

PRIEST IN CHARGE SEARCH

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
315 Warren Street
Fall River MA 02721
508-678-5118
info@stlukesfallriver.net

Position Title: Priest-in-Charge, Part-time
Receiving Names until 12/31/23

PARISH STORY– History

1. *Tell us about when your church was founded and how have your parish and community changed over the years.*

St. Luke's Church was founded as an English immigrant parish in 1897, an offshoot of the wealthier central parish, now called Church of the Holy Spirit. Like other English immigrant Episcopal churches in Fall River, it was a working people's parish focused on the church neighborhood. The church played an important role in parishioners' social and spiritual lives with many recreational events as well as worship services and religious education. St. Luke's was especially supportive to parishioners during the World Wars and the Great Depression.

To deal with their modest budgets, the parish often had gaps between rectors as they saved money up for the next clergy leader. In the interim times, lay leaders took an active role in conducting Morning Prayer and preaching. That pattern changed with the tenure of the Rev. Jim Hornsby in the 1970s who agreed to serve part-time at the church. Rev. Jim became a bi-vocational priest and began a career as a social worker in the city.

In 1979, under Rev. Jim's leadership, the parish started to resettle Cambodian refugees at the request of Bishop Coburn. Over the years more and more Cambodian families arrived, with some joining the parish and becoming baptized, confirmed Episcopalians. At about the same time, the church was instrumental in starting the Niagara Neighborhood Association that held its monthly meetings at the church. The Association established the Niagara Senior Center that met in St. Luke's parish hall for many years and was led by one of the church's lay leaders.

In 1988, Rev. Susan Lee arrived, with the help of a diocesan grant, to integrate the growing number of Cambodian parishioners into the life of church. Worship services included prayers and lessons translated into Khmer and led by Cambodian parishioners. The parish initiated significant youth work with Cambodian children such as summer camping trips, a children's choir, and a weekly youth group, including anti-gang work to deal with friction between Cambodian and white teens in the neighborhood. Rev. Susan also led a community effort to establish a battered women's shelter in Fall River, Our Sisters' Place.

Over the following decades, the Cambodian portion of the congregation tapered off as the Cambodian community organized a Fall River Buddhist temple, after initial services in St. Luke's gym. Cambodian families became increasingly integrated into American society, with their children growing up as young Americans. St. Luke's parishioners were very active in

promoting citizenship for Cambodian residents. Like Rev. Jim, Rev. Susan pursued a career outside the church, as a sociologist, and worked on a part-time basis for St. Luke's. New parishioners joined the church, and new ventures began such as a project reviving the library at the nearby elementary school.

Rev. Susan retired from active ministry in 2021, and Rev. Jim now serves as the bridge priest. The parish is looking for a new part-time clergy leader to lead us forward.

2. Tell about one significant event that stands out in your history.

The resettlement of Cambodian refugees and their integration into the parish and American society, and the establishment of the Niagara Neighborhood Association, have been the most significant events in our recent history. The arrival and integration of Cambodians through St. Luke's has had a significant impact on the city of Fall River as well. Cambodian children have become involved in youth programs such as Upward Bound and the local high school summer enrichment program, going on to college and careers as professionals, business owners, and homeowners. Cambodians were the first significant group of color in the city of Fall River and St. Luke's was honored to play an important role in the diversification of the city.

PARISH STORY – Present life

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

A recent example of a success is raising funds and coordinating the attendance of many St. Luke's children and other Fall River children to the annual Durfee High School 6-week summer enrichment program for elementary and middle school children. We also sent our young Episcopalians to the diocesan Barbara C. Harris Camp and other diocesan youth programs including trips to Israel and El Salvador. Our involvement with children and young people has been a treasured part of our collective life that we want to continue into the future.

Recently the transition period has been very difficult, especially in combination with the COVID pandemic. We lost some families during the pandemic, and the Sunday School is in suspension. The Thrift Store is currently closed as well due to a lack of parish volunteers. These are developments that we regret very much.

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

A recent survey of the parish emphasized that our parishioners value the closeness to God that they experience during our worship services. Our services are simple and "low-church" but nonetheless have a formal, traditional structure that all appreciate. Our hymns are taken from the 1982 Hymnal and the LEVAS hymnal. We have also sung Taizé pieces as service music, including in both English and Khmer. Our organ is an historic Andrew Carnegie pipe organ that was featured in a organ society tour and brochure. Before her retirement, Rev. Susan sometimes sang songs with the Sunday School children, accompanied by her guitar.

