

2024 Parish Profile

A Vision for Ministry



A Message from the Profile Committee

Dear friends,

Over the past 10 months, St. Peter's Church has been in a period of discernment and discovery: who are we, and who are we called to be? While times of transition can be unplanned and uncomfortable, they can also aerate the soil of a community to invite new and stronger growth. This profile document represents the beginning of such forward movement. It tells part of the story of who we are and offers glimpses into who we want to be.

To discern St. Peter's story, the Profile Committee convened a series of listening groups in Advent and Epiphany. These asked small groups of parishioners to reflect on four guiding questions about recent life at St. Peter's:

- 1. What is the most powerful emotion you've felt in yourself?**
- 2. What is your greatest source of pain or disappointment?**
- 3. What is your deepest fear and your best hope as we call a new rector?**
- 4. What is your greatest joy at St. Peter's right now?**

Seventy-eight parishioners participated across 14 groups and offered a trove of thoughtful and prayerful responses and emotions. Almost all groups were multi-generational, bringing together parishioners who knew each other well and those who were meeting for the first time. These groups laid the groundwork for a strengthened and revitalized community that will be essential to St. Peter's next steps.



In January 2024, the Committee released an electronic survey to the parish membership, active and inactive. We received 106 responses that offered detailed views about the qualities we want in leadership and what ministries, activities, and quirks of St. Peter's bring us life or cause us frustration. The Committee read and quantified these responses, adding vital details to our picture of who we are.

Thank you to all who offered their voices!

Part of the beauty of the body of Christ is its diversity; representing the varied views of such a body is impossible for any document to do perfectly. We trust you will approach this profile with grace, remaining open to encounter perspectives both that you agree with and that challenge your point of view.

St. Peter's will now continue the work of discernment and cast a vision for ministry. This vision will offer specific actions, goals, and opportunities for everyone at St. Peter's to contribute to building the community we are called to be. This cannot happen through the work of clergy and staff alone. We look forward to engaging the entire community in growing St. Peter's now and into the future!

Sincerely yours in the journey,

The Parish Profile Committee: Nora Adelman, Julia Cadwallender, Sharon Haynie, Teri Leavens, Angus McLeod, Hannah Poole, Marjory Spraycar & Ben Willis

With guidance from consultants Gail Lebert and the Rev. Susan Richardson



About the Parish Profile

In the midst of transition, instinct urges us to find something steady with which to engage our core and reconnect with our foundations. After COVID quarantines, the postponement of a building project, significant staff changes, and amid a continued shift in how the world engages with church, St. Peter's is at an inflection point. Gathering input for this profile helps us look forward to who we are invited to become. In the present moment, we examine who we are right now, and the solid ground on which we stand.

We are grounded in the love of Christ and the way that love shapes and steadies us. We are grounded in our history: the people who have stewarded this Church before us and the heritage of our Episcopal way. We are further grounded in the unique characteristics of our community.

As we attempted to capture an authentic profile of St. Peter's, these community characteristics—the foundational parts of our DNA—helped organize the things we see in our present, the things we wonder about for our future, and the hopes we hold for the leadership who will help us get there. These four “pillars” are values common among many 21st century churches, yet they illuminate the unique life of St. Peter's parish. Like our building's stone floor, they are well-worn by the past and still relevant for the future.

In reading, reflecting on, and praying about them, may they offer an authentic reflection and spark meaningful questions as we continue to grow into the future, with God's help and in Christ's love.

The Four Pillars



Welcome & Belonging



Connection & Engagement



Healing & Repair



Direction & Discernment



Welcome & Belonging



The three words most used to describe St. Peter's in the survey were welcoming, spiritual, and inclusive.

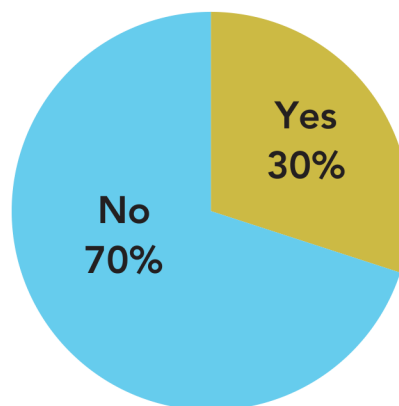
People are drawn to this church: Seventy percent of our parishioners were raised in another faith tradition. It is a place where individuals—whether they call themselves Christian or not—find community, acceptance, and a sense of belonging. Young and old find solace and warmth. LGBTQ+ people especially feel a sense of invitation and safety. Families feel welcome, with children free to wiggle and snack during worship services.

Clergy draw from diverse theology and contemporary life experiences to bring the message of Christ to modern Philadelphians. Their sermons challenge and engage with life outside the pews with eloquence and compassion. Questions and doubts are welcomed and encouraged.

