

St. John's Church 1333 Bay Street, Staten Island, NY 10305 USA



2020 PARISH PROFILE & THE SEARCH FOR PRIEST-IN-CHARGE



A Prayer for St. John's Church

Almighty Father,

As members of St. John's Parish, we praise you and give you thanks for sustaining us all through the years with rich history and tradition. We earnestly pray that you grant us wisdom through the power of the Holy Spirit to assist us in the process of choosing a Priest-in-Charge for our parish who is able to conduct the affairs of our parish with ability and spiritual discernment so that all our parish's needs are met, and thus we fulfil your divine purpose vested in us. We ask this in the blessed, matchless name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Contents of our

PARISH PROFILE

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ST.
JOHN'S CHURCH

PROGRAMS AND PARISH
MINISTRIES

PARISH OUTREACH

LOOKING FORWARD

PARISH SURVEY RESULTS

FOR OUR NEXT PRIEST IN
CHARGE

QUALITIES FOR OUR
NEXT PRIEST IN CHARGE

PARISH SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

- While we have a small membership of lifelong members at St. John's Church, a great many of our parishioners have come to us either from other Episcopal churches or from the Roman Catholic community.
- While many of our members came to St. John's either through a friend/relative or because of its convenient location, it is our style of worship and sense of fellowship that inspires them to stay. In fact, both style of worship and fellowship were rated among the most important issues to our parishioners. They were also rated among our "best practices".
- Many of our members are actively involved in some aspect of parish life. While we see this as a success, we also desire to increase the level of involvement.
- We want to increase our church membership.





- Overall, our parishioners have a strong sense of spirituality. They see their relationship with God as highly personal and central to their relationship to the Church.
- We want to make a special membership outreach to families and young people. While this was rated as one of the most important issues to our parish, it was also noted as an area where the most improvement is needed.
- We have prided ourselves on our frequent collaborations with other parishes and churches, both within the Episcopal community and inter-denominationally.
- Fundraising was identified as an area that needs improvement. Increased funds would better enable us to conduct the kinds of membership and other outreach we see as so vital to our parish. Increased funds would also better enable us to maintain and/or improve the condition of our buildings.
- In many ways we take comfort with the way we do things. This can make us reluctant to adapt and to try new things. We need a Priest-in-Charge who will inspire and encourage us to try new and creative ways of worship, outreach and growth while being

sensitive to the concerns and challenges that come with change.

- One thing that has become quite clear through their responses is that St. John's parishioners have a strong sense of responsibility to their church and to one another. They place a great deal of emphasis on laity involvement and management of the parish. The laity of St. John's has demonstrated strong leadership. Commitment, faith, support and encouragement within the church as well as within our community. The concept of their relationship with their Priest-in-Charge is clearly one of a partnership that is based upon mutual trust and respect.



THE PARISH'S TOP 5 PRIORITIES FOR OUR PRIEST-IN-CHARGE

The parish survey asked that parishioners prioritise some twelve aspects of church life. They were also asked to identify what, in their opinion, constituted our current best practices and the areas in which we need the most improvement. Their responses to these questions echoed the comments made throughout the body of the questionnaire and provide insight into the role required of our next Priest-in-Charge.





Those roles are:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and to incorporate them into the life of the church.
- Take necessary actions to attract families with children and youth to our church.
- Expand our existing activities, programs and outreach within our current congregation.
- Provide leadership in the area of goal achievement, particularly a related to matters of stewardship and fundraising.
- Place an emphasis on pastoral care by being available for crisis ministry, providing counselling, visiting shut-ins, opening the Priest-in-Charge to meetings with small groups of parishioners, welcoming newcomers and regularly participating in fellowship activities such as coffee hour.

The areas of parish life that were of the highest priority to our parishioners were:

- **Fellowship:** welcoming newcomers, coffee hour, Priest-in-Charge participation, small group meetings and social activities.
- **Relationship Between Parish & Priest-in-Charge:** sense of trust, maintains privacy, strong family/youth orientation, respect, involvement in parish management and budgetary initiatives.
- **Outreach to Special Age Groups:** children, seniors, parents, singles & teens. Active in the community and the Richmond Inter-Parish Council.
- **Sunday Service:** involvement of children, the preaching, liturgical style, music and laity involvement.
- **Pastoral Care:** crisis ministry, counselling, home visits, laity training in this area.





