

# 2023 Annual Report

## Report of the Priest-in-Charge

February 25, 2024

Dear People of St. Peter's,

I began serving as interim rector of St. Peter's on May 1, 2024. I knew very little about your history, context, and current situation. What followed was a steep learning curve. In my twenty-five years of ordained ministry, I've seen almost everything under the sun when it comes to congregational life. What's the old insurance commercial? "I know a few things because I've seen a few things?" What I discovered was a community:

1. Diminished by and not yet recovered from the pandemic
2. Reeling from the discovery of historic (and horrific) sexual misconduct of a previous organist and choirmaster
3. Angry, sad, confused, and hurt over the abrupt dismissal (with cause) of the director of music the previous year
4. Angrily divided over failure of an expensive capital campaign
5. Discouraged by the departure of the previous rector

Any one of these things would have qualified as a serious community trauma, but *all five? And all within a year?* My goodness. Where to start?

I began with the classic tasks of the interim rector:

1. Gather feedback from vestry, leaders, and staff as to how to begin (completed)
2. Conduct a staff retreat (completed)
3. Update all staff position descriptions and make recommendations to vestry regarding current personnel (completed: St. Peter's is well-served by its staff)
4. Review division of labor with associate rector (complete: I am staff point person for finance, investments, all things building, music, personnel, HSPCPC, etc. and Sarah liaises with TNT, social justice discernment, COVID, family service, food cupboard, Connecting Our Faith, etc. Together we share in liturgical planning, preaching, and pastoral care)
5. Decluttering and reorganizing the physical spaces, etc. (underway)
6. Organizing the work of the profile and search committees, writing their charges from the vestry, and setting a search timeline (completed)

7. Ensuring the continuance of the vestry process, denominational and diocesan requirements (complete and ongoing)
8. Responsibility for “the cure of souls” (ongoing)

Most of this was complete or in-hand by the end of July. At that time, and with the advice and consent of the vestry, I began to delve into some of the traumas listed above. St. Peter’s has been through a lot—and it shows.

I insisted on—and received—a full briefing from the parish’s attorneys on the personnel matters involving the former director of music who was terminated for cause in 2022. I met with the bishop and diocesan officials and sought to clarify (for me) points where accounts may have differed. I wanted to understand these events as this incident remains a considerable point of grievance for some parishioners deeply involved in the music program. I offered to meet with whomever wanted in order to hear their pain. Bound by the non-disclosure agreement signed before I arrived, I’m afraid I could offer them little consolation beyond my assessment that I, personally, would not have reached a different conclusion. Indeed, I commend the parish’s leadership at the time for their faithful, courageous decision.

Conflict, per se, does not necessarily damage a congregation. However, unresolved conflict almost certainly will. I think we are at an important moment. During my many years as a clergy misconduct intake officer, I had to tell many of my colleagues that while God’s mercy is an ocean without shore, our actions do indeed have consequences. As Jesus says, only “the truth shall make you free.” How St. Peter’s can heal from these fissures without a full disclosure of the truth of these events eludes me at present. And so we have it: a congregation whose vast majority wishes to turn the page, and a group still in obvious pain. As your priest, I’m pastor to both groups. I acknowledge my responsibility. I think I speak for the vestry, profile, and discernment committees when I say that if you are in pain over any of the traumas of the past three years, we are committed to wholeness and health. Trust, mutual forbearance, and forgiveness—on the part of all—will be critical for us to succeed. This is your responsibility.

I have been working hard on some proposals for a new building. There exists a very promising collaboration with St. Peter’s School. While we are both independent institutions, our current space needs are remarkably complementary. A design proposal is nearly complete. I hope to share it with you soon. What the Head of School and I are currently working on is a business plan. Neither of us has done anything like this before, so we are working with professionals for whom this is their bread and butter. (I’m a big fan of professionals.) More to come this spring.

St. Peter’s has, at its core, an amazing team of servant leaders. Staff meetings are fun, productive, and deeply collegial. Vestry feels like a family united around a common love and a deep sense of God’s calling. I’m grateful to Jared Cram who is finishing his second term on the vestry, during which he served—for a time—as accounting warden. I’m also grateful to Jill Minick, who, after many years, is stepping down as head of the churchyard gardeners. In typical Jill fashion, she has prepared a very helpful job description for her successor. Finding her successor is a critical part of my prayers these days. Please let me know if God is calling you to this work. Don’t be afraid to say, “Here I am, Lord. Speak, for your servant is listening.” The gardeners are an amazing group; the whole parish joins me in thanking you.