However, there are also feelings of unsettledness. Some have felt or perhaps felt their voices are unheard, marginalized, or silenced, prompting them to leave. Others feel their presence—or absence—goes unnoticed and yearn for more robust pastoral care. There is also a lack of accessible spaces that welcome and support those with mobility challenges.



**Were you raised
Episcopalian?**



Welcome & Belonging

What we wonder

- How can we improve or expand our physical space to support the parish's growth and connection? Our current space limits how we can gather together.
- How can we develop the music program to welcome a broader audience? Recent changes to the music program—such as expanding the choir's repertoire—were applauded by most, yet there is more we can do.
- How do we extend our welcome beyond our immediate community and commit to broader social service?
- How do we blend old and new ways of showing welcome and affection? We wish to reclaim the traditions of handwritten notes and welcoming ceremonies for new members as well as restarting faith stories, new member Sundays, and intimate dinners at parishioners' homes to forge connections between old and new members.
- How do we embrace and expand online services, to reach beyond physical boundaries and welcome seekers from outside our community?
- Can we find ways to reach out to those who have strayed and left our community? We need to look inward and contemplate the "missing" among us.

What we seek

We seek stable leadership who will anchor and inspire us to reach new heights. We yearn for leadership who will assist us in creating intimate gatherings that foster a sense of belonging and kinship. We look for leadership who shares our commitment to radical welcoming and deep belonging, and who will help us build a community where every soul feels seen and valued.



Connection & Engagement



There is a resounding desire among parishioners for a more deeply interconnected community, especially between parishioners of different ages and who attend different services.

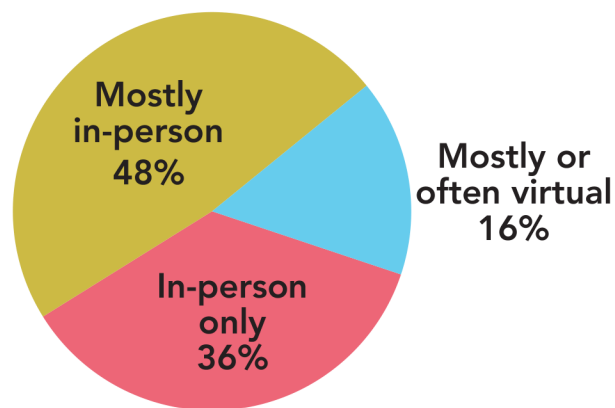
Our current programming that centers around age cohorts—especially the Family Service, 20s & 30s discipleship groups, and 60s+ Sages group—is strong and commonly described as vibrant and engaging. However, parishioners hunger for expanded activities that bridge these cohorts and offer more overlap and interaction outside of Sunday morning services.

Parishioners noted the value of virtual opportunities, including live-stream worship services and virtual programming, and view this as a strength to expand upon.

Despite many efforts over almost 20 years, St. Peter's still lacks a parish hall that offers space for the entire congregation to gather outside of the church: a process and reality that continues to be a disappointment for many, and is likely limiting our growth as a community. Parishioners expressed innovative solutions for large gatherings, and there is a desire to move ahead with a physical solution soon.



How do you attend church?

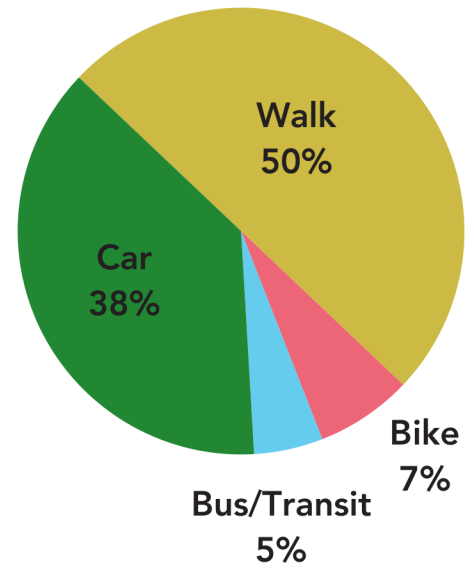


Connection & Engagement

What we wonder

- How do we create a community where young families and retirees know each other by first name and extend relationships beyond church walls?
- How can we continue to develop services for our youth beyond the Family Service? Parents especially express a desire for an expanded Sunday School and a dynamic youth group that is relevant and engaging for young people.
- How do we re-engage those who may feel disconnected from St. Peter's during these challenging times?
- How do we forge relationships and connection with the broader Philadelphia community?

How do you get to church?



