Christ Church, Cambridge

A Parish Profile

February 2021
Welcome

Founded in 1759, Christ Church, Cambridge is the spiritual home for a community living throughout Cambridge and the Greater Boston area. In 2020, the parish embarked on the search for its 17th rector to lead our community as we find our way to know and serve God.

Mission Statement

Christ Church, Cambridge is the Episcopal Church in Harvard Square—a community of God’s people who are varied in gifts and united in mission. Our church is a place of affirming sanctuary to the diverse community around us. We welcome and affirm old and young, all races and ethnicities, rich and poor, the LGBTQ community, those who are single, married, and families in their many forms. Christ Church seeks to be a place of hospitality, hope, redemption and peace for those in Cambridge and beyond. Worship here is always about thanksgiving and overflows with themes of God’s grace, God’s call to justice, and our responsibility to one another as God’s beloved children. Wherever you are on your journey with God or toward God, you are welcome here.
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Introduction

To create this profile of Christ Church, Cambridge in 2020, the Discernment Committee sought out the parish’s input through multiple surveys, individual interviews, all-parish and small-group Zoom conversations, and published histories of the parish. The community responded with a diversity of thoughtful, passionate responses. The Committee received stories about individual experiences at Christ Church, reflections on this community as a whole in the past and present, and hopes for how we will grow as a body of Christ.

The following pages will introduce you to our parish through our historical presence in Cambridge, our relationships with clergy and lay leaders who have shaped this community through the years, and our ministries. As you read, we invite you to envision yourself among us as a discerner, as we are, wrestling with important questions and helping us to bring our many different perspectives, passions, and gifts together for the good of this faith community.
During our self-study phase, parishioners frequently cited our history as a key feature of our identity and an attractor for membership. Founded as a mission of the Church of England in 1759, our origin story parallels that of the nation itself, not always in ways that are comfortable to look at through the lens of our present historical moment. Most recently, events such as the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests have thrown a sharper light on the unequal distribution of resources and the unequal results of justice in our society based on race and ethnicity. As one parishioner wrote:

*We could do more to contemplate our long-term history as a parish and our personal roles in issues of inclusion and equity...We have celebrated the [presence] of George Washington and MLK [at] our parish, but have we looked at who they were speaking to? What did our parish look like?*

**Colonial and Revolutionary Beginnings**

As a mission of the Church of England, Christ Church was a part of the colonial system, and the wealthy and powerful Anglicans of Cambridge would have seen themselves unapologetically as “the great and good,” representing the top tier of that society. Many of our founding parishioners lived in mansions on “Tory Row,” among them wealthy merchants, officers in the British Army, judges, and colonial officials; among them were slaveholders and persons involved in the slave trade. Letters of the time mention the “English Church” among the “grand doings” of Tory families in the same breath as “their slaves, their chariots of four black horses, their silver plate and...
stiff brocades.” Our first rector, the Rev. East Apthorp, was the colonial governor’s brother-in-law and built a mansion—known, perhaps derisively, as the “Bishop’s Palace”—as a symbol of his prestige and station in society. For these families, exalted social status and its privileges were things to be celebrated, not questioned.

But almost from the start this made the “Tory church” a target for anti-colonial resentments, seen as a monarchical intrusion on behalf of “gentlemen of figure [with] an income large enough to maintain a domestic chaplain.” Attacked by Congregationalist pamphleteers, its right to hold Anglican services challenged, Christ Church, Cambridge faced a rising tide of hostility. Matters became so heated that Apthorp retreated home to England, never to return. In the summer of 1774, as riots became more frequent, most of the congregation and the rector fled to Boston, Canada, or England, and the church was boarded up. In 1775, it was conscripted to serve as a barracks for colonial soldiers, who melted down the organ pipes to make bullets.

The building itself still bears physical evidence of that turmoil: the Revolutionary War bullet hole near our front entrance; an English prisoner of war buried in our crypt; and the plaque memorializing George and Martha Washington’s having worshipped here—a service that occurred during the building’s appropriation by the Continental Army, in which prayers were raised that the King might be “enlightened” to agree to the revolutionaries’ demands.

**Revival under the Rev. Nicholas Hoppin**

There followed some five decades of penury during which a small congregation managed to struggle on, its pre-Revolutionary splendor lost. The congregants were poor; pew rents yielded only modest revenues; and the church had to turn several times to Harvard College for financial support. It lacked a permanent rector and could afford to hold services only at Christmas, if at all. Morning Prayer was held regularly as way
to provide spiritually for the congregation, relying on Harvard students and tutors to lead. But if the plummet from the height of power and prestige might be seen as a rebuke, it ultimately led to a rebirth in the appointment of the Rev. Nicholas Hoppin as Rector in 1839.

The very fact that Divine Providence had kept it alive through so many years of discouragement, was rather an evidence that it was intended to do good service yet for the Redeemer. —the Rev. Hoppin

Under his tenure, the church expanded rapidly, serving two growing populations: Episcopalian students at Harvard College, and Protestant Irish immigrants. By all accounts Hoppin had enormous gifts in pastoral care and parish-growing, a “readiness to minister to all needs.” It was said that his guidance was “cherished, not least by the poorer members of his flock” who would “turn to him in times of distress and sorrow,” even after he had retired. By 1857 the parish had so flourished that the sanctuary space had to be lengthened by two bays to accommodate its numbers. Though other challenges were to come, his tenure through 1874 illustrates that a spirit of endurance and renewal is also a part of our legacy.

Post-World War II

Under the three rectorships from 1941-2004, Christ Church engaged in the movements to advance civil rights and social justice.

Within the period of living memory, beginning with the tenure of the Rev. Gardiner Day, the history of Christ Church again shares a trajectory with that of the nation, particularly with respect to the movements for civil rights and social justice that were emerging at that time. This period leading to the present is worth particular attention because of how it informs our current character as a parish and the present discernment process.