Least among our priorities are making changes to our liturgical style, development of evangelism and giving personal testimony, and enhancing spiritual development through organised programs taught by outside consultants.

It is important to realise that these combined traits, abilities, skills and activities are of the utmost importance to the parishioners of St. John's Church. Our identity as a parish and our sense of our uniqueness are derived from them. As such, they will also be vital for our next Priest-in-Charge.

QUALITIES FOR OUR PRIEST-IN-CHARGE

Congregants were asked to prioritise the qualities they deemed most important in our next Priest-in-Charge. In short, we seek someone who is a pastor, preacher, teacher, youth worker, crisis minister, and someone who enjoys involvement in the parish life. We need someone who is a stewardship leader.

More pointedly, we are looking for someone who:

- Can preach with clarity, integrity and relevance. Someone with an informal, conversational delivery style.
- Has an interest in a strong music program. Someone who can build on the strengths of our choir and can expand our music program into new areas.
- Is youth and family-oriented. Someone who cares about youth and can activate their involvement in our parish.





- Is committed to strengthening the bonds of an inclusive community and is facile in making people from all walks of life feel welcomed, respected and appreciated. Someone with strong skills as a consensus builder and whose focus is on working with groups.
- Nurtures and cares for the parishioners, enabling them to grow in faith. Someone who is responsive to the people of the parish, whose nature is comforting and assuring and who places an emphasis on pastoral care.
- Values excellence in the liturgy and yet is comfortable in expressing his/her own opinions, but also welcomes criticism and dissent. Someone who standards are accounted for by circumstances rather than absolutes.
- Generates ideas and encourages others to take initiative. Someone able to delegate responsibilities. Someone with a variety of interests, but who need not be an expert.
- Has a sense of humour (an essential trait), who is lively and enjoys social involvement. Someone who is comfortable in leading community action through the church.





- Wants to be here (also essential). Someone who is willing to make a commitment to the future of St. John's Church and its Staten Island parishioners.

St. John's is being given the unique opportunity, through a three-year grant from the Diocese of New York, to create a full-time Priest-in-Charge position. The candidates must be aware that after that time it will be the full responsibility of St. John's Church to support their full-time Priest, and will be working together towards that goal. Because of the importance of St. John's to its community and to Staten Island, the Diocese has confidence in that goal.

ABOUT STATEN ISLAND & ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

St. John's Church is located in one of the oldest and most stable neighbourhoods of Staten Island. Staten Island is one of the fastest-growing boroughs in New York City. Like the borough itself, the St. John's community is extremely diverse. With an estimated population of 475,000 as of 2020, Staten Island has long prided itself on being the most suburban of the five boroughs of New York City. Despite its suburban feel, travel to any of the other boroughs, and particularly to Manhattan, is easily accessed and convenient, by either the Verrazano Bridge or the Staten Island Ferry. We have the luxury of also being proximal to New Jersey. In some ways, Staten Islanders experience the best of all opportunities.

Staten Island is home to several attractions, including the Richmond County Bank Ballpark, which is located next to the Staten Island Ferry Terminal. The stadium is home to the Staten Island Yankees, who have



launched the career of celebrated New York Yankee pitcher Wang; it overlooks the East River and the Staten Island September 11th Memorial, a beautiful tribute to the dozens of Staten Island men and women who lost their lives in 2001. Other celebrated attractions are the Staten Island Zoo and both South and Midland Beaches, where year-long visitors stroll along the Boardwalk. A restaurant and catering hall have provided “economic and visitor enhancement” since 2004, by providing dinner guests with stunning views of the shoreline. The Boardwalk also provides easy access to a nearby senior park, which contains



special features such as checkerboard tables, benches and bocce courts. The Ocean Breeze Fishing Pier, opened in 2002, at 835 feet long, is one of the largest in the city. Freedom Circle is also the site of frequent visitors, to commemorate the many servicemen and women from Staten Island who have fought to defend America’s freedom. Staten Island is also home to the Greenbelt, a preservation of 2,800 acres of woodlands, wetlands and meadows.



