

PRIEST IN CHARGE SEARCH

St. Peter's Episcopal Church
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Position Title: Priest-in-Charge, Full time

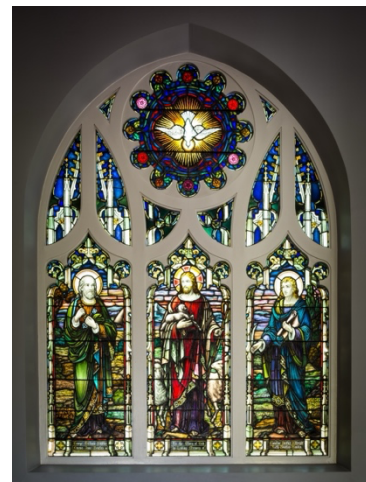
Receiving Names through June 1st: Please apply by sending letter of interest, resume and OTM profile to **The Rev. Canon Martha Hubbard at mhubbard@diomass.org**

PARISH STORY– History



From the time our congregation first gathered in 1865, to the time it was formally established as a Parish in 1914, and continuing to the present day, St. Peter's has played a vital role in meeting the spiritual needs and leading outreach activities in Weston, Massachusetts and surrounding communities. Our beautiful, light-filled Church building was consecrated in 1959 and is one of the most iconic churches in the western suburbs of Boston, enjoying a prominent setting on the much-traveled Route 20. The 1959 structure also includes a three-story Parish House, with well-maintained offices, meeting spaces and classrooms, as well as a true musical gem – an Aeolian-Skinner organ of concert hall quality.

But St. Peter's greatest blessing over the years has been its faithful and committed parishioners. Generations within our town have been introduced to the message of Jesus Christ at St. Peter's, have been nurtured and challenged by that message, and have taken that inspiration out into the World to do good work. People from St. Peter's have been lay leaders at the Diocese of Massachusetts (as Treasurer and President of the Standing Committee), leaders of Episcopal City Mission, pioneers in interfaith activities in Weston, supporters and



Like so many other mainline Protestant churches, however, St. Peter's has been swimming against the tide of declining church attendance in the 21st Century. Frustrating as this has been, we have not been complacent! In 2013, St. Peter's completed a \$975,000 Faith In Our Future capital campaign that not only funded major repairs and improvements to our facilities but also funded a youth-oriented assistant position for a number of years and made substantial outreach donations to the Diocesan B-SAFE program for inner-city youth and to Esperanza Academy in Lawrence, both of which had enjoyed significant volunteer support from the Parish.

To enhance St. Peter's ability to attract and retain the best clergy, in 2018 we purchased a lovely colonial house in the adjacent town of Wayland, which has one of the best school systems in Massachusetts, to serve as our new Rectory. As part of our commitment to protect God's creation, St. Peter's installed an array of solar panels on the roof of the Church. Together with the solar panels already installed at the Rectory, St. Peter's has saved over 50 *tons* of carbon emissions (the equivalent of planting 780 trees!), zeroed out our electricity bills, and generated excess electricity that we sell at a discount to Yusuf Mosque in Boston, thus furthering our interfaith outreach.



Then came COVID, which dealt a severe blow to our average Sunday attendance (and took away four of our beloved older parishioners). Notwithstanding our installation of a state-of-the-art audio visual system to continue to reach our parishioners, Sunday morning participation suffered. COVID also adversely



impacted our efforts to broaden the base of our income through property rentals. Fortunately, we recently signed a lease for a new Montessori preschool that will be using a portion of our classroom space during the week while generating a reliable stream of income for the Parish.



As the Parish emerged from COVID, two facts became abundantly clear. First, when we regathered for Christmas and Easter services, robust attendance indicated that there was still a viable congregation of people who consider St. Peter's their spiritual home. Second, however, during the other 363 days of the year, it was equally clear that the old

model of engaging current parishioners and attracting new ones was being overwhelmed by Sunday morning sports, the overscheduling of families, weekend travel and recreational activities, and an overall loss of "the habit of going to Church". We urgently needed a new model. We therefore embarked on an intensive, consultant-led strategic planning process, which included widespread input from within our Parish as well as interviews and public forums with key stakeholders and constituencies in Weston and surrounding communities. The resulting Strategic Plan, which is discussed elsewhere in this document and is available on our website, calls for a more focused mission for St. Peter's that builds on our decades' old commitment to outreach. We believe this focus will encourage people to re-engage with us and will foster growth in membership. We are now seeking a special person who feels God's call to join us, as Priest-In-Charge, as we journey together to implement this prayerfully-considered plan to carry out Christ's work in the World.

PARISH STORY – Present Life

Tell about a time in your church's life which you recognize as success and a time of failure.