The Rev. Day, rector from 1941-1966, was a civil rights activist and a friend of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1960, Christ Church parishioners picketed the Woolworth’s store in Harvard Square protesting the parent company’s maintenance of segregated lunch counters in the South, and Day successfully advocated for Yale University, his alma mater, to award an honorary degree to Dr. King in 1964. That same year, Christ Church parishioners went to Mississippi to help...
Black people register to vote. It was also a time of expansion in women's involvement in lay leadership (in 1955, Sarah Parker was the first woman elected to the Christ Church vestry), and in developing programs such as the Thrift Shop, which continues to play an active role in assisting those in need. Day devoted considerable energy to international and ecumenical initiatives as well as civil rights. During his time Christ Church came to support many international social programs; provided assistance for refugees and displaced persons, hospitals, and orphanages; aided Anglican churches in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America; worked to address world hunger; and demonstrated for nuclear disarmament.

Day’s ministry introduced a spirit of activism that has had a strong influence over the direction of Christ Church under succeeding rectors. His immediate successor, the Rev. Murray Kenney (1966-1986), was also active in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movements, and was an advocate for the ordination of women in the Episcopal Church. One of his most controversial acts came in 1967, when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King came to Cambridge to make an anti-Vietnam War speech and was denied a venue. Though the wardens, who were out of town and unreachable at the time, later said they would have refused the use of church property for the event, Kenney offered the Parish House:

“The basis for my decision was: here’s a national leader; here’s a Baptist minister; here’s a leading Christian in the world. If we don’t give him space and a platform, we would set back race relationships in this place maybe fifty years, and we’d had a fairly good record as a Parish.”

Other civil rights actions continued. The parish raised a fund of $100,000 that was dispensed by a committee of the church’s Black members to organizations and programs working for racial justice and to improve conditions in communities of color (the group also donated the copies of Lift Every Voice and Sing found in our pews, as acknowledged in each volume’s bookplate). When an “irregular” ordination of women was held in Philadelphia in 1974, Christ Church warden Charles Willie (who had resigned from the National Church’s House of Deputies over the issue) preached, and Kenney participated in the laying on of hands for the women being ordained.

The current of activism continued to flow under the Rev. Bob Tobin (1987-2004), who “saw the church’s mission in terms of the politics of compassion.” During this time a plaque commemorating that 1967 speech by Dr. King was placed at the church
and dedicated, and three Sundays were set aside around his birthday for programs to celebrate his work and learn from his teaching. Tobin established an AIDS Concerns Committee to provide education demystifying the disease, and enlist parishioners to provide support and pastoral care to people living with the disease. He appointed an Anti-Racism Committee, active from 1995 to 2004, sponsoring anti-racism training and education programs. Mission trips to Honduras to help with hurricane relief drew participation from parish families, adults, and clergy. Tobin was particularly concerned with affordable housing, serving with the Cambridge Clergy for Affordable Housing and overseeing Habitat for Humanity-style projects in Cambridge after rent control was repealed in the 1990s. Parishioners were active in projects to renovate houses in Cambridge for low-income buyers, and the vestry voted to make a $500,000 loan to the Nehemiah Program of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization to build affordable housing in Boston. Toward the end of his tenure, Tobin led the community in study and engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the struggle over Palestinian rights.

Not all of these efforts were without risk and stress within the congregation. The Nehemia Program loan ran up against strongly held concerns about the fiscal responsibility of such a large outlay, and engaging the Palestinian cause was alienating to some parishioners. A substantial number in the parish felt that our next rector should turn in a more pastoral direction.

During the Rev. Joe Robinson’s tenure (2005-2019), laity were empowered to lead the parish’s initiatives to help heal a broken world in practical ways. Christ Church maintained its support of programs including the Harvard Square Churches Meals Program and the Episcopal City Mission, and participated in diocesan-driven activities in the city like B-SAFE. In the early 2000s, mission trips to Honduras continued. Meanwhile, several mission trips to Cuba were also undertaken to build relationships with parishes and the cathedral in Havana. The 2013 campaign to establish a community toilet in Harvard Square addressed an unglamorous but critical need for the homeless population in our immediate environs. Robinson also took on leadership roles at the diocesan level, including co-chairing the Diocesan Mission Strategy team.
But overall, this period was characterized by a focus on inward-facing concerns: strengthening and building the parish community by grounding the congregation in a more robust and aesthetic liturgy, and maintaining and improving our physical facilities to better carry out mission-driven projects and make our space more flexible and accessible. Several major capital projects took place (described later in Resources Ministry) to resolve overdue maintenance issues, modernize building systems, and to renovate spaces. Beyond these physical changes, there were major organizational transformations. We sometimes describe ourselves as a Pastoral-size church with Program-size aspirations. To better balance our eagerness for mission and engagement with our human and financial resources, we embarked on a two-year overhaul of our ministry structure from 2012-2014, known as the Community Renewal Project.

One of the hallmarks of Robinson’s tenure was a focus on creating a sense of wholeness and beauty in music and liturgy. This was not a matter of mere aesthetics, but a way of creating a sense of groundedness and unity among the worshippers, helping to attract and retain new parishioners and guide them toward deeper engagement with the community and with God. This congruence is perhaps best illustrated by the inclusive rite for marriage Robinson wrote, one of the earliest such rites in the diocese. Liturgy was one of his strengths, and it flourished in the collaborative relationship with Director of Music and Organist Dr. Stuart Forster. This period featured an expanded music ministry, attracting new members and utilizing music from the whole canon of Christian music in regular Sunday services along with sung Masses on high holidays, monthly Evensongs, and special services that had attendees lining up down the block.

Recent Events

The Rev. Robinson’s ministry might bring us to the end of this retrospective were it not that in the year-plus since his departure we find ourselves grappling with some of the most momentous historical events many of us have faced. The pandemic erupted only a few weeks after our Discernment Committee began its work. Like other parishes and organizations, we turned to online platforms like Zoom to carry on.
This has challenged us to adapt to remain connected, and to resolve disagreements without the benefit of face-to-face dialogue. The death of George Floyd and the following civil unrest and protests deeply affected Christ Church parishioners and the community. In order to better understand parishioners’ perspectives on social justice issues in the wake of these events, the Discernment Committee sent the parish two supplemental survey questions in July 2020. These asked parishioners to assess Christ Church’s past, present, and future approach to these issues and to describe a new rector’s best role in helping the parish address them.