Cultural diversity is important to Staten Island, as well. The landmark Snug Harbor Cultural Center, originally established as a nineteenth-century residence for retired seamen, also houses the Staten Island Botanical Garden and the Staten Island Children's Museum. This location is also the future home of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, which is currently located at 75 Stuyvesant Place. The Sandy Ground

Historical Museum was established as a farming community during the nineteenth-Century by freed slaves, and is the oldest such community in America. Many descendants of the original settlers still live in the area. Staten Island is also home to the National Lighthouse Museum, the beautifully restored St. George Theatre, and the New York Chinese Scholar's Garden, which is the first Chinese Scholar's Garden in the



United States. Visitors also flock to the Garibaldi Meucci Museum, the Alice Austen House, and the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, located on Lighthouse Hill, which contains a complete replica of a Buddhist Temple. The CSI Center for the Arts, located at the College of Staten Island, features five theatres under one roof, making it Staten Island's ideal performance venue. For a bit of home-grown Broadway entertainment, audiences flock to the campus of Wagner College, where students from the drama department stage sophisticated renditions of popular musicals, both recent and classic, throughout the year.

Staten Island is a land also rich in historical significance. Historic Richmond Town and Conference House Park provide history aficionados with a glimpse into colonial life; the former is the original seat of the Richmond County Government, while the latter is the site of a 1776 peace conference between representatives of the Continental Congress and the Commander of British Forces during the Revolutionary War. Fort Wadsworth, now the Gateway National Recreation Area, is one of the oldest military sites in the United States, having guarded New York City for almost two hundred years.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

In the 1840's the population of the South Eastern end of Staten Island was very small. The area known as Clifton was occupied by large landed gentry and opportunities for worship were limited. The first suggestion about worship was that a "union church" be built which would serve all the various denominations. This plan seemed impractical and since the Episcopalians were the largest and most influential group, it was agreed that an Episcopal Church would be built and it would join the diocese of New York. The agreement was that a pastor of "evangelical views" would be called as Rector.

On September 23, 1843 a meeting was held at the residence of William B. Townsend for the purpose of organizing the parish. Wardens and vestrymen were chosen. All were men of prominence in the community and in larger affairs.



The first services were held at the Clifton Hotel on Cliff Street but a steady increase in attendance revealed a need for a proper Church building. Construction of a small Carpenter's Gothic structure across the road from the present church was completed in 1843 and consecrated on March 30th the following year. It is of particular historical interest that the first child baptized in the church was Cornelius Vanderbilt and the first bride married there was Mrs. Sophia J. Torrance, the daughter of Commodore and Mrs. Vanderbilt.

The first Rector, the Reverend Kingston Goddard, had served Emmanuel Church in Brooklyn and for three years he provided faithful pastoral leadership and eloquent preaching at St. John's. With his departure to become Rector of a large Philadelphia parish, he nominated the Rev. Dr. Alexander Mercer who was then a professor at the University of Pennsylvania to be his successor. He was unanimously elected Rector by the vestry. Ill health forced this brilliant preacher and thinker to retire after five years. He was followed by Richard Abercrombie the scion of an illustrious family both in the States and in England.



Certainly no name is more associated with St. John's Parish in the Nineteenth Century than the Rev. John C. Eccleston who was Rector from 1856 to 1863 and again from 1867 to 1899. His ministry at St.

John's spanned nearly half a century. In his Jubilee sermon of December 31, 1893 he exhorted the parish not to rest on past achievement however grand or however weary they might be, but to press on to what remains to be done for realising God's Kingdom here on earth. It is also worth noting in passing that his daughter Gertrude was Alice Austen's best friend and she and Austen enjoyed many happy hours together at the Rectory.

