programs for single adults
- All members involved in outreach

How important do you think the following Gloria Dei Outreach programs are?

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<th>Program</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Participate</th>
<th>Do not</th>
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<td>Fellowship (&quot;Welcome&quot; &amp; parish dinners)</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Lucía Festival</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>Churchyard cleanup</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Guatemala support</td>
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The Qualities and Skills We Seek in Our New Rector

Over the past 70+ years at Gloria Dei Church, we have been blest to have only had two rectors to serve our diverse congregation. As a result, change is not something that the congregation of Gloria Dei Church is accustomed to and therefore, we pray that we will not be going through a search process again anytime soon. We anticipate that our current search will, with the grace of God, result with us finding a rector that will serve our church community for many years to come.

Our new rector will have a combination of qualities and skills to lead the congregation of Gloria Dei Church and to help us meet the challenges that we will face in the years ahead. When we surveyed our congregation, the following came up as qualities they believe are most important for our new rector:

Preaching — Our new rector will preach with clarity and make the Gospel relevant to our daily lives. Sermons must be motivational, uplifting, thought provoking, educational, hold our interest, reflect the topics of the day, be spiritual, and demonstrate his/her dedication to God and belief in Jesus Christ. Sermons should be tailored to fit the audience.

Pastoral Ability — Our new rector will care for people so that they are nurtured and challenged for growth within the community of faith. The new rector will be warm, friendly with a pleasant personality, outgoing, open-minded, compassionate, flexible, caring, kind, spiritual, non-judgmental, and tolerant. The successful candidate will be someone that all members of the congregation will be comfortable with and be able to share their personal concerns and troubles.

Theological Leadership — Our new rector will demonstrate and share an understanding of biblical and historical revelation and the perception of God’s activity in the world. The new rector will have a strong demonstrated knowledge of the liturgy. The new rector will be able to convey the message of Christ in both traditional and non-traditional ways.

Counseling — Our new rector will be able respond to people at significant crisis points in their lives — birth, sickness, death, trauma, success, etc. He/she will be able to counsel and minister to members of the congregation of all ages, leading and guiding them in the way of Christ.

Liturgy — Our new rector will be able to plan and conduct liturgical services of public worship. The new rector will have a thorough understanding of the liturgy and be able to present the liturgy in a non “High” Episcopalian manner. The importance of the liturgy came up very strongly through out our member survey.

In addition to the qualities listed above, our new rector will also need strong administrative leadership to guide the business affairs of Gloria Dei Church, including programs, organizations, finances, facilities management and staffing. He/she will have a sense of community and be able to promote Gloria Dei’s outreach programs. The new rector will be able to lead the congregation’s stewardship efforts to better manage individual and church resources.

As we indicated, the Swedish colonists founded Gloria Dei in the late 1600’s. We continue to maintain our connection with our Swedish heritage through various programs at Gloria Dei Church. Because of our Swedish heritage, the Rector of Gloria Dei Church serves on the Board of Directors of the Swedish Colonial Society.

We have a lovely colonial rectory on the grounds, which is located close to the Church and Riverside Hall. Our previous two rectors occupied this wonderful historic home and raised their families in this location. The rectory would be available to our new rector should he/she wish to reside there.

On the lighter side, the congregation of Gloria Dei Church is well known throughout our diocese for its wonderful meals and fellowship. We certainly like to have a good time and enjoy breaking bread together. Excellent culinary skills would be a big asset for our new rector.
Gloria Dei’s endowment fund is valued at approximately $2.6 million. With the Rector, the Accounting Warden monitors the finances for the church and reports monthly to the Vestry. Additionally, check writing, payroll and most state/federal required forms are provided on a pro bono basis by the Accounting Warden. The church has an audit committee that reviews the financial reports and investments for Gloria Dei annually. A comparatively small annual expenditure is made for accounting services. Plans are underway to form a finance committee to review the Church investments and formulate a spending policy.

Between 1996 and 2004, the number of individuals regularly contributing through plate offerings, pledge support and regular other support has increased from 180 to 241.

For 2004, with income from all sources at $249,783 the major categories of expenses were:
- $184,125 Operating Expenses
- $25,000 Diocesan Assessment
- $12,899 Improvement/Capital Expenditures
- $8,616 Outreach from operating budget
- $8,080 Funds to other organizations

Effective in 2005, Gloria Dei is undertaking a monthly budgeting plan process. The Vestry has reaffirmed their commitment to a fiscally responsible spending policy. They will continue to look to the congregation and other sources to help supplement funding for outreach programs. The budgeting process will include establishing a “set aside” amount to fund plant and equipment repairs and replacements.