A majority of the responders wanted to see the parish be more involved in addressing racial and social justice issues. Some of the calls for greater involvement and action focused on our imperative as followers of Jesus and the demands of the times we are living in. Some respondents thought Christ Church should avoid institutional involvement in “political” matters, but support individual parishioners who wish to be active. Responses revealed different views as to the best role for a new rector in addressing social and racial justice issues. While many expressed that they would like leadership from the rector for the parish’s response to these concerns, almost one-quarter preferred that the rector attend primarily to internal parish matters, such as nurturing the community and ensuring that we have a rich liturgical life.

Another theme emerged in the responses: that a rector would best serve Christ Church by supporting the work of individuals and groups within the parish, but not setting an agenda. One parishioner wrote, “We see the church as supporting individuals to do the work of love in the world, not as an institution that does the work for them.” Another parishioner shared, “A rector should not shy away from difficult conversations, difficult truths, and difficult lessons—participating, encouraging, leading... Helping all of us think deeply about our implicit biases and prejudices and giving ourselves the forgiveness and motivation to keep addressing inequities in our society as we center ourselves in our faith and our love for one another as Christians following the example of Jesus.”

“We see the church as supporting individuals to do the work of love in the world, not as an institution that does the work for them.”

A bright spot in our time physically distanced during the pandemic: in November 2020, the congregation blessed the renovated sanctuary entrance and welcomed all, for the first time, to easily access the church through its front doors.

The sign above, hung in July 2020, reads, “We believe that Black lives matter... and that mattering is just the beginning.” We are engaged in formation opportunities such as a conversation series based on Dialogues on Race. Parishioners will continue in meaningful inquiry as Christians struggling with the problem of racial injustice.
Community Renewal Project

In 2012, the rector and vestry commissioned a group of parishioners to lead the Community Renewal Project (CRP) to engage the community in the question of how to better care for its members. Over time, it had become clear that many members who dedicated significant time, effort, and love to the church found themselves frequently overburdened. The CRP engaged a significant portion of the parish through multiple all-church meetings, frequent small group work, a Sunday interactive sermon about the liturgical underpinnings of the ministries, and an Annual Meeting that detailed the work of each Ministry. Guided by the scriptural principles of Listening, Learning, Living, and Loving as a Body of Christ, over 65 church committees were re-organized into 11 under four ministries: Worship and Pastoral Care; Parish Life and Christian Formation; Mission; and Resources. Later, Worship and Pastoral Care grew into two ministries, resulting in the current structure of five ministries led by two stewards each. In this model, the church’s precious human and financial resources are more effectively tracked and allocated, and leadership is more easily rotated. The shift since 2014 to increased lay leadership and a culture of shared responsibility has required many hands to do the work, highlighting an ongoing need for coordination and adequate volunteer numbers. The following page illustrates the renewed structure so that our leadership and community members work together and communicate.

Who We Are by Ministry Leadership and Community

Above: Under direction of parishioner Melissa Hirshson, the Hand Bell Choir shares music during worship and throughout New England.
Center: Lighting candles is the final touch by worship ministry volunteers before holiday services begin.
Left: J2A on a pilgrimage in the South doing service work with Habitat for Humanity.
Church Governance

Right: The Vestry (accepted as a full slate) photographed at our Annual Meeting, January 2020. (See photos of our newly elected 2021 Vestry here.) Below: A diagram of our current leadership structure resulting from the thoughtful process of the Community Renewal Project (report appended).

Vestry, Wardens and Clergy

The Vestry, Wardens and Clergy meet monthly to discuss matters and make decisions by vote. The Wardens, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Clerk and Clergy comprise the Executive Committee which meets weekly and establishes the Vestry agenda.

Co-Stewards of each ministry foster community building, coordination and connection among five ministries:

Worship  Pastoral Care  Mission  Parish Life and Christian Formation  Resources

Worship Coord.  Music and Choirs  Pastoral Care  Grants Mgmt.  Outreach and Social Justice  Welcome

Parish Life and Hospitality  Christian Formation and Education

Planned Giving  Financial  Property

Committee co-chairs invite parishioner participation in all that we do. Over fifty activities and groups are organized through the committees listed above, meeting and organizing action steps as they see fit.
We are a congregation actively engaged in worship, not spectators from the pews. Over one hundred parishioners across all ages contribute their time and talents as acolytes, readers, chalice bearers, ushers, altar guild, and musicians.

**All Are Welcome**

We begin the invitation to Communion with a statement that ours is an open table, and all are welcome “wherever you are on your journey with God or toward God.” This attitude is reflected in small and large ways at Christ Church. We have made participation more “user-friendly” by consolidating all the music and prayers into the bulletin, eliminating the book-shuffling that can be confusing and distracting to newcomers and long-timers alike. We have also undertaken architectural renovations like moving the altar forward from where it had been tucked in the apse. This allowed the celebrant to be closer to the people during the Eucharist, and made the choir and congregation more visually connected to each other. Most recently, we completed the renovation of our front entry: new glass doors improve energy efficiency while sharing what is going on inside the sanctuary with anyone passing by. The front walk and driveway have been regraded and raised to make the front entry accessible for all, regardless of mobility limitations.

“Music, liturgy, thought-provoking sermons, and our historic and beautiful sanctuary are the foundation of our connection to each other.”

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**Worship Ministry**

*Listening to God*

Worship ministry volunteers like chalice bearers, lectors, and ushers are organized through an online sign-up portal.

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Praising God with Music

Christ Church, Cambridge is known for high quality music in the Anglican tradition. Many parishioners cite our music as a primary attraction that first drew them to the congregation: some to enjoy the worship atmosphere, and some to sing with us, including talented singers from area music schools. The choir’s diverse, adventurous repertoire draws on the full range of Anglican church music, from sixteenth-century choral motets to the works of contemporary composers. A typical Sunday invites the congregation to join in singing hymns from Lift Every Voice and Sing as well as responses from traditional Anglican chant.

