

PRIEST IN CHARGE SEARCH

Position Title: Priest-in-Charge

Full/Part-time: TBD

Receiving Names until: May 15, 2025

Church Address: 74 South Common Street, Lynn, Massachusetts 01902-4594

Phone Number: (781) 599-4220

To Apply contact Ms. Dorothy Post - dorfp@aol.com

PARISH STORY– History

St. Stephen's Mission

St. Stephen's is an open and affirming Christian church worshipping in the Anglican tradition. Crossing lines of color, class, culture, and generation, we seek transformation of our lives and our community through Christ's Gospel of love, compassion and justice.

St. Stephen's parish was founded in 1844. The present church building, with its 130-foot bell tower and magnificent Tiffany windows, was given by Enoch Reddington Mudge as a memorial to his children, Lt. Col. Charles Mudge, who died in the battle of Gettysburg, and Fanny Olive Van Brunt. Designed by noted architects Ware and Van Brunt, it is a national historic site.

The strength of our congregation is in our dedication to and passion for living out Jesus' Great Commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." We work together to discern how to live out these commandments in our time, in our congregation, in the broader community.

We are blessed to be a diverse community. As our mission statement puts it, we "cross lines of color, class, culture and generation." Our parishioners are "cradle Episcopalians" as well as people from a variety of other faith traditions. We are African-American, Afro-Caribbean, African, Anglo-Americans, French Canadian, Irish, Italian, and Polish-American. We are long-time residents of Lynn, newcomers and suburban parishioners who find strength and true community together.

St. Stephen's has long been a leader in social, racial and economic justice in Lynn, particularly in fighting hunger and homelessness.

- In 1975, the congregation built St. Stephen's Tower, a 10-story, 130-unit affordable apartment building for seniors, one block from the church. It is owned and managed by a separate non-profit organization.
- In 1982, St. Stephen's helped to found My Brother's Table, a free community feeding center that is still serving unhoused and other people struggling with food insecurity.
- In the 1980's, St. Stephen's established its own food pantry. It continues today, distributing 200 bags of food each week, partnering with the Greater Boston Food Bank. This ministry is also supported by volunteers from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lynn and the local Lions Club.
- During the 1980s, tension arose between the City's political leadership and residents who were under-represented and under-served. St. Stephen's was a founding parish of the Lynn Organizing Project, which grew to become the Essex County Community Organization (ECCO), now affiliated with the global faith-based organizing network Faith in Action. St. Stephen's relationship with ECCO deepened further during the Rectorship of the Rev. Jane Gould (2000-2017) who was a local and national leader in faith-based organizing. Parishioners continue to participate in ECCO's legislative advocacy campaigns for immigrant rights, criminal justice reform and economic justice.
- At different times in the life of the parish St. Stephen's has been a "safe space" for Lynn youth dealing with community violence and other challenges. This was particularly true when there were a number of parishioners teaching in the Lynn Public Schools, and during Rev. Gould's tenure, when St. Stephen's had a very talented (part-time) youth minister and trained art therapist. When a young man was murdered in Lynn, amid rumors of retaliation and further violence, the church opened its doors for an impromptu gathering of over 200 of his friends and family, as well as for his wake and funeral.
- Teens met regularly with the youth minister, joined by volunteers from the congregation, sometimes on Friday evenings, sometimes after school, for wide-ranging conversations. Our youth also helped organize and sponsor several retreats with teens from other Lynn churches. In 2015, St. Stephen's teens

planned and held Lynn's first Pride celebration, a festive day in the front church yard, along with a teen-run program of witness and testimony in the sanctuary.

- Also during Rev. Gould's tenure, St. Stephen's hosted newly ordained transitional deacons and priests through our Diocese's Urban Resident Program providing the diocese with an urban training location while providing the parish and rector with additional clergy assistance.
- During this time, and partly due to the availability of additional staff, St. Stephen's had a vibrant women's group which met regularly for fellowship, meals and periodic retreats.
- In 2015 St. Stephen's formed the Beloved Community Team (BCT), a lay-led multi-racial group of parishioners created for shared learning and advocacy. The group was later joined in 2017 by members from St. Andrew's, a predominantly white Episcopal congregation in nearby Marblehead. BCT meets once a month and has sponsored a number of workshops for the two congregations.
- Rev. Gould successfully raised grant funds to establish our "Kids in Community" (KIC) program, a free summer enrichment program for school age children in Lynn which concluded its 20th summer this year.