At the end of 2023, I can safely say the state of the parish is strong. Numbers are up across the board: attendance, giving, volunteers, etc. My goals for the first and second quarters of this new year are to:

1. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the parish profile
2. Continue to improve and enhance the pastoral care of the parish's sick and homebound, especially with lay members of the parish
3. Appoint a steering committee to receive and act upon the work I have done soliciting proposals for a new, affordable parish house
4. Ensure a vigorous and joyful celebration of Holy Week
5. Be fully available to the discernment committee over the next weeks and months

Respectfully submitted,  
The Reverend Clarke French, Priest-in-Charge

## Comings & Goings in 2023

**Baptisms:** James Steven Colberg, Cameron Hesdon, Madelyn Elizabeth Labrensz, Noa Rae Nakhla, Lucy Alice Thomson

**Marriages:** Rebecca Ohliger & Christopher Ryan, Monica Poeske & Matthew Kuentzler, Christine McQuade & Ben Fournier

**Welcome to:** Susan Butler, Olivia Chalkley, Lindsey & Lauren Coates, Haley Goodrow, Suzanne Kane, Dan & Jo Layman-Wilson, Sam Nguyen, Ella Peterson, Claire Schrader, Libbie & Hinár Schrader Polczew, Nina Singhapakdi, Katherine Sepulveda, Travis & Chloe Stewart, Kristina Syvarth

**Departures:** Betsey Arledge, Laurel Christensen w/ Forrest & Peter, Paul & Lisa Cover, Veronica Dende, Jay Hangle, Hildegard Kent, Michael & Amanda King w/ Claire & Caroline, Blaire & Martin Schmie, Ellen Strohm, Jeanne Walker

**Deaths:** Pat Fusco, Margaret Rose Espenshied Ullman

**Vestry:** Julia Cadwallender, Paige Carlson-Heim, Jared Cram, Ann Kell, Burrell Montz Covey, Jay Newlin, (Rector's Warden), Marjory Spraycar (Accounting Warden), Court van Rooten, Kat Voit, Claire Waugh, Caroline West, Ben Willis

Thanks to Jared Cram for his years of service and dedication on the Vestry.

### **Ministry leaders in 2023:**

Adult Education – Cordelia Biddle	Music Library – Hannah Poole
Altar Guild – Kathleen Stephenson	Parish Profile Committee – Sharon Haynie & Ben Willis
Bell Ringing – Ben Cornelius	Pastoral Care – Kate Randall
Book Group – Gretchen Cowell	Personnel Committee – Tina Hogan
Children & Youth Leadership – Sarah Hedgis-Kligerman & Danielle Defassio	Property – Ben Leaphart & Wallace Umberger
Churchyard – Jill Minick	Rector Search Committee - Nora Adelman & Kat Voit
Church Tour Guides – Carolyn Klepser	Social Justice – Barbara Mattuecci
Finance – Marjory Spraycar	Stewardship – Lauri Cielo
Food Cupboard – Mara Blake-Ward	TNT – Sarah Hedgis-Kligerman
Gravestone Cleaners – Keith Betten	Ushers – Steve Zettler
Greeters – Cordelia Biddle	VIA – Tina Hogan & Nigel Richards
History Committee/ HSPCPC – Keith Betten	Writers Group – Cordelia Biddle
Investments – Allen Hall	Youth Group – Lisa Hardy
Livestreaming – William Lim	
Music Advisory Committee – Nora Adelman	

## **Highlights of the Year**

### **Feast of Absalom Jones**

In February on the Feast of Absalom Jones, a large contingent of St. Peter's parishioners attended church and worshipped with our friends at the Historic African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. The guest preacher that day was the Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

### **Growth of the Food Cupboard**

Food Cupboard Manager Mara Blake-Ward held a series of Food Cupboard Roundtables in the beginning of the year to discuss the Food Cupboard and improve and grow its operations. This year, the Food Cupboard received a grant from the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania to purchase a new freezer, giving the Food Cupboard the ability to once again store and offer perishable items, such as produce and meat.