“We are a symbiosis of tradition and progress... aesthetically traditional, rooted in scripture and traditional music, yet we are able to use that to forward progressive ideas in society.”

The four choirs—Adult Choir, Evensong Choir, Youth Choir, and Handbell Choir—involve over seventy members, more than any other single ministry. Choir membership draws participation from the local area, but largely, participants are from the congregation. The Youth Choir provides opportunities for children to participate in ministry and fellowship, gain musical skill, and grow in their knowledge of the church and their faith. Singers and bell ringers dedicate many hours rehearsing for Sunday services and monthly Evensongs. Extra rehearsals go towards preparation for special events like Lessons and Carols, as well as the annual All Saints masses that have featured sung requiems by Fauré, Mozart, Rutter, and Duruflé. The parish supports these efforts with budget lines for choir section leaders, requiem concerts with chamber orchestra, and the Kenney trumpet fund. The music program in turn fosters a strong commitment to the parish, with most members pledging. This ministry is full of enthusiastic and dedicated congregants who are eager to return to singing and ringing praises to the Lord as soon as it is safe to gather.

Dr. Forster ended his 21-year tenure in August 2020. The Director of Music and Organist position awaits a search to call a permanent replacement under a new rector.

An orchestra accompanies the combined choirs for the Duruflé Requiem on All Saints Day in 2016.

Above: Adult and youth choirs sing each Sunday at the later service.

Below: Combined choirs perform at special services like the annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols.
**During the Pandemic**

The past year has been a time that allowed the resilience of our priests and church leadership to shine. From daily video check-ins by clergy, staff and vestry during lockdown to our current livestreamed services with prerecorded hymns (and a few live singers), our clergy and lay leadership have worked hard to keep our congregation connected and engaged. Notably, virtual worship draws around 200 views per week. Music rehearsals have also continued online. Composite performances have been assembled and screened on our social media channels, and rehearsals have continued virtually with vocal training sessions and learning new repertoire. None of this is easy, but shows a determination to keep this vital ministry alive and our skills ready for when it is safe to gather in person again.

Above and center: The old organ loft has become the worship livestream control center, combining live and prerecorded elements for the service broadcast over Facebook and YouTube.

Far Left: On Christmas Eve 2020, the parish enjoyed recordings of Christmas readings, carols and other musical offerings.

Below: The Sunday experience on screen.
Preaching is the centerpiece of formation for many parishioners. We are lifelong learners inspired by intellectual and thoughtful sermons that connect scripture with values and actions. Beyond the pulpit, there are numerous opportunities offered for education, discernment, and growth in one’s faith. Parishioners report that Christian formation offerings are an extremely important component in their spiritual lives.

**Christian Formation for All Ages**

Christ Church has traditionally hoped to provide learning opportunities that are as much about transformation as the transfer of knowledge; and as much about learning to live in a community of faith as individual enlightenment. The Rev. Robinson shifted service times so that Christian Formation offerings could take place between services and serve the whole community, bringing together early and late service attendees, and allowing parents to attend Adult Ed while children attend Sunday school. Adult Ed promotes discussion about scripture, biblical history, and our faith tradition, and is an opportunity for parishioners to develop relationships across generations and diverse experiences. Participants interact directly with the Rector and guest speakers in a small group setting, learning from and about each other. Most recently, attendees have engaged in a virtual conversation series called Dialogues on Race, led by our Interim Rector, the Rev. Kate Elledge. Additional adult formation opportunities are offered throughout the week and have continued via Zoom during the pandemic. One popular repeating program is Episcopal 101, attended by parishioners preparing for baptism and confirmation, as well as longtime church members. The program looks at the historical roots of contemporary Episcopalian expressions of faith.

With the leadership of Associate Rector the Rev. Jon Eden, a dedicated corps of parishioner-teachers and a part-time staff Coordinator of Children’s and Family Ministries have grown a comprehensive church school program for youth. Children pre-K through 5th grade participate in two levels of Godly Play, a Montessori-based approach to Christian formation that recognizes the innate spirituality of children and helps to develop their Christian literacy through sacred stories, symbols, parables, and traditions. Pre-teens and teens go through Journey to Adulthood (J2A): A Program of Christian Formation for Young People in three two-year segments (Rite 13, J2A and Young Adults in Church), culminating in a youth retreat and mission trip. Youth Choir and Acolyting activities...
also contribute to Christian Formation for the youth at Christ Church. The diocese and deanery also offer opportunities for youth to attend the Barbara C. Harris Camp and Conference Center, and participate on the Diocesan Youth Council. When there is a gap in youth programming at the parish, these opportunities allow those interested to continue growing in their spiritual lives throughout high school and young adulthood.

Youth express feeling welcomed throughout the parish, and enjoy volunteering and learning alongside adults, “not as teachers and students, but as equals.” Many youth shared that the experience of being greeted, known by name, and included by clergy, adults, and other youth in the parish is deeply important to their feeling of belonging at Christ Church. They are excited by learning how to experience God outside of the church walls and especially cherish developing personal connections with clergy. It would seem that both adults and youth value intergenerational friendships and learning!

A major theme in survey responses was the hope for more families to be drawn to Christ Church. The challenge of packed schedules and busy lives, traffic, and everyday pressures on families living in a high-achieving, highExpectation locale such as Cambridge makes this difficult. Reengaging youth once in-person activities resume will require creativity and effort, especially to reach those in middle and high school. We are looking for a rector who will make every effort to connect with parishioners of all ages, and will believe in our youth.

“\textit{I learned not to limit religion and spirituality to the church building— it doesn't have limits.}”

Prior to the pandemic, a typical year of gatherings included the following:
\begin{itemize}
\item Homecoming potluck lunch
\item Acolyte training pizza lunch
\item Lessons & Carols champagne reception
\item Monthly Evensong receptions
\item Shrove Tuesday pancake supper & talent show
\item Easter egg hunt & pizza dinner before Easter Vigil & reception
\item Pentecost/End of program year Picnic and kickball game
\item Red Sox game outings
\item Summer Sunday brunches
\item Chaplaincy dinners
\item More can be found \url{here}.
\end{itemize}
Parish Life: Welcome and Fellowship

Christ Church, Cambridge is committed to welcoming all who enter our doors wherever they are on their spiritual journey. On Sundays, one of our vestry personally welcomes newcomers and asks them to fill out a yellow card so that they can be contacted by our clergy if they wish. Additionally, we make a reusable name tag for each parishioner who requests one to make it easier to get to know each other. After-church coffee hour is a chance to meet newcomers and learn about their needs and backgrounds. Christian Formation offerings like The Way of Love connect newcomers with current parishioners, and engage them in learning about Episcopal traditions. All newcomers are welcome to participate in ministries and committees, and are eagerly invited to fellowship events.

