

Saints Oaks

Downtown West
243 Barrow Street
Houma, LA

[Google Maps](#)



The live oaks at Saint Matthew's Episcopal Church are registered with the Live Oak Society and are named for major Old Testament figures: Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, Joseph and Jacob, Israel. These oaks were planted in 1855 by John R. Bisland, St Matthew's founder.

According to The Reverend Craig Dalferes, Rector of St. Matthew's, the five original trees were added to the Live Oak Society of the Louisiana Garden Club Federation, Inc. in 1989. Abraham measured 14 feet and 4 inches, in 1980 Sarah measured 12 feet 10 in, 1981 Isaac measured 14 feet 1 inch, in 1982 Jacob/Israel measured 17 feet and in 1983 Joseph Measured 11 foot and 10 inches.

Trees play an important role in the holy scriptures of The Bible – from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden to the Messiah as a branch of Jesse's tree, from the olive branch brought to Noah by a dove to the hard wood of the cross on which Christ was crucified. With that in mind, it is not surprising that beautiful trees accentuate the grounds of churches. The beautiful, grand oak trees along Barrow Street in front of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church are over 125 years old, with the exception of the one closest to Main Street. It is a few years younger.

When additional property was acquired by the church

and school, the sixth tree was added and named The Prodigal Son. Father Craig summed up his appreciation of the beautiful trees when he said, "I've always loved St. Matthew's majestic oak trees and the way they frame the church and bell tower. St. Matthew's Episcopal Church has very deep roots in this community and by God's grace has persisted through good times and bad weathering many storms along the way. To me, the oaks are a symbol of that resilience and also a symbol of God's faithfulness, come what may."

In addition to the symbolism of God's strength and the roots in community that the oak trees provide, the trees are home to many of God's creatures – including insects, birds, and lizards. The trees also provide nesting for the Mexican Whistling Duck, which nurtures its young in the trees before they head out in search of water. The trees are a symbol of strength and resilience for the church and the community.

Measurement Information from the book "Visiting with Some of Terrebonne Parish's Oldest, Wisest Trees" by Mulberry 2Elementary School 4-H Club (1993-1994).

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Photos by Trudy Voisin Hebert