Bishop Horatio Potter laid the corner stone of the present church on November 10, 1869 and the church was consecrated on September 30, 1871. It was built in Victorian Gothic style with the exception of large clock tower and steeple that served as a landmark for ships entering New York Harbor. At the close of World War I, St. John's sexton, Frank Pflieger, welcomed each shipload of soldiers returning from the War by waving a flag from the steeple and ringing the fine bells of the church.

In 1881 a Rectory was built on the grounds. It was a charming Victorian home, made of stone and cedar shingles with a rich piazza running across the back of the building. Later a legacy of \$5,000.00 from the estate of the Rev. Dr. Mercer was the nucleus for building the Mercer Chapel. This was the first Sunday School building and parish house. All three buildings are reportedly the work of Arthur Gilman a noted 19th Century architect who donated his services as well as a

stained glass window as a memorial to his son. From Bay Street the three buildings presented a picturesque scene.

Later, in 1911 a large hall, the John C. Eccleston Parish House, was added and until it was razed in 1998 served as centre for Christian education as well as for social and community functions of all sorts. There were classrooms, a large auditorium, kitchen, and later, even a basketball court.

In the 1950's the church was redecorated by colourful decorations of blue, green, red and gold painted in the arches and at the heads of columns of the church. Most recently, in July of 2000, four new memorial stained glass windows were added to the Church, which were designed and rendered, by Michael and Son, a venerable Staten Island institution.

One interesting aspect of the clerical leadership in the Twentieth Century was the length of their tenures. Edward Dodd served from 1907 until 1920; William Pott served from 1920 until 1940; Albert Frost served from 1940 until 1943; Alexander Frier served from 1943 until 1960; Howard Bingley served from 1961 until 1978; John-Michael Crothers served from 1978 until 1999; John Romig Johnson served from 2002 until 2005, Roy Cole served from 2008 until 2019, and Rev. Rhoda Treherne-Thomas, Priest Associate has served since 2005.

Today we are in a period of restoring our buildings, deepening our faith, and extending our witness to the wider community. Since 1974 the church has been granted landmark status because it has “a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.” We are concerned both to honor

our rich heritage as part of the historic Catholic Church and our new opportunity to serve Christ in the 21st Century.

Social, demographic and economic changes in the 1970’s and 80’s hit St. John’s Church hard and for a time in 1973 the parish house had to be closed in the winter to save fuel costs. The parish house, the sexton’s cottage and the Rector’s garage were all in appalling



condition and presented the parish with an overwhelming financial burden that could not be ignored. Eventually through the efforts of the Wardens, Vestry and the then Rector, Rev. John-Michael Crothers, a bold plan was conceived. This gave birth to Canterbury House, a moderate-income senior apartment building with lovely ground floor rooms for Church School classes, parish gatherings, and other social and religious occasions. The building is a model for such facilities in the future and a major opportunity for ministry.

In 2002-2003 the parish restored the outside of the Rectory removing the aluminum siding which was installed during the 1970's and returned the look to the Victorian period, back to the gingerbread molding. The interior of the Rectory was both restored and up-dated to include central air-conditioning. The basement was converted into a beautiful parish office which includes an attractive meeting room.

In recent years a handicapped-accessible ramp was added to the church building.

When Dr. Eccleston spoke at the Jubilee celebration of St. John's Church on December 31, 1893, he chose as his text, Joshua 13:1.

"Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the Lord said to him, thou art old and stricken in years and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Eccleston argues that while the

Israelites were weary and their zeal was flagging, God called them to fresh exertions." Dr. Eccleston's point was that God will not let his people rest on past achievement, but calls them to new challenges and new fields of wider service for His purpose. It seems that this dear old parish has struggled valiantly with a limited number of lay leaders and difficult hills of financial necessity to climb. We, responding to God's clarion call, have begun to identify this church as "none other than the house of God, the gate of heaven" and it is becoming a place of refreshment, peace and cheer for all of us. We are deepening our devotion to our Lord and gaining inspiration and purpose to tackle the future under His guiding hand.