At Christ Church we find many ways as a community to gather in celebration for joy, connection and fellowship. Baptisms, marriages, and funerals often involve festive gatherings and the participation of parishioners. Events, which most often are tied to feast days, are facilitated by a core team of volunteers who share in the ministry of welcome and hospitality. Our parish calendar is filled with an abundance of annual celebrations. With our strong music ministry, it is not surprising that many of our celebrations include musical offerings as well as refreshments.

At the suggestion of a parishioner, covenant groups were initiated within the community to provide an opportunity for parishioners to meet in each other’s homes in groups of 10-14 for dinner, conversation, and prayer. Participation has grown since the program began in 2012, and groups are re-configured every two years, giving participants the opportunity to get to know and bond with an increasing number of parishioners. A number of covenant groups have continued meeting remotely since the onset of the pandemic, and the recent parish-wide survey indicated deep appreciation for these groups.

As a parish community we are willing and able to change traditions based on needs and interests, and new opportunities for fellowship and gatherings often present themselves. As an example, in 2017 the church leadership decided to change the service schedule to a single service at 9 a.m. for the summer months, a season when traditionally the church is lightly attended due to the academic calendar. With that change, brunches after service also began and created an opportunity for parishioners who typically attended different services to worship and break bread together. Though there was some hesitation at first, the new combined services were embraced positively.

In the last ten years, perhaps the one endeavor that highlights our spirit of festive hospitality and reverence for our history and traditions was a year-long series of celebrations surrounding our 250th Anniversary. The events included a celebratory Eucharist, gala, a concert performance of Hayden’s Creation, Harvest Moon festival square dance, a masquerade ball, construction of a large commemorative quilt, publication of The Biography of a Church Volume II: Voices from the Pews, and the installation of a timeline of the church’s history, displaying artifacts of past centuries.
Many parishioners offer help to each other in times of need, and survey responses showed that most people are comfortable reaching out to clergy or friends in the parish for help. In our survey and listening sessions, respondents expressed a strong desire for a rector who would individually know, care about, and be accessible to our parishioners. Because of Christ Church’s Transitional size, individual pastoral outreach has been challenging for clergy alone to manage over the years. To help, the Pastoral Care ministry was established during the Rev. Tobin’s rectorship, allowing lay members to partner with the clergy in offering pastoral support to fellow parishioners. Under the Rev. Robinson’s guidance, the ministry evolved and strengthened its standards and training for this sensitive form of outreach. Currently, the committee comprises nearly twenty lay members in addition to the clergy.

Having an organized group that can quickly and skillfully respond as parishioner needs arise has proved to be extremely helpful to the community. However, a number of survey responses identified pastoral care outreach as an area for improvement, noting that communication between clergy, the committee, and parishioners in need is critical.

With other forms of connection less available to the community during the pandemic, pastoral outreach to individuals

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**Pastoral Care Offerings:**

**Prayer**
- Lay Eucharistic Minister services to the homebound
- Monthly healing prayer service

**Personal Service**
- Transportation to and from the church
- Meals during times of hardship or transition
- Helping to find resources for parishioners in crisis

**Visiting**
- Spending time with the elderly of our congregation or others homebound

**Communication**
- Sending cards and emails during times of joy and sadness
- Outreach to those who need support

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“I received home visits when I was injured and unable get to church, and pastoral counseling after the death of a parent. In both cases, I felt understood and supported.”
and the congregation at large has taken on critical importance. The committee has continued their ministry remotely, calling and sending handwritten cards to over a hundred parishioners on the holidays. While there are still times when outreach opportunities are missed, the combined efforts of clergy and lay members are much more successful at meeting the parish’s needs.

Below: This tender moment of pastoral care speaks to our hope to be known and cared for by clergy and by each other.

Above: The dedicated Altar Guild cares for the Sacristy and the elements shown on the credence table above, as well as the Eucharistic Minister cases used to deliver communion to homebound people.

Right: Wooden crosses gifted by the family of a late parishioner and choir member are used for special prayer services and by the Pastoral Care Committee as a way to offer comfort.
Christ Church parishioners have a strong desire to engage with the world and to express their faith in practical action. As a parish with many ideas and passions, we are involved in a wide variety of mission and social justice work both at the church and in our lives and communities outside of church. Listing these activities may give the impression of a self-sustaining greenhouse of virtuous activity, but there is an ebb and flow in these things over time, both in enthusiasm and direction. The rector plays a central role in nurturing, shaping and sustaining parishioners’ energies to the greatest spiritual and practical effect.

Over recent decades, the overall emphasis of our mission outreach has moved toward more local concerns and involvements. These can seem very humble and specific, yet still reflect a concern for social justice and the dignity of all persons. An example is the project to create a public toilet in Harvard Square. Our involvement came because we had had a longtime policy of allowing free access to our parish hall restrooms, a response to the needs of the homeless in our locale. Over time, several incidents led to the practice becoming a safety issue for staff and program participants, and had to be ended. But we were keenly aware that withdrawing the policy left an urgent need unmet, and we became one of several groups, civic and religious, that successfully petitioned the city to have a publicly accessible facility built. Humble as it might seem, this was both a practical answer to a problem on our literal doorstep, and also a matter of upholding the dignity of those who have ended up unhoused irrespective of cause or circumstance.

We are very much aware that we can’t do everything ourselves—we often work best when we work with others, both within our parish and in the community outside our doors. Collaborations aimed at trying

“Every opportunity to volunteer with other parishioners for hospitality or local mission work is rewarding.”