What we seek

We seek leadership who can help build the bridges St. Peter's needs to forge deeper internal and external connections. We seek a leader who will invite, encourage, and empower us to cross silos and build a spiritual and physical infrastructure for intergenerational and regional connection and community building. This will require building trust and rapport quickly, and modeling what it looks like to reach out and create authentic relationships.





Healing & Repair



St. Peter's parishioners share strong, powerful emotions over the church's recent, tumultuous past.

Many expressed sadness and grief over sudden and unexpected shifts in leadership and community life. Anchoring forces have fractured, and parishioners are trying to recraft our identity and move forward. They recognize the impact of the pandemic on our collective life and many feel that we have been in "survival" or "recovery" mode.

Many feel that we must continue to process what has happened in our past to move to a more secure place from which to envision the future. Others voiced that we need to take ownership of how we have failed as a community, and work together to build the future community we aspire to be. Parishioners repeatedly shared that the listening groups were an important step toward healing, and hope there will be more opportunities for similar conversations.





Healing & Repair

What we wonder

- How can we create a community that better reflects key values: openness and transparency; honesty and integrity; clarity and cooperation? Many expressed appreciation of Sunday morning announcements by Vestry members and there was also hope for better and clearer communication among all members of the Parish, especially from Vestry leadership and clergy. The support and professionalism of our staff came up repeatedly as an enormous asset for our congregation, and the website was cited as a sterling example of communication.
- How can we rebuild trust and establish supportive relationships among parishioners and clergy, parishioners and Vestry, and among parishioners themselves? We believe that greater transparency around decision-making is vital to making all the relationships of the Parish work well. Many also believe all of us need to step up and be the change we want to see. There is a general belief that we should avoid top-down decision-making and refrain from placing responsibilities on our clergy and staff that we as parishioners can fulfill.

What we seek

We seek to rejuvenate our community and steward trust and belief in one another. We seek to heal from recent and past hurts, grief, and confusion. We hope for a music program that is rebuilt and robust, including opportunities for community outreach and children's development. Parents seek to entrust their children to our clergy and staff.

We hope for clergy leadership dedicated to pastoral care and with skills to provide spiritual guidance and personal support. We also want clergy and staff to ask for help and support from us to protect their own time and avoid exhaustion. The paramount qualities we seek in a rector are character and communication/teaching and we want clergy that affirms us while challenging us to live as God's people.





Discernment & Direction



There is a collective eagerness for St. Peter's to move forward, beyond the disruption and isolation of the pandemic years, and the feeling of static suspension in this time of leadership transition.

Parishioners are excited to articulate and begin work on our future, specifically in the music ministry and relationship to the city outside of our walls.

St. Peter's stands on a foundation of remarkable strengths that were named repeatedly in the Listening Groups and survey: a rapidly growing young family population, compelling worship services and sermons, a community characterized by warmth and inclusivity, and a profound desire to contribute and engage. These assets position the church well for sustained growth as it moves confidently into the future.





Discernment & Direction

What we wonder

- How do we design an authentic, inclusive, and life-giving process for answering the question of who is St. Peter's?
- What should the future of our music ministry look like?
- How do we encourage young families to stay and continue to engage in the St. Peter's community, particularly as their children age out of the Family Service?
- Spirituality was marked very important by 92% of survey respondents, yet the word 'God' was mentioned minimally in our Listening Groups. How do we interpret this, and what does that mean for worship and programming?

What we seek

We seek a spiritual leader who can harness and channel our community's passions and energy into a thoughtful and life-giving process to discern the role and identity of St. Peter's in a post-Covid era.

We seek leadership that excels in guiding a parish through transition, challenging and inspiring us through that journey. We seek leadership that can skillfully help us reconcile past contradictions and heal from past wounds.

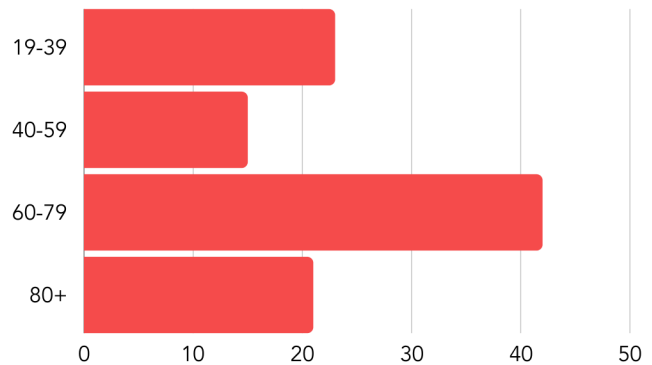
St. Peter's aspires to build on our parishioners' sense of belonging to increase lay leadership and active participation in the stewardship and well-being of St. Peter's. We seek leadership who can inspire and guide us to use our gifts, talents, and treasures to make a more meaningful impact beyond our church walls.