A thumbnail sketch like this does not do justice to the rich and varied programs, which this church has sponsored and directed over the many years of its life and ministry. There have been large church schools, choirs and youth choirs, boy scouts, campfire girls, pageants and plays, basketball teams, altar guilds, and the Episcopal Church Women just to mention a few.

OUR PROGRAMS AND PARISH MINISTRIES

Lay Eucharistic Ministers

Eight parishioners, together with an additional seven men and women who have recently completed their Diocesan training, compose the body of St. John's Lay Eucharistic Ministers, who also act as Lay Eucharistic Visitors. These trained and licensed volunteers assist in administering the chalice at the Eucharist during the weekly masses, and deliver communion to those of our parishioners who are hospitalised, invalids, or otherwise unable to travel to church services.

Acolytes





Men, women and children ranging in age from 7 years to well-seasoned adults serve as acolytes, assisting the celebrating priest during regular masses and special services, including holidays and other holy days. They are trained to be crucifers, servers, thurifers, and boat-bearers. They are an enthusiastic group who attend training sessions, and also participate in Acolyte Festivals in the Diocese of New York as well as the October Festivals at the National Cathedral in Washington D.C.

Our acolytes provide an escort of the cross and torches to present the gifts of bread, wine and the collection to the sanctuary at the time of offertory.

Altar Guild

Our Altar Guild currently consists of four teams who serve for two weeks at a time preparing the altar before the services, clean up afterwards, change the altar and votive candles throughout the church, launder and care for the linen and Eucharistic vestments.

Children's Worship and Church School

It is our sincere hope that we may reinstate our children's services at St. John's. During these services the children performed various roles in the service, including those of



lectors, ushers, and gift-bearers. The youth were the focus of the day's sermon with the celebrating priest coming down from the pulpit to address the children in a way that is both concise and contemporary, thereby describing Biblical stories and concepts so that children can understand and relate to them.

We would also like to reinstate a Church School Program. Church school would begin from September through June. At such time the children will be provided with a Bible-based program for the one-room school which would include stories, crafts and activities. The class would begin at 9:45am and the children would then join the parish in church at the "Prayers of the People".

Music

Music plays a large role in the worship at St. John's. We have a small but dedicated choir who meet weekly for rehearsals. We have been using the 1982 Hymnal since 2001. We have sung over 300 of the hymns and several mass settings from this hymnal but there are still a few die-hards who prefer the 1940 hymnal. We use "Wonder, Love & Praise" and "Lift Every Voice and Sing" for anthems and to sing congregationally. The choir has learned chant, both Anglican and plainsong and many of the canticles





used for both the Eucharist and the offices of the church. The choral library is expansive and well organised.

We have a 3 manual and pedal digital organ and a grand piano, both used to enhance worship at St. John's.

Our organist is willing to take requests from the parish of their favourite hymns and we continue to expand our repertoire.

In the past we have hosted *Con Brio*, an acapella group from England, who performed both sacred and secular pieces as well as the *Wagner College Choir* with a concert sponsored by the Richmond IPC (Inter-Parish Council) and the Island-wide Lutheran Churches.

In November 2019, St. John's had the pleasure of being granted a piano concert recital given by Richard Sigona. Mr. Sigona's recital pieces included works by Beethoven, Lizst, Ravel and Schubert. The fundraising concert was followed by a wine and cheese reception.

Outreach

Our commitment to the community is proved by our participation in the many possibilities provided to us. Our parish recently held a food drive to benefit the Stapleton

UAME Church Food Pantry, as the need arose especially during the last several months of the COVID-19 PANDEMIC. In addition, members of our parish generously donated their services by providing meals, offer financial assistance, grocery shop and run errands for members who are seniors and are currently unable to these tasks during this time.

To kick off the Lenten Season, Shrove Tuesday finds us preparing and eating a pancake supper with our local community to support a charity with our free-will offering donated from this event. We consider it an opportunity for reflection and giving as we proceed to the Lent.



Sunshine/Hospitality Committee

We are blessed to have women who see to it that our sick and shut-in members receive cards reminding them we are praying for them.