*Mission Ministry*

*Living Our Faith*

The community that the Thrift Shop has built contributes to the vitality of our parish as well as the needs of others.
to offset food insecurity in our community include our participation as one of ten churches making up the Harvard Square Meals program (we host the Thursday night meal), the Outdoor Church of Cambridge (making sandwiches for participants), and helping make soup for the Friday Night Café at our neighboring First Church United Church of Christ. Parishioners also contribute supplies to On the Rise women’s shelter, and goods to the Cambridge Citywide and Senior Center Food Pantries. Other collaborations include members volunteering in education programs for the imprisoned through Boston University and Harvard, participating in asylum advocacy with University Lutheran Church in Cambridge, and offering English classes for speakers of other languages, a primary need for the many immigrants to the greater Boston area.

Our large parish hall is a blessing we share with the surrounding community. We provide subsidized space for AA and related groups for people in recovery. Other physical space is devoted to the Thrift Shop, a decades-long ministry driven by women’s leadership in the church that offers bargain-priced clothing and other items for people with low income. As an unexpected but welcome side benefit, it has evolved as a hospitable space for persons in need of companionship. Its considerable proceeds contribute to the revenue of the church, allowing this and other services to persist long-term.

In organizational terms, mission activities are supported financially by the Mission Fund. The fund is distributed by the Grants Management Committee, a group of parishioners who review funding requests for projects that reflect the life of Christ, actively engage Christ Church parishioners, align with church and diocesan mission priorities, have amplifying potential for impact, and that respond to emergencies and catastrophes. Funds have been distributed, for example, to social service organizations in Cambridge; the Barbara C. Harris Camp and Conference Center Annual Fund; youth mission trips; diocesan mission programming such as B-PEACE (an anti-violence campaign), and B-SAFE (a summer program for youth in Boston); and individuals who embark on mission work.

Members who participate in programs that directly serve others speak of the profound impact of this work on their personal lives, relationships with others, and their faith. We recognize the role of the rector to nurture the desire for action in the world as a movement of the spirit that sustains us as a faith community.
Property and Capital Campaigns

The Christ Church, Cambridge Resources Ministry includes property, financial giving, human resources and technology. The focal point of the church’s property is the main building, designed in 1759 by Peter Harrison. Opening its doors in 1761, it is the oldest church building in Cambridge. This beautiful windowed and sun-filled church, with seating for 300, touches hearts in our congregation and requires great care. The aesthetics of the sanctuary inspire beautiful liturgy and music as a foundation for a community of worshippers. A detailed description of Christ Church’s historical building may be found on our website. The Parish Hall houses church offices, a library, a kitchen and refectory, an auditorium, an education suite, archives, the sextons’ shop, a mechanical room, an organ blower room, and a choir rehearsal space. Additional adjoining church property on Garden and Farwell Streets includes the rectory, Thrift Shop, gardens, and space leased for residential apartments and a preschool. Located in densely packed Harvard Square, there are few options for physical expansion.

The church property requires investment, maintenance and upkeep. Our Property Committee includes those who donate their professional expertise in architecture, engineering, and real estate. Many parishioners participate in capital campaigns and in the hands-on care of the property. Guided by the principles of loving our church and our world, recent projects have made the entire church and its entrance more accessible; installed solar panels on the roof of the parish hall; updated the heating system, with two boilers to assure that the church can safely withstand any New England winter; replaced many of our windows with energy-efficient windows; and landscaped the grounds, including a patio completed as an Eagle Scout project by a young parishioner.

“\“I love the beautiful liturgy and music in a beautiful space... It helps me transcend the everyday strains and reminds me of the importance of God in my life...
I feel closer to God at Christ Church.”\"
Since 2003, the church has launched three formal capital campaigns: for the purchase of a new Schoenstein organ; for the repair of the tower and exterior; and for a full renovation of the interior of the church (the altar, the front entrance, the sacristy and the Rector’s reception area) and Parish Hall (the auditorium, church offices, kitchen, and the education suite). These campaigns, which were seeded by generous project-specific gifts from church families, enhance our ministry work and ability to welcome all. The education suite now has facilities for retreats. The kitchen is more inviting and efficient for community gatherings, and better supports our meals programs. Over the past decade, nearly every part of the church has been updated with badly-needed maintenance to ensure that it will continue to be a place for our community to gather in fellowship, worship, and formation for decades to come.

Although there is no urgent need to mount another capital campaign, the congregation has shown it could do so should the need arise. Areas of the church which are still in need of cosmetic renovations include one classroom and the library. Updated technology, both for groups renting spaces and for parish gatherings, is due; and there is an ongoing need to grow the endowment for the high cost of maintenance of a building of this age. A full summary of the status of the church property is appended.

**Finances**

In addition to capital campaigns, annual stewardship provides for daily operations and the yearly budget. Christ Church parishioners pledged $624,327 from 177 pledging households in 2019, with a median pledge of $3,527. Year after year, approximately 52% of our operating budget is supported with annual pledge income. Importantly, roughly 60% of pledging parishioners have been consistent pledgers for five or more consecutive years. The remainder of the operating budget is supported by rents, Thrift Shop revenues, other offerings, the endowment, and reserve funds. The church does not carry debt.

The church is blessed to have around $3,500,000 in its total fund balance, based on current market value in the Diocesan

Below: The Memorial Wall remembers parishioners and supports upkeep of the garden.

Below: Illuminated for the 250th Anniversary gala.

Left: The congregation gathers to bless the newly renovated Parish Hall Kitchen, spring 2019.
Investment Trust (DIT). Folded into that number are the generous bequests of parishioners reaching back many generations. Funds include the William Winthrop Endowment Fund of $1,768,000, named for a parishioner who made a major bequest of land in 1825; this fund also includes a Maintenance Endowment Fund of $668,000 established in 2019. The Batchelder Reserve Fund of $633,000 was named for the Batchelder family, who served the church as leaders and benefactors over four generations. This long tradition of individuals securing the future of the church through bequests was given a more formal structure with the establishment of the Planned Giving Committee in the 1990s, which has provided a clarity and focus that has produced positive results. It acts to ensure we honor donors’ intentions—an important ethical and fiduciary responsibility, as well as an encouragement to prospective donors—and it has raised the profile of estate planning as a way to sustain the future of the church. As a result, the East Apthorp Society, named after our first rector, now numbers 29 current living members who have provided for the church in their estate planning. Pledging resources to our church is a most tangible way of loving it.