The last seven years since Rev. Gould's departure have been challenging for St. Stephens. We conducted a search for a new Rector, but the Search Committee was unable to agree on a candidate among the three finalists. We are tremendously grateful for the Interim Priests who have journeyed with us. We are especially grateful to our Priest-in-Charge from 2020 to 2023, the Rev. Gregory Perez. He joined us in the depths of the early pandemic and helped us expand online worship and other safe and creative ways for us to stay connected. He also continued Rev. Gould's warm welcome to parishioners from the LGBTQ community and, with parishioners, in 2022, initiated St. Stephen's annual hosting of a free community dinner during Lynn Pride Week. Many of us will always remember his pastoral response to the May 2022 mass shootings at the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas and Tops Supermarket in Buffalo, New York. He brought pictures of the victims into the church, held a vigil, and, with his preaching, helped us mourn what had happened and resolve to do what we can to prevent future mass shootings. During his last year with us, Rev. Greg began a Spanish-language service at St. Stephens which we unfortunately had to end when he left to join our Diocesan staff as the Regional Canon for the Central Region. We would love to re-establish this ministry.

Over the past seven years we have learned a lot about who we are as a community. Recovering from our inability to call a priest, then the pandemic and its aftermath, we have relied on one another, struggled with one another, made Church with one another. It has given us an appreciation for the grit, determination and faithfulness of our community. Our Diocese suggested, and supported, our work with congregational consultants Patricia and Stephen Gianotti over the past year. This work has helped our lay leadership pull together and work together with honesty, clarity and care. We are doing our best to lead with love and transparency.

PARISH STORY – Present life

(two to three short paragraphs are adequate)

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

Our persistence through the pandemic, with changing and temporary clerical leadership, has shown us our strengths as a congregation, revealing the depth of our commitment to this particular home of the Jesus Movement in Lynn. We are also proud of the decades of providing emergency food aid through our Food Pantry and especially during the pandemic, when need soared and we met the challenge, distributing twice as much food each week as before, with a smaller group of people to staff the Pantry. With the aid of grant funds, we hire a trucking company to pick up 11,000 pounds of food from the Greater Boston Food Bank monthly. Volunteers from our parish and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lynn (UUCGL) as well as others from the community all come together to bring the food in, sort and store it and fill bags of groceries for the clients. Most of the clientele are Spanish speaking and we have some volunteers who are learning to speak Spanish as well as one volunteer who speaks Spanish fluently.

We have experienced a lot of loss in the past several years: of a beloved Rector, youth minister and Urban Assistants. The pandemic hit us hard, as it did other faith communities. These losses revealed to us our ongoing struggle to respond to the profound changes in our community and the broader culture. By and large, the children who grew up in the church no longer attend. Grandchildren are brought by their Grandparents on occasion. We know St. Stephen's is not alone in this experience.

Lynn, while always home to many immigrants, now is home to many Latino people from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. Latinos

make up 43% of the city's population and 69% of its school children. In 52% of homes in Lynn, a language other than English is spoken.

These issues contributed to our unsuccessful search in 2018. We are in a different place as a community at this point, smaller and older, yes, but more clearly seeing that change has come, requiring new ways of being St. Stephens. We are actively engaged in discerning what that is and are looking for a Priest-in-Charge to join us as we draw on our resources and strengths to live our mission anew in Lynn, today.

2. Share your worship style and special worship moments you like.

Our community comes from many places and traditions such as Liberia, the Caribbean, Black Gospel, Evangelical, high, low and broad church, and all are welcome. We use Rite II liturgies in the Book of Common Prayer as well as enriching our worship with other Anglican liturgies. We supplement the 1982 Hymnal with Wonder, Love and Praise and Lift Every Voice hymnals. We LOVE our way of exchanging the Peace – everyone greets everyone, often with hugs.

