



St. Mary of Magdala Church

An Ecumenical Catholic Community

LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

The community that is St. Mary of Magdala Church believes that:

We are an ecumenical community, the Body of Christ, St. Mary of Magdala Church.

As the Church in this place at this time

We are called to: Gather for Worship, Cherish our living Catholic Tradition, Witness the Gospel and Minister to Others as Christians in the world. All are welcome here.

In other words, we believe that Jesus has called us as Church (His Body) to continue spreading his gospel message. We follow him. He is in the lead. From our beginnings St. Mary of Magdala Church has encouraged each member to participate in discerning Jesus' call to us. This is an inclusive way of exercising leadership and one that is quite different from our cultural norm. Perhaps the best way to explain our system is by question and answer.

ARE YOUR PASTORS IN CHARGE?

We are in the Ecumenical Catholic Church, which holds to the Tradition of Apostolic Succession for ordained ministry. We look to our pastors for guidance. They are people trained in the Tradition, history, and life of the wider Church, as well as in pastoral ministry and spirituality, and they are ordained as deacons, priests, or bishops. However, our pastors are members of the full community, each member of which helps to discern what Jesus is asking of us year by year, based on our mission statement. It is Jesus who is in charge, and we work and pray together to discern what he is asking of us.

HOW DO YOU DISCERN JESUS' CALL?

Periodically, we gather for a communal discernment meeting. Guided by our pastors and community leaders we address the following question:

What is Jesus calling us to for the next period of time in light of 1) our mission statement; and 2) what is currently happening or needed in our church, our local community, and our world.

When the Focus Circle believes that the time for a communal discernment has come, the last part of the question is framed specifically for each meeting by the Focus Circle working with our pastors. Then the community is given one or two weeks to pray about the question.

At the community meeting we use a process whereby each member is given the opportunity to speak about the answer they feel they received in prayer. No one responds to anyone else - each person simply shares the fruit of their prayer. When each person has had a chance to speak, we then take a few moments of silence to reflect on what we just heard. Then, as a community, we try to identify the common threads we heard in what each person had to say. Those common threads (and they have always been there) usually come together to give us clear direction for the coming months.

YOU MENTIONED COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP - PLEASE EXPLAIN.

There are several elements to the way in which SMMC governs itself:

The Full Parish Community: This is the final discerning body with regard to following Jesus' call. This body makes final decisions about our direction, about major expenditures and each annual budget. It also has voice on selecting or electing members for the other leadership groups. The by-laws of St. Mary of Magdala Church, Inc. recognize that this is the final decision-making body. (St. Mary of Magdala Church, Inc. is incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in the Commonwealth of MA and is recognized as a 501 (c) 3 organization by the IRS).

The Focus Circle: This parish leadership group is comprised of up to four members. As terms expire or seats open, parishioners are asked to prayerfully consider who might serve on this group, and then nominate that person. (You may nominate yourself.) New members are drawn by lot from among those nominees willing to serve. The purpose of the focus circle is to ensure that the parish stays focused on living out its mission statement, especially according to the results of the most recent parish discernment meeting. The focus circle is to monitor parish activities and listen to parishioners' hopes or concerns in between meetings.

The Finance Committee: This leadership group is responsible to monitor the parish's operational budget, propose annual budgets, and oversee any other special funds in existence. It works out contracts for pastors and for rental facilities (or lease or mortgage) which must then be approved by the full parish community. Members may be nominated by any parishioners in consultation with the pastor(s); the committee itself or the pastor(s) also may nominate someone for membership. The full parish community must then vote to accept the nominee as a member of the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee gathers at least quarterly to meet its responsibilities.

The Board of Directors (aka, The Joint Focus/Finance Group): This body is comprised of members of The Focus Circle and The Finance Committee. It meets at least once annually as

required by our documents of incorporation, and/or as needed for major issues affecting the life of the community.

The Pastoral Team: Our current pastoral team consists of our co-pastors, Rev. Kathleen Carpenter, and Rev. Kathy Rigordaeva and one permanent deacon, Rev. Deacon Ann O'Callaghan. We also have one person in training for the diaconate, Jennifer Keon. Rev. Kathleen and Rev. Kathy were called to serve our parish as pastors at the beginning of 2023, to take over the role of co-pastors from Revs. Jim and Marie David, who retired at the end of 2022. Deacon Anne O'Callaghan has served as our Deacon since her ordination in 2013. Members of the Pastoral Team are affiliated with The Ecumenical Catholic Diocese of New England, and are responsible to provide for worship, pastoral care, outreach, and guidance to the parish community.

FINANCES

Annual Budget: SMMC has an annual budget that provides for a part-time salary for pastors, rent for the space where we currently worship, supplies and advertising. A portion of our annual budget is set aside each year as our Charitable Giving Fund, to serve the needs of others.

Charitable Giving Fund: Money is budgeted for this fund in each year's budget as a form of communal tithing. In January of each year a small committee engages in a pre-established process for distributing the money in this fund on local, national, and international levels. As part of this process each registered parishioner can make proposals for the distribution of the fund.

Endowment Fund: In 2018 the parish voted to use the money left in the transition fund to create an Endowment Fund. The transition fund consisted of money raised in a capital campaign in 2013, and was used to facilitate our transition from worshipping at Evensong Retreat Center Chapel to our present home at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. These funds were also used with parish approval to supplement our budget which included a half-time pastor position, shared by two co-pastors. Beginning in 2023 the pastor position shifted to a one-quarter time position, shared by two co-pastors, and the budget no longer needs to be supplemented by the Endowment Fund. The Endowment Fund remains in place to help the parish in emergency conditions, and donations or bequests to the fund are much appreciated.