The parishioners value the special worship services we have had in recent years including Blessing of the Animals, Blessing of the Backpacks, Invite-A-Friend Sunday, and social celebrations such as a churchyard barbeque after a summer service. We also have had

simple summer worship services in a state park, Myles Standish State Forest, that were very well attended and were followed by a social afternoon relaxing by the pond.

3. What brings people back week after week?

The worship services in the Episcopal tradition have been very meaningful to parishioners, as well as the feeling of being part of an extended family where they are known as individuals and cared for very much. The parish feels strongly about being a welcoming place to all, with special attention to children and to those new to the area or to the Episcopal Church. We value diversity across racial, ethnic, age, and class lines and see our parish as a place where those values can be affirmed and lived out. Some of our members have been part of the parish from birth, following a long line of their forebears dating back to the founding of the church. All these factors strengthen parishioners' ties to St. Luke's Church.

4. How do you care for each other?

Because we are a small family-sized parish, we can recognize individual needs, problems, and successes. People stay for the coffee hour and share with one another on a weekly basis. As an example, the children in one family participated in all our youth activities, both local and diocesan, and served as acolytes. They excelled in their studies and the two oldest girls won admission to MIT and Boston University. We celebrated their many successes on Sunday mornings. In the recent parish survey, one of the young women said how much that support mattered to her: "St. Luke's has been a significant part of my life and has always pushed me to do more while encouraging me. So I am really grateful for this community."

5. Tell us about outreach in your community.

In addition to our work with Cambodian refugees and the Niagara Neighborhood Association, we were instrumental in starting the local battered women's shelter in the 1990s. We led an effort to revive the library at the nearby elementary school before the pandemic. Our Thrift Shop has been a significant outreach effort, with very low cost items. The Food Pantry was in operation whenever the Thrift Shop was open and was often needed. Our youth programs have reached many, many young people in the community and that remains very important to us. Rev. Jim has been very active with helping low-income people in need of housing and other things. We gave a children's xylophone to the nearby park in recognition of Rev. Susan's retirement. The parish regularly gives money away to food pantries and other organizations serving local needs. We also donate periodically to Episcopal Relief and Development and diocesan funds.

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

The parish values our multicultural heritage very much and would like to continue that emphasis in the future. We would like our new clergy leader to guide us in organization, reaching out to new people, encouraging lapsed families to return, and re-activating programs such as the Thrift Shop and the Sunday School. Parishioners are dedicated volunteers and recognize that we are partners with the clergy in working towards these goals.

We recognize that we cannot afford to pay for a lot of clergy time. We are hoping to find a bi-vocational clergy person who can work part-time at the parish, as Rev. Jim and Rev. Susan were able to do for many years. We offer flexibility in terms of Sunday services and expect to have a regular schedule that includes lay people leading Morning Prayer. We realize that our new clergy leader may not be able to be here every Sunday. We do need the clergy to attend the monthly Vestry meeting as a key organizational hub.

Warden: Arthur Benjamin
363 Underwood St.
Fall River MA 02720
abenjamin1@verizon.net
774-644-4077

Treasurer: Robert Holt
24 Francis Drive
Swansea MA 02777
robroy227@comcast.net
508-642-2200

COMPENSATION & HOUSING

Compensation available for new position: \$ 10,000 - 12,000 annually
This is a 1/8 time paid position following diocesan guidelines.

Negotiable?: Some leeway within the limits of our resources

Housing Allowance or Rectory: All compensation may be considered housing allowance.

SECA reimbursement options (n/a, Full, Half, Other): N/A.

SECA reimbursement details: N/A

Pension plan (in compliance?): Yes, as required by the church.

Healthcare options (negotiable?): Some funds for expenses are possible.

Dental: Part of healthcare options.

Housing Equity Allowance in Budget: N/A

Annual Equity amount: N/A

Vacation weeks: One month paid vacation.

Continuing education weeks: N/A

Continuing education funding in budget: \$ and/or comments N/A

Additional compensation comments

We are accustomed to providing \$1000 per year to a clergy discretionary fund.