Starting in March, the St. Peter's Food Cupboard began distributing household goods in addition to food. These items are distributed the first Saturday of each month and include cleaning staples many families cannot afford right now: laundry detergent sheets, dish soap, toilet paper, and disinfectant wipes. This initiative was made possible by a successful fundraising campaign during Lent, in which parishioners and friends raised more than \$6,000 to fund the program for a full year.

Throughout 2023, the St. Peter's Food Cupboard experienced tremendous growth. We started the year feeding about 50 local Philadelphia families each month, and by December that number grew to 200 families.

### **Parking Lot**

In April, St. Peter's Church and St. Peter's School repaved the parking lot at the corner of Third and Lombard. Then in November, St. Peter's Church entered into a lease with St. Peter's School to allow the school to use the majority of the lot during weekdays for school activities. The lot continues to be used for church-goers on Sunday mornings.

### **Arrival of Interim Rector & Search Process**

On May 1, St. Peter's welcomed the Rev. Clarke French as our interim rector. Clarke came to St. Peter's from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where he most recently served as the Rector of the Church of the Holy Family. Also in May, St. Peter's formed a Parish Profile Committee and Rector Search Committee to lead the process to call St. Peter's next rector. The Parish Profile Committee hired two consultants to help us through this process and led a series of Listening Sessions with parishioners to gather information and input for the creation of a Parish Profile.

### **Return of St. Peter's Skinner Organ**

In June, we welcomed back our 90-year-old historic organ, affectionately nicknamed "Margie." The St. Peter's E.M. Skinner Organ was removed from the church in 2021, and had spent the past two years at the A. Thompson-Allen Company in New Haven, Connecticut. The team meticulously cleaned the pipes, rebuilt the mechanical components, and restored the organ to its original tone and beauty.

To welcome Margie back, St. Peter's held an organ recital series in the fall. The highlight of the series was a rededication concert by Dr. Nathaniel Gumbs, Director of Chapel Music at Yale University. The series also included Friday Noon concerts featuring local organists.

### **Adult Education**

This fall, we rebranded our 10 AM Adult Education hour "Connecting Our Faith," to more meaningfully reflect the goals of these events: to connect with each other, with God, and with ourselves to deepen our faith and our lives. Highlights this year included a discussion of the tribal chieftains buried in the churchyard, an exploration of the writings of former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, and a series on Isaiah and Being Neighborly.

### **Social Justice & Advocacy**

The Social Justice Discernment Group (formed in 2022) continued to grow in 2023. They provided information and resources to the congregation through the Social Justice Calendar, a calendar that highlights an important issue each month including Black History Month, veteran support, suicide prevention, Asian American and Pacific American Heritage Month, World Refugee Day, ending gun violence, Juneteenth, Pride, and health disparities related to heat in summer months. They also partnered with outside organizations to bring programming to St. Peter's as well as support justice initiatives outside of our church walls. Collaborations included: AAPI coffee hour with Chinatown Development Corporation, POWER campaigns, Braver Angels retreat and workshop, Asylum Pride House Christmas gift fundraiser. SJDG also changed their meeting structure so that every other meeting is an intentional time of discernment through group spiritual direction.

### **Children & Families**

New this year, St. Peter's offered Sunday School during the 11 AM worship service for children age 6-10. Children are dismissed to Sunday School before the first reading and return during the Peace so families can receive communion together. The Sunday school is staffed by a dedicated group of volunteer teachers and assistants.

Our Family Worship Service at 9 AM continued to attract large numbers of children. Highlights of the year included an intergenerational Shrove Sunday Pancake Breakfast, where the children decorated the tables and youth served pancakes; a June "Neighbor" series where we welcomed guest storytellers who are different from us; and a lively Christmas Pageant.

### **Sacred Ground**

St. Peter's began our first Sacred Ground circle in Fall 2023, with over 20 participants who are meeting bi-weekly over 7 months. Sacred Ground is a part of The Episcopal Church's long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice. The 11-part series is built around a powerful curriculum of documentary films and readings along with dialogue. Together, participants peel away the layers that have contributed to the challenges and divides of the present day – all while grounded in our call to faith, hope and love.