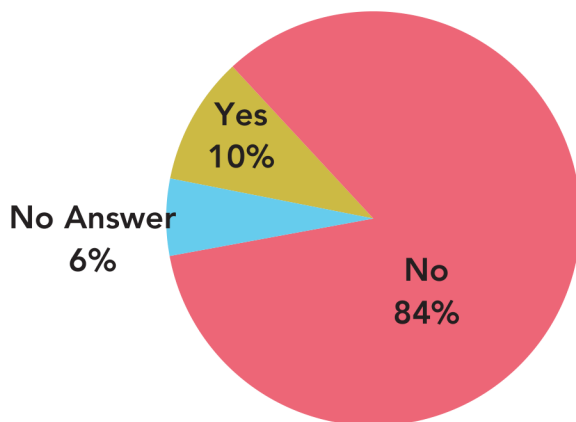
St. Peter's by the Numbers

The following data shown here and elsewhere in this document represent the 106 parishioners who participated in the Parish Survey in January 2024.

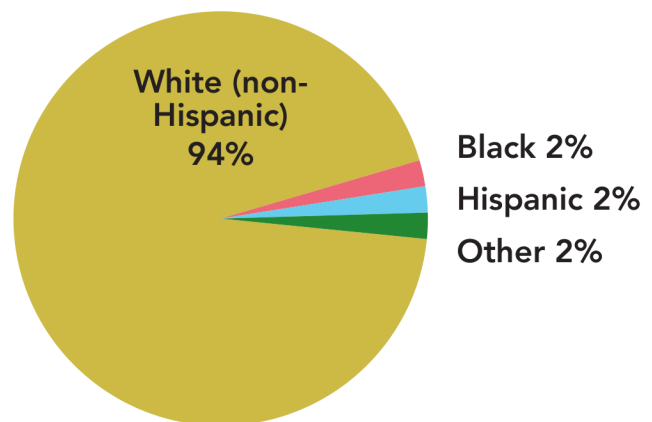
Age of those who took the Parish Survey:



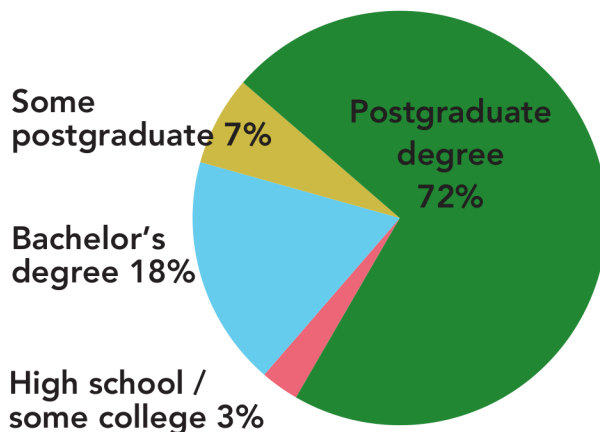
Do you identify as LGBTQ+?



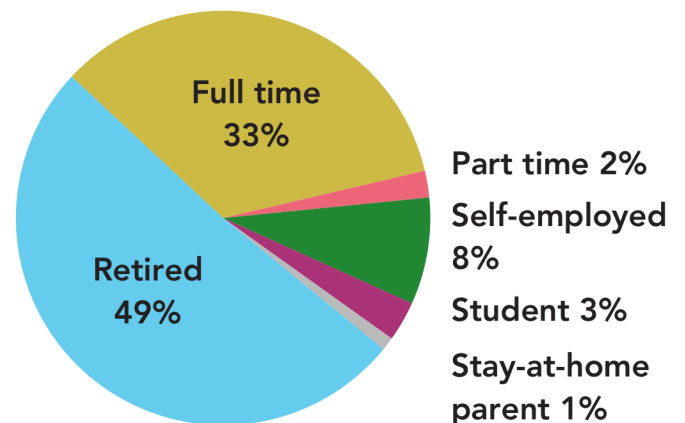
What is your race/ethnicity?



What is your highest level of education?



What is your employment status?



In 2023, average Sunday attendance was 104 in-person and 75 on YouTube.
 In 2024, St. Peter's has 147 pledging households.
 (These statistics were provided by the Parish Office, not the Parish Survey.)



Thank you

Thank you to the Rector's Warden, Jay Newlin, and the St. Peter's Vestry; Canon Jane Gober; the staff of St. Peter's, especially Lauri Cielo for designing the profile; Listening group notetakers: Keith Betten, Bob Hornsby, Matt Kuentzler, Rebecca Lopez-Kriss, Elaine Markezin, Barbara Matteucci, Ella Peterson, Mildred Robinson & Caroline Slingluff; and all the members of St. Peter's Church.