Success:

When a need arises, St. Peter's responds. A recent example occurred in connection with the influx of refugees from Afghanistan, a number of whom settled in southern New Hampshire with essentially no material goods, and with little knowledge of our language and cultural norms. Notwithstanding the COVID crisis, St. Peter's parishioners sprang into action, partnering with three other parishes to



donate and collect household goods, arrange transportation, help to obtain employment, facilitate language classes, arrange medical and dental help, and assist with the other myriad necessities to establish lives in America. COVID had



shut down our outreach programs -- always a key component of our identity - - but the ministry to the Afghan refugees reinvigorated it (and our community). The experience happened to coincide with our strategic planning process, and the timing could not have been more fortuitous (or divinely inspired!). It shone a light on what engages our passions and what we do best.

Failure:

To put it bluntly, we have tried many unsuccessful strategies to reverse the secular decline in church attendance and engagement that has afflicted us (and many, many churches) in the 21st Century. St. Peter's has experienced a decline in the number of new parishioners, including young families, attending and joining the church. One only need drive through Weston on a Sunday morning and see the playing fields full of children and their parents to identify one of the major causes. Parents will still send their children to confirmation, but as the children complete the confirmation process, the families frequently disengage with St. Peter's. This problem has been exacerbated in Weston, which is a mobile community, with families moving for other employment opportunities or downsizing when children leave the school system. These departures from St. Peter's membership have outpaced the numbers joining.

Over this period, we have been very open to innovative ideas to reverse this trend.

In 2014, we invited a series of priests from around the Diocese to come to St. Peter's to describe initiatives that had worked for them. We tried many of these! We funded an additional clergy position focused specifically on youth; partnered with a neighboring parish to share a staff position focused on youth; offered church services at various different times on the weekends when families might be more available; offered services geared toward children and



families; undertook new activities/programs to deepen spiritual engagement, such as suppers with scripture at parishioner homes and a social justice reading group; and instituted informal summer services with contemporary guitar music. None of these efforts gained traction, causing us to realize that a much bolder approach was needed. That is what triggered our strategic planning process in which we reached out to our greater community. We believe we now have a solid plan. What we need now is a spiritual leader to partner with us in this exciting venture!

Share your worship style and special worship moments you like.



Although our Strategic Plan focuses on outreach and service activity, worship remains at the heart of St. Peter's community life, especially for the committed core of our parishioners. During the academic year, we gather on Sunday mornings for Holy Eucharist at 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Our early service is Holy Eucharist, Rite II, held in our historic chapel that was brought

over from our 1917 church building. Typically, our early service does not include music. Our 10:00 a.m. service, also Holy Eucharist, Rite II, includes hymns and choral music (usually from the classical repertoire) led by our choir (both paid and volunteer) and our music director on organ and piano. The worship style at St. Peter's could best be described as traditional "broad church".

In the summer, we worship in a less formal way at a single Rite II Eucharist service at 9:00 a.m. This service includes a single musician (in recent years a guitarist and singer).

Our parishioners appreciate a lively sermon that unravels scripture, connects it to everyday life, and leaves us with renewed guidance and enthusiasm to follow Jesus' teachings in our daily lives.



What brings people back week after week?

The five most prominent reasons congregants stay with us:

- **Shared community.** Our parishioners enjoy warm relationships with one another... disagreements are rare. People enjoy sharing worship and fellowship each week. One comment we hear often from people who return to us after trying us out is that they came back because we are friendlier than other churches. In the post-COVID era, however, our average Sunday attendance is small. That contrasts dramatically with Christmas and Easter, when the church is filled to capacity. We are confident that many people continue to consider St. Peter's as their spiritual home. If only we can re-engage them to participate on an ongoing basis and help sustain us financially.



- **Worship style.** People like our informal yet reverent worship style and inspiring preaching.
- **Outreach.** We offer multiple, meaningful outreach opportunities.
- **Music.** We have a robust music program with a dedicated choir and an exceptional music director. As noted earlier, our predecessors installed a magnificent Aeolian-Skinner organ, and it was (and is) such an exceptional instrument that St. Peter's was able to entice world-renowned organist, Virgil Fox, to play its inaugural performance. It is entirely fair to say that at St. Peter's, we seek to glorify God through the beauty of music.
- **Our Beautiful Sanctuary.** Our uplifting, light-filled sanctuary is a peaceful and sublime setting in which to worship God.



How do you care for each other?

Caring for our church family is embedded in St. Peter's DNA. We give rides when needed, bring food, send cards, and bring flowers to those who are ill or can't get to church. Our ministry leaders know that they can count on parishioners to assist when needed, such as helping put up or take down the church decorations at



Christmas and Easter, provide food for Parish gatherings, and attend to the many tasks needed to maintain our treasured facilities. All the ministry and committee work that so many parishioners participate in gives us a sense of camaraderie and support that we find in few other parts of our lives. In the deeper, more spiritual sense, we care for each other in a touch, a hug, or a smile. And, yes, we pray for one another!