Staff and Technology

Christ Church staff are committed professionals. After 21 years of dedicated service, our beloved director of music left in August 2020, thereby creating a vacancy, which will need to be filled after our new rector is called. The addition in 2019 of a director of administration and finance has improved office operations. Our music assistant is integral to production of the weekly church bulletin, and the functioning of the music program. Two full-time sextons care for the church. Many dedicated parishioners fill critical administrative functions for the smooth running of the church, which includes maintaining the website, scheduling volunteers, proofreading and editing publications, and assisting with legal and human resource expertise. Our community is blessed with many talented and experienced people with skills necessary to assist in the smooth running of our church. Sometimes the challenge is having too many excellent suggestions and opinions!

During the pandemic, the church has made a significant investment in cameras, software, microphones, recording equipment, and a half-time Digital Production Coordinator to expand its technological ability to provide online worship and hold parish meetings. Staff utilize online communication tools and platforms including ConstantContact and Facebook. We use Realm and Rotunda Ministry Scheduler Pro software to coordinate scheduling, pledging, committees and activities. Although stable and fully functional, this is an area which needs ongoing attention and updating.

“*We have agendas both religious and secular, with the explicit goals of discerning God’s will and of serving our broader community. The space, the plan, the materials, the history, and even the stewardship of our Sanctuary serve these ends.*”

—The Biography of a Church, Vol. II, 179-180

Original stone steps were relaid, level to the Narthex floor and front drive.
Where We Are

Our Diocese and Community

The Diocese of Massachusetts

Christ Church has participated actively and extensively in diocesan programs over the years, and sees this as part of our historical identity as a parish. In 2014 the Rev. Robinson was the Director of Liturgy for the consecration service for the Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates as Bishop Diocesan. Dr. Forster was the Director of Music for the consecration, coordinating 550 singers from choirs across the diocese, bell choirs, a chamber orchestra, and the sound system for the arena-sized auditorium. This was a mammoth administrative and creative undertaking involving countless details and thousands of participants, all of which had to be managed to create a seamless and moving experience for all at the celebration.

Our clergy maintain close ties with the presiding bishops, and are frequently called to serve as leaders of diocesan initiatives and programs. They have acted as clergy co-conveners, clergy representatives to the Diocesan Council, (acting) Dean of the Alewife Deanery, board President of the Barbara C. Harris Camp (BCH) and Conference Center, and co-chair of the Diocesan Mission Strategy team. The diocesan offices and Cathedral Church of St. Paul in downtown Boston are just a quick Red Line (subway) trip from Harvard Square.

Lay engagement in the diocese is also strong. Parishioners are frequently called to serve on the Standing Committee, the Diocesan Investment Trust (DIT), Congregational Consultants Committee, Diocesan Property Committee, and the
BCH Board. Additionally, we have active annual and national convention delegates, Diocesan Youth Council members, and members who serve as cathedral service and diocesan event organizers, musicians, and representatives. We participate in diocesan programs such as Episcopal City Mission, the Outdoor Church, and the Food for Free meals program. Christ Church is extremely involved in deanery work, with one parishioner serving both as a Diocesan Delegate and Clerk of the Alewife Deanery. Across our diocese and especially in the Alewife deanery, we support and attend other parishes’ services, events, priest installations, celebrations and parish anniversaries. We travel with other representatives and clergy to diocesan events and conferences. We strive to be good and faithful listeners, and try to assist other parishes in the deanery that may need a “big sister” parish to help at times. The diocesan mission calls all parishes to “embrace brave change” and reimagine our relationships and future together.

Harvard Square Churches

There are ten churches in Harvard Square that meet and collaborate as the Harvard Square Clergy, which began the Harvard Square Churches Meals program. Cambridge is host to three other Episcopal churches: St. Peter’s in Central Square, St. Bartholomew’s in The Port, and St. James’s in Porter Square. Many Christ Church parishioners also frequent weekday services at nearby Harvard Memorial Church.

Harvard Square itself is also home to the Society of St. John the Evangelist, an Episcopal monastic community with a strong intellectual tradition that attracts retreatants from around the world. Our relations with the other communities have always been cordial, but the degree of interconnection has varied with time. In the past there has been more in the way of activities like pulpit exchanges and joint choral concerts than we have seen in recent years. This is a potential area for growth under a new rector.

Harvard Episcopal Chaplaincy

Christ Church provides worship space and other support for the Harvard Chaplaincy, “an outpost of the Episcopal Church” with its own governance independent from Christ Church’s. Historically, there has been frequent engagement and overlap between us: the assistant rector was once the chaplain, and the Chaplaincy building was jointly owned. Today, the Chaplaincy calls its own priest, and owns the 2 Garden Street
property that sits adjacent to Christ Church. The Harvard chaplain is invited to preach at Christ Church with some regularity; Christ Church parishioners sit on the board of the Chaplaincy and sometimes provide meals after the evening services; Chaplaincy members also volunteer for mission programming at Christ Church, in addition to their own.

Many Christ Church parishioners express a desire for greater connection and collaboration with the Chaplaincy. Chaplaincy members seem to agree, excited by the prospect of “a rector who is interested in the imaginative work of the church through and with the Chaplaincy,” who wants to engage with them while respecting their autonomy. Reinvigorating our relationship with the Chaplaincy in our literal backyard is an opportunity to foster support across generations as young adults take ownership of their own spiritual lives.

Additionally, some parishioners hope that a more intentional relationship with the Chaplaincy could help support youth at Christ Church who are still in middle and high school, and illuminate a framework for further spiritual growth and faith exploration as they get older. These are thoughtful and curious students exploring their faith lives “right outside the door,” with whom there is an opportunity to co-create an energizing relationship for the Chaplaincy and its parish home.