Episcopal Churchwomen (ECW)

We have an active group of women who do fundraising for our special projects, and are counted on to bake and cook for our special receptions. These women send





flowers, fruit or food baskets to our shut-ins and those who have been recently hospitalised, have lost loved ones, or have had a baby.

Worship

At St John's we believe we are basically a traditional parish although, we do not perceive ourselves to be strictly *High Church*. On Sunday mornings, we celebrate the Rite I Eucharist (no music) at 8 a.m., and at 10 a.m. we celebrate Rite II Eucharist with music and choir. Our 8 a.m. parishioners, average attendance is between 15 to 20, are faithful to this mass which is a said mass at our "Lady Chapel." The only time this mass is changed to 10 a.m. is on Christmas Day. The Rite II Sung Eucharist is each Sunday at 10 a.m. from September through June. During July and August the ordinaries of the mass are not sung. Our Christmas Eve Mass is currently at 10 p.m. which we find more convenient for families and older parishioners as well.

Staten Island has a very active IPC (Richmond Inter-Parish Council) and we celebrate the feasts of All Saints and Ascension as a community at those respective parishes. The IPC meets quarterly.

Our parishioners are comfortable with and committed to maintaining this schedule and to the use of both Rite I and Rite II traditions. We are looking for a Priest-in-Charge who shares these values and who can bring clarity and relevance to the liturgy.

Staten Island has a very active IPC (Richmond Inter-Parish Council) and we celebrate the feasts of All Saints and Ascension as a community at those respective parishes. A Lenten program is held each year at different locations, the subject of which is decided by a small committee of IPC members. A picnic typically held on the first Sunday of June is also sponsored by the IPC which is attended by approximately 150 -- 200 people from all of our Island parishes. The IPC meets quarterly.

Canterbury House

Canterbury House was a joint venture between St. John's Church and Sheldrake Corporation to offer affordable housing for seniors in Staten Island. Two of our buildings, the parish house and the sexton's house, were razed and Canterbury House was built on that property. The goal was for the parish to provide outreach to the community as well as giving us a safe, dry space for our functions.





Canterbury House has 84 one-bedroom apartments, which are affordable to seniors with specific income guidelines. The residents have a community room, and St. John's has its own room us use for our coffee hour, and other parish functions.

Many of the residents have become active in St. John's, while others attend Thursday night Rosaries in their community room



LOOKING FORWARD

As stated above, the parishioners at St. John's do not wish to change the times of Sunday services. We do, however, wish to strengthen our youth involvement. It is our belief that a Priest-in-Charge who can bring clarity and relevance to the liturgy will inspire the youth in our community. We are seeking a Priest-in-Charge who has strong skills as a preacher and as a teacher.

While most of our parishioners prefer a traditional form of service, there are some who strongly believe that we should explore other, more contemporary alternatives, especially regarding music which might appeal to younger parishioners. To this end members of our community have indicated their willingness to offer their time and expertise in this endeavour.



Interest in St. John's?

FIND OUT MORE & APPLY NOW!

- Find more about us on our website at www.stjohnssi.org
- Take a look at our Facebook Group at www.facebook.com/groups/stjohnssi
- E-mail us at info@stjohnssi.org
- Call us at 718-447-1605
- If you want to apply, e-mail Cannon Nora Smith at nsmith@dioceseny.org

And finally . . .

Our needs are varied, our dreams are many, and our vision for the future is vivid. We steadfastly look to the Almighty for guidance in our search for a Priest-in-Charge who can meet out multi-faceted needs. We look forward to inspiring cooperation, active participation, and prayerful commitment from our parishioners. Throughout this process we will join together and grow in faith, as we strive to discern God's purpose in His choice for our new Priest-in-Charge, and the future of our parish.

Search Committee

Chinelo Anosike
Ray Gant

Gail Menkes
Vivian Murray

David Sprosty

Warden

Edwina McCrimmon

Vestry

Susan Abraham-Jacob
David Sprosty

Vivian Murray
Ray Grant

Michael Adams
Agnes Trinity