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Parish was officially accepted as a parish of the Diocese of Virginia on January 31, 2004.

## Looking to the Future

Although much has been accomplished, much is yet to be done. Our community seeks eventually to rebuild Belmont Chapel and to expand the sanctuary building with new classrooms, offices and a parish hall.

Today, we are a covenant community where no one stands alone. Together we are learning to love one another as we learn to be loved by Jesus. Any time. Any place.



**St. David's**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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# THE HISTORY

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OF ST. DAVID'S  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



*A rendering of the reconstructed Belmont Chapel*

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## Margaret Mercer And 19th Century Roots

The Episcopal Church on our campus dates back to 1836. Margaret Mercer purchased Belmont plantation to establish a progressive Christian school for young ladies. With a desire to provide access to education for all children, her students included both nonpaying children and those from wealthier families.

As her school grew, so did her commitment to the community. She initiated a number of public works projects to improve the local environs. She urged all local children to attend Sunday school so that all could experience the power of faith as well as the basics of reading and writing. Mercer campaigned for a new parish church in Ashburn. The closest church was in Leesburg, too far for most residents. Her petitions to the bishop of Virginia resulted in little enthusiasm for the project. Unwavering in her commitment, Mercer used her own resources to build Belmont chapel in 1840.

She persuaded the rector of St. James Parish in Leesburg to visit the chapel monthly to preach and administer the sacraments. The chapel grew into a community center of worship, Sunday school, communion services, funerals, baptisms and weddings. Following her death in 1846, Belmont Chapel remained the center of community religious and social activity for the area well into the 20th century. The Sunday school founded by Mercer continued uninterrupted until World War II. Never having a priest of its own, it was regularly served by clergy from nearby churches. The last known religious event held in the chapel was a wedding in 1951.



After that time, the property fell into disrepair, culminating in a fire set by vandals in 1963 that destroyed all but the foundation and a portion of the grand stone façade of the chapel. The property was almost forgotten until Victoria Heard, curate of St. James in Leesburg, discovered a land deed that restored the Belmont property to the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia as part of an effort to reach out to the growing population of Loudoun County in 1987.

## A New Covenant Community Is Born

In 1989, four households joined in a journey of prayer, study and fellowship to plant a new parish at Belmont. Heard was appointed as missionary to the "Ashburn Mission." It was decided to name the new church after David, patron saint of Wales. Born at the end of the 5th century, David is credited with bringing the Christian Gospel to Wales. Known for his courage and commitment to evangelism, David of Wales represented the values that are the cornerstone of the church's mission today.

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With only 12 members, our church was accepted as a mission church of the Diocese of Virginia in January 1990. Rob Roy and David Boslaugh were chosen as the first wardens and Stephen McWhorter succeeded Heard as the first vicar of Belmont. Sixty people assembled in a tent in the un-cleared woods to celebrate Easter that year, the first services on the church grounds in many years.

The church continued to flourish and plans for a building on the current grounds began to take shape. The parish acquired additional land in 1992, more than doubling the size of the existing property. Designed by Jay Rohr, a parishioner, construction of Mercer Hall was completed on the site later that year. Mercer Hall was originally used for worship and now houses our Preschool and Sunday school classrooms.

Additional land was donated by IBM in 1994 and Toll Brothers in 1995. In 1995, with a congregation of approximately 280 parishioners, the Boslaugh Center church school was constructed and a nursery, housed in trailers, took shape. In 1999 our community moved into its current sanctuary, which has won a series of significant architectural awards.

## Growth and Expansion

A contemporary worship service was started in early 2001. Our Preschool opened for its first session in spring 2002 and is a tribute to the educational commitment Mercer began over 150 years ago. Traditions supporting fellowship and a commitment to family-centered worship have started and blossomed, including a Pentecost Picnic and annual celebration of St. David's Day in March. The

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