



# *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 on a yearly basis. 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?**

Each October 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 year in light of 1) our mission statement; and 2) what is currently happening or needed in our church, our local community, and our world.

The last part of the question is framed specifically for each meeting by parish leadership 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 next year.

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 Board of Directors:** This body is comprised of members of The Focus Circle and The Finance Committee. It meets at least one time annually as required by our documents of incorporation, and/or as needed for major issues affecting the life of the community.

**The Focus Circle:** This parish leadership group is comprised of 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 annual 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; the committee itself or the pastors 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 Pastoral Team: Our current pastoral team consists of two priests who serve as co-pastors and one deacon. Most Rev. Jim David also serves as the Bishop of the Ecumenical Catholic Diocese of New England (ECDNE). Rev. Marie David is a Roman Catholic Woman Priest who is also a member of ECDNE. Both Jim and Marie were formally asked by the Parish Community to serve as its pastors in 2010, and they provide those services under contract. Both pastors serve as ex-officio members of the Focus Circle and of the Finance Committee. Bishop Jim appointed Anne O'Callaghan to serve as our Deacon upon her ordination in 2013. Members of the Pastoral Team 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 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.

Transition Fund: In 2012 Jim and Marie alerted the community that we would eventually have to find a new space for worship. To prepare for that a small Capital Campaign was engaged and pledges were made over a three-year period. The Campaign concluded at the end of 2016, and there is presently some 91,000 in the fund.