Our 10 AM service is our main service, with choir, and we also have a small, but deeply faithful 8 AM congregation. We would love to re-institute a Thursday noon Eucharist held at St. Stephen's Towers.

3. What brings people back week after week?

We come to be fed by the sacrament of communion and the preaching of the Gospel. We come to be in a community where we feel known and welcome. We come to continue to discern together where God is leading us and how we can be of service to each other and to the broader community. Hope and faith are what we share as a congregation.

How do you care for each other?

Members of the congregation "show up" for each other, being present and listening in good times and difficult times. We pray for those who are unwell, and we comfort those who have losses. Facing challenging times as well as fun times helps us to grow closer to one another and to God. We struggle at times with different styles of communication, different priorities, and with healing hurts and disagreements among parishioners.

4. Tell us about outreach in your community?

Food Pantry: St. Stephen's food pantry was established approximately 40 years ago. It is the only pantry in Lynn open 3-4 times a month. We are a member of the Greater Boston Food Bank and receive donations from other churches and organizations. Prior to the COVID pandemic, we distributed an average of 100 bags of food a week to an annual total of 2,500 households. Since the pandemic, we've distributed 200 bags of food a week to an annual total of 7,600 households.

KIC Summer Camp: KIC provides a free month-long day-camp for 40 children and jobs for 8-10 Lynn teens. The program also recruits Reading Buddies from our own congregation as well as from other churches, including St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Marblehead, Ascension Episcopal Church in Ipswich and UUGCL.

Youth Safety and Advocacy: In the past, several parishioners were teachers in the Lynn Public Schools and St. Stephen's had a talented youth minister. This allowed the church to operate a Friday night youth group, open to all young people in the community. Parishioners and clergy also created safe space for youth and other community members to gather after tragic episodes of community violence.

12 Step Programs: St. Stephen's is committed to helping those in the community maintain their sobriety. We host a well-established NA meeting on Tuesday night from 7 pm to 8:30 pm.

Kenyan Congregation: In 2002, St. Stephen's began hosting a Kenyan congregation, helping with grant writing and advocacy for the congregation and collaborating on occasional joint services. . In 2023, while still worshipping on the St. Stephen's campus, they became Christ the King Mission of our Diocese.

"Trails and Sails" is an event series organized by the Essex National Heritage Commission, a non-profit organization established to bring awareness and appreciation for the heritage of Essex County, a federally designated National Heritage Area. Trails & Sails events include outdoor activities such as guided hikes and excursions on the water as well as historic house tours, lectures, community celebrations, special exhibitions, craft demonstrations, and many other diverse activities. St. Stephens opens the church to visitors participating in "Trails and Sails" one Saturday each Fall. Members of the congregation serve as docents, telling the story of the congregation and the history and significance of the building, with a particular emphasis on the building's remarkable Tiffany stained-glass windows.

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

As St. Stephen's moves into a new phase of our life as a parish community, we are committed to finding a balance in our priorities between nurturing and growing our own parish community and serving others in Lynn.

We want St. Stephen's to be a place where both young and old feel welcome and fed spiritually. We recognize that we need to develop a congregational culture that respects traditional forms of worship yet creates new ways of worship that speak to young people seeking meaning and a deeper relationship with God.

We are looking for a priest grounded in spiritual practice who enjoys preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. The right priest for St. Stephen's will be seeking to work with an urban, multicultural parish and find that richness energizing and life-giving. As a socially engaged parish, we love partnering with our clergy to have St. Stephen's be active in the life of the city beyond the walls of our church building. It would be ideal for our new priest to speak Spanish and be interested in developing St. Stephens as a bilingual community. A good candidate will have a strong work ethic, effective staff management skills, financial and fundraising experience.

To a new Priest-in-Charge, we offer strong lay leadership backing and the substantial volunteer time and effort of the congregation. We have parishioners with skills and experience in building management and restoration, technology, financial management, leadership and organizational development, fund-raising, ministry operations (Food Pantry, Kids in Community) and hospitality.

We seek to partner with our new Priest-in-Charge to learn and grow together as we seek to live the loving, liberating, life-giving way of Jesus, and make that Way available to others, for years to come.

To apply, please send cover letter, resume or CV, OTM profile and links to 2 sermons to:

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