### **Wednesday Noon Eucharist**

In September, St. Peter's began a new regular weekday celebration of the Holy Eucharist each Wednesday at Noon. This quiet, spoken service comes straight from the Rite II liturgy of The Book of Common Prayer and uses a portable lectern on the altar end of the church.

### **Tower Room**

Our Tower Room (the room upstairs in the west end of the church sanctuary) got a big makeover this year and was lovingly renamed the Wiggle Room. With a colorful rug, toys, books, and kid-friendly items, it is a space where families can retreat to during services in the church to get their wiggles out.

### **Music Program**

In 2023, the St. Peter's Music Program continued under the direction of interim music leaders: Music Director Dr. Derrick Thompson and Organist Charles Johnson. We were especially grateful to Dr. Thompson for leading a series of Adult Education programs about the history and importance of Black spirituals sung in white spaces. Derrick and Charles came together this fall for a Gospel works recital and discussion. In other Music news, the Choir Robing Room was cleaned and recognized and new choir robe racks were installed; and all the choir music was sorted and reorganized.

### **Stewardship Campaign: Growing in Faith**

During the fall's stewardship campaign, we encouraged parishioners to "Grow in Faith." We hung flowers on the east end of the church throughout the campaign to symbolize each pledge. By the campaign's end, 147 households (including 13 new pledgers) pledged to financially support St. Peter's; altogether pledges totaled \$406,000. We were encouraged that the number of pledgers and total pledge revenue remained stable from the previous year.

# Financial Report

	<u>2022 Actual</u>	<u>2023 Actual</u>	<u>Proposed 2024</u>
<b>Revenue - General Operating Fund</b>			
Contributions Pledged	\$ 446,599.00	\$ 400,417.00	\$ 406,000.00
Plate, Easter, etc.	56,907.00	46,346.00	37,500.00
Contributions	<u>503,506.00</u>	<u>446,763.00</u>	<u>443,500.00</u>
Routine Transfers from Endowment Funds	255,671.00	265,548.00	264,756.00
Other Income	92,985.00	99,667.00	125,000.00
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b><u>852,162.00</u></b>	<b><u>811,978.00</u></b>	<b><u>833,256.00</u></b>
<b>Expenses - General Operating Fund</b>			
Clergy	277,903.00	235,734.00	285,585.00
Music and Choral Scholarships	130,299.00	102,373.00	111,718.00
Education, Fellowship and Development	75,584.00	79,168.00	82,933.00
Outreach: Parish Ministries	3,331.00	223.00	1,200.00
Outreach: Diocesan Support	67,282.00	69,700.00	70,000.00
Administration	169,610.00	188,735.00	200,335.00
Property	85,892.00	93,986.00	90,168.00
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$ 809,901.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 769,919.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 841,939.00</u></b>
<b>Net Operating Income (Loss)</b>	<b><u>\$ 42,261.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 42,059.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$ (8,683.00)</u></b>
<b>Other Income (Expenses)</b>			
Non-routine transfers from Endowment	85,000.00	45,000.00	-
Profile & Search Expenses	-	(4,694.00)	(15,300.00)
Legal & Personnel Related Fees	(75,640.00)	(26,538.00)	-
Property Projects	(8,920.00)	(37,114.00)	-
	<u>\$ 440.00</u>	<u>\$ (23,346.00)</u>	<u>\$ (15,300.00)</u>
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	<b><u><u>\$ 42,701.00</u></u></b>	<b><u><u>\$ 18,713.00</u></u></b>	<b><u><u>\$ (23,983.00)</u></u></b>

# 2024 Parish Profile

St. Peter's Church is in the midst of a rector transition. In February, the Rev. Dr. Clarke French was appointed Priest-in-Charge, and we are currently in a period of discernment.

St. Peter's congregation recently participated in a series of Listening Sessions and a Parish Visioning Survey to help us through this process. After those conversations, the St. Peter's Parish Profile Committee created a document that describes who we are, who we want to be, and what sort of parish God is calling us to be.

If you have any questions about the rector transition, please contact Rector's Warden Jay Newlin at [rectorswarden@stpetersphila.org](mailto:rectorswarden@stpetersphila.org).

Scan the QR code to read the 2024 Parish Profile: A Vision for Ministry