During "The Peace" in the service each week, we renew that emotional foundation and rekindle the confidence, support and joy that our faith brings to us and that binds all of us together as part of the Body of Christ



Tell us about outreach in your community?

As noted, St. Peter's recently undertook a strategic planning process to refresh our Mission Statement and formulate a Strategic Plan to carry out that mission. Guided by a highly-experienced consultant, the process received input from members of the Parish as well as from representatives of the local school systems, police departments and social service agencies. We looked deeply at all aspects of our communal life, including our worship and programs. The Strategic Plan report is posted on our parish website.

Our outreach program has always been a key component of St. Peter's identity and an area that parishioners are particularly passionate about. Our planning process helped us to understand that community service can be an effective route to bring many more members of our community together at St. Peter's and increase our presence in the community. As a result, we decided to make outreach the cornerstone of our Strategic Plan. Our vision is to transform St. Peter's and its

identity, programs and activities into a community “hub” of mission and service activity through effective use of our church building and coordination with existing community resources. The Outreach Committee will be identifying key short-term and long-term action plans toward this vision in the coming months.

Examples of St. Peter’s long-time outreach activities have included:



- hosting a week of the B-SAFE summer camp, a Diocesan-sponsored summer enrichment opportunity for Boston at-risk youth;
- contributing financially and with volunteer hours to WATCH, a housing advocacy community development organization in neighboring city of Waltham; and organizing food, present and diaper drives at Thanksgiving and Christmas and periodically through the year;
- in conjunction with three other Episcopal parishes in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, we have provided care and living resources (clothing, money, food, education, computers, etc.) to a number of Afghan refugee families living in southern New Hampshire.

What gifts and skills would you like your new leader to bring and what gifts and skill can you offer?

As a prospective partner with us at St. Peter’s, we believe the following gifts and skills of a Priest-In-Charge will be most helpful in achieving success together:

- A people person. We need someone who will draw energy from engaging with us, who can take a group of people who genuinely like each other, help us identify our common goals, and inspire us to work together.



- Spiritually grounded. We’re not looking for someone who is rigid in their beliefs, but instead a pastor who is comfortable in their understanding of God and Jesus and can help us grow in our own understanding.

- A natural preacher. Spellbinding orations are not needed at St. Peter's! Instead, we value sermons that are from the heart, that explain the sometimes challenging messages in scripture, and that help us figure out how to apply those messages in our daily lives. Humor is welcome, too!

- A pastor. Someone who embraces the pastoral aspects of priesthood – lending a caring and sympathetic ear to those experiencing illness or hardship, visiting those who can't make it to church, getting to know us as individuals and families, and generally modeling compassion within our Christian community.



- An ambassador. Someone who feels called to help us implement our Strategic Plan by actively representing St. Peter's in our community, making connections at schools, the council on aging, houses of worship and other community groups, and generally promoting awareness of St. Peter's and its programs.

- A willingness to be entrepreneurial for God! We know we need to reinvent our approach as a church, and we have worked hard to come up with a



plan that we believe will be successful. We need someone who will walk with us on that journey, who can give us confidence when we waiver, can inspire us to do the work, who is not afraid to try something new even if it fails, who relishes the role of a builder, and who is ambitious to do God's work!



As far as gifts and skills that St. Peter's offers, we believe our church represents an ideal platform for an energetic leader looking for a parish ready to adapt and expand in the modern world. Specifically:

- We have a congregation that gets along with one another.
- We have already done the hard work to develop a clear vision of who we are and where we want to go.
- We have an excellent staff, each of whom is a delight to work with.
- We have a substantial financial foundation.
- Our facilities are beautiful and well-maintained.
- We have a lovely Rectory in a highly-desirable town with top-rated schools.
- Our congregation reflects a broad range of life experiences and includes members whose backgrounds in business, healthcare, law and finance can be utilized in helping us to achieve our goals.
- We are committed to providing our Rector with the resources necessary so that we can be successful together.

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COMPENSATION & HOUSING

Compensation available for new position: \$110,161
Negotiable? (y/n): Yes
Housing Allowance or Rectory: Either-We have a beautiful Rectory in Wayland, Massachusetts that is currently rented to tenants.
SECA reimbursement options (n/a, Full, Half, Other):
Half Pension plan (in compliance?): In compliance
Healthcare options (negotiable?): Family healthcare according to Diocesan recommendations Dental: Yes
Housing Equity Allowance in Budget: None
Annual Equity amount: None
Vacation weeks: 4
Continuing education weeks: 1 week for continuing education, 3 days for retreat
Continuing education funding in budget: \$1500