City of Cambridge

Cambridge is home to Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, along with the more specialized schools of Lesley University and Longy School of Music. The city’s population is highly educated: over 75% of persons above the age of 25 have a bachelor’s degree, and over 45% have a graduate degree. These numbers are even greater at Christ Church, where around 70% of parishioners hold an advanced degree, and around 90% percent hold a bachelor’s degree.

Immigration is a strong demographic feature in the city. Today, almost 30% of Cambridge residents were born outside the United States, and a third speak a language other than English at home. Over the past twenty years, the share of Asian residents has grown especially quickly to become the largest non-white population at 16%. During the same period, Black and African American residents and Hispanic residents...
Not all Cambridge residents have benefited equally from the local economy. The population has grown by 13% in the past ten years, and with limited new housing construction, rental and housing costs have increased significantly. The majority of city residents are renters, and median rents are now greater than $2,000 per month. Homelessness is a tangible and visible problem in Harvard Square. The pandemic has exacerbated this, with many shelters closing. The majority of residents live in non-family households. There is marked flux in housing: a quarter of all Cambridge residents move each year, on average.

Costs also extend to other daily necessities. Massachusetts has the highest childcare costs in the country, with daycare in Cambridge costing $2,000 to $3,000 a month per child. Although poverty has fallen on average since 2000, there remains considerable variation across neighborhoods. To Christ Church’s west is the affluent West Cambridge neighborhood, with a 5% poverty rate, while the Riverside neighborhood east of Christ Church has a 15% poverty rate.

Housing and economic stability are concerns in our external community. Cambridge is wealthy, on average, but the wealth is not spread evenly, and the national debate over policing and social and racial injustice is of vital importance to many who live here. The need to have conversation and movement on these issues has been urgently felt within our congregation, and indeed all these stressors reach into our own community of faith. Housing and childcare costs and the destabilizing effects of the pandemic, including threats to employment, disruption of school and family routines, feed into uncertainties that affect many of us. We look to our church as a center of gravity in the midst of turmoil, as evidenced in the intensity and energy that met the Discernment Committee in our listening sessions during the pandemic lockdown.
Above: The Social Justice group hosts talks, film series and book groups. The above concert celebrating MLK Day was possible through a collaboration with nearby Longy School of Music.

Below: Aerial photo of the Christ Church grounds after the entry renovation, and its next door neighbor, the Harvard Chaplaincy (and the outdoor sacred tent).

Above: Local professors and activists join a panel discussion held in the Parish Hall in May 2013.

Below: Parishioners (two-legged and otherwise) look forward to celebrating the Blessing of the Animals each fall.
For all our distinctions, Christ Church shares the same worries as many other 21st-century churches: declining membership, aging parishioners, fewer children and families participating in activities, reduced finances, and little diversity in the pews or the pulpit. Parishioners who offered their thoughts to the Discernment Committee frequently expressed their hope for a rector who has the skills to work with the parish to steer these trends in a positive direction. Additionally, reconnecting in person once it is safe to do so again will be another significant task, though not one unique to us. Despite these concerns, the parish is full of hope for the future of our faith community, and look forward to welcoming a new rector who will appreciate and help to develop our talents and guide our commitments.

Throughout this profile, we have noted many hopes for the qualities and energy a new rector might bring. One parishioner’s words distill many of these ideas: we are looking for “a world-class connector,” one to help us deepen relationships within our community, welcome and encourage new members, and reach out to neighboring communities. A love of music might inspire the search for a new director of music; a love of history might energize one to take interest in caring for the historical property and in planning for the legacy of Christ Church. We seek someone who will enrich our liturgical practice to provide the foundation for our care for one another, as well as for our individual and community devotion to mission.

Our church experiences the pulling of interwoven fibers of tradition and progress, and of interconnectedness and outreach, creating a “tension” that strengthens us
when it is helped to be in balance. Our history is one of engagement and activism, but it has also taught us that we value the sense of being part of one community in service to God, and must cultivate our love and care for one another. The liturgy and our relationships with each other replenish us to “go forth into the world in peace… to love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.”

We seek a rector who understands that liturgy is the foundation of a faithful and loving community like ours, which is brought together through a shared feeling of belonging and of being moved by the Spirit during worship together. We heard clearly during the self-study that we have an engaged congregation that listens deeply and acts intentionally. Individuals deeply value our beautiful and relevant worship, and the community it attracts, while also feeling strongly that our parish should address the problems and suffering of the world. Our community demands meaningful worship and fellowship experiences that nurture our commitments to mission, and move us to do God’s work in the world. We have so many people in our parish who are lights in the world. We need someone who will shine brightly among us and help us sustain that glow in ourselves and one another.
Conclusion

We are curious about you and eager to meet you, know you and love you. We are alive to the Spirit to help us as we search and wait for you.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect… For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (Romans 12: 2, 4-5)
Appendices

We invite you to read more...

Self-Study Summaries
Summaries of our forums held from March to July 2020 were shared with the parish on our committee webpage.

All-Parish Survey Report
Analysis of the online survey collected during spring of 2020.

Community Renewal Report
The report on the restructuring of our ministries.

Annual Reports
- 2019 2019 Budget
- 2020 2020/21 Treasury Report

Property Review, 2020

Source Material from the Massachusetts Archives
For archival purposes, we are using Perma.cc links, which capture a webpage at a moment in time. To view a page’s hyperlinks and to read more, click “view the live page.”
Discernment Committee

Jill Herold (Chair)
Bill Bennett
Claire Burke
Beth Childs
Sarah Corvene
Steven Ferrer-Padilla
Valerie Fontana Shulman
Sue Hallowell
Ted Hammett
Ron Yang
Eric Fossel (Chaplain, 2020)
Mimi Truslow (Chaplain, 2021)
Ed Rewolinski (Diocesan Consultant)

We want to thank Amey Callahan in addition to Christ Church, Cambridge staff and several other parishioners for use of the beautiful photos in this profile to help us tell our community’s story. We are grateful for the church’s history books:

Day, Gardiner. The Biography of a Church. The Riverside Press, 1951