

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Holbrook, Massachusetts 02343

Welcome to The Little Church that Can.

“Come as you are and be who you are”



Parish Profile 2022

web site: stjohnschurchholbrook.com

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Saint John's Mission Statement

The congregation of St. John's Episcopal Church in Holbrook is dedicated to having a loving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Our mission is to worship God, love our neighbors and spread the good news. We are a loving church family and we welcome all to worship with us. "Come as you are, be who you are". We are dedicated to supporting the needs of our parishioners, our community and beyond, through our outreach programs. We live and serve as followers of Christ and pray that God's love will guide us on our journey.



Mission Strategy for the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Vision Statement

We, the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, are living members of the Body of Jesus Christ. As Jesus gathered his disciples, took bread and blessed it, and then offered his body for us in order to bring reconciliation, forgiveness and healing, so may we offer ourselves in Christ's name.

Embracing Brave Change

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Corinthians 16: 13 – 14)

God is calling us to look ahead and to embrace brave change. As fewer people turn to the church as a source of solace and strength, more than ever we yearn to know and be known by God and one another. In a world plagued by grievous conflict, injustice and poverty, God give us the courage to be agents of reconciliation, justice and abundance. There will be difficult choices for us as followers of Jesus. It is only through ongoing, prayerful discernment together that we will find a path to a faithful future.

Who We Are

St. John's Episcopal Church is known in the community as a warm and welcoming church. We are a church that encourages people to come and worship "As you are" without judgement. A small church that emanates love and is filled with caring people. The people who attend St. John's believe it is important to find time and energy to support their fellow parishioners socially, physically and spiritually. Saint John's provides a safe and comfortable environment that feels peaceful and tranquil. It is a warmhearted and kind church that gives everyone space to express and practice their faith while finding a pathway to grow close to God. The congregation states, they benefit from hearing sermons that pertain to their daily lives and are supported by scripture. This type of sermon provides more clarity and guidance in the way God wants us to live. Dealing with life issues has been a corner stone for our church. St. John's is known, as a resource to help parishioners and the community. We often hear the words, "Go to St. John's for help".



A visit from our Bishop, Gayle Harris
on
March 22, 2022



Decorating our Sanctuary for Christmas.



Our Worship at St. John's

St. John's celebrates Sunday service at 10:00 a.m., using the Holy Eucharist Rite II and alternating between various Eucharistic prayers, using the Book of Common Prayer.

During the COVID pandemic, our Sunday services were available via ZOOM and on our Facebook page. Currently, we attend Sunday services in person while observing the safety rules and regulations suggested by the Diocese of Massachusetts. The congregation is now participating in an improvised Eucharist ceremony, and we are all grateful for this change. We are aware that some of our parishioners cannot attend services, so we have decided to continue to broadcast our church services on ZOOM and Facebook.

Our services always feature piano music by our Music Director. The Deacon leads our choir, but it is not currently active because of Covid restrictions. Gratefully, members of our choir are allowed to sing special solos. However, we are all looking forward to the time when the entire choir can sing together in worship and express our love for God.

St. John's holds many different types of services throughout the year. They are the following: Christmas Eve, where the entire congregation lights candles and sings about the coming birth of Jesus. The other special services are Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, and occasionally we have an Easter Vigil. Some other services include Blessings of the Pets, All Saints, which features a jazz band, Baptisms, Mass on the Grass, and a service that validates the importance of spirituality in the 12 Step programs. Additionally, during COVID we created a sacred place under the "Chapel of The Pines" to hold our regular Sunday services so we could continue to worship God together. Even though our Sunday services were different throughout the year, we always ended them with a request for special blessings to those in need.

Our Sunday services reflect the seasons of the church and the needs of our congregation. Every Sunday we embrace and share God's love and guidance through scripture, prayers, sermon and music. We listen to God's words intended to inspire us to be more like Jesus and to encourage us to spread his love into the world.

Dealing with COVID

It is important to comment about the many challenges COVID 19 presented to our church and congregation. We had to grapple with all the changes and new protocols made by the CDC and the Diocese of Massachusetts. As a result, we found new ways to function, and this meant brainstorming and exploring new ideas to find solutions. What was familiar and routine was no longer acceptable and safe. The consensus at St. John's was to move forward. We decided to hold outdoor services, like our Easter Service which was presented in our parking lot on a flatbed truck. We applied for a grant, as our fundraisers had to be put on hold, the grant made it possible to purchase electronic equipment to broadcast our Sunday services via ZOOM and Facebook. This enabled the church to hold services outdoors or in the parish hall. We were truly astonished by the number of people we were reaching through ZOOM inside and outside of our church building. Members of the church came together to plant flowers outside the church and to create a sacred garden under the pine trees. The Altar Guild continued to improvise and set up sacred places for our Sunday services, such as our parking lot under the pines. Our Music Director played a keyboard to provide us with music outside. We kept music alive during the services with people who volunteered to sing solos since we were not allowed to have a full choir. Our congregation "believes music gives energy to God's words and connects people to God". Many parishioners dropped off food for the Food Pantry and donated toilet paper and paper towels for the church bathrooms. Where others volunteered to record and deliver the money envelopes and donations to the bank every week. There were many who reached deep into their pockets to help with St. John's expenses. Some members attended the Vestry meetings, Land Development meetings, and Bible Study sessions via ZOOM. Everyone helped to nurture and tend to our parish in some way during the pandemic. Many individuals and families prayed from their homes and others made a strong effort to call and check in on everyone.

Worshipping During the COVID - 19 Pandemic



This picture demonstrates what “thinking out of the box” can accomplish. Easter celebration was different in 2021. Parishioners attended St. John’s outdoors Easter Worship service by sitting in their cars in the church parking lot. Those who participated could hear the service and view the altar assembled on a flat-bed truck. The Priest and Deacon walked from car to car to distribute the Holy Eucharist while following strict state and Diocesan COVID protocols.

Christian Education

Currently, our adult Bible Study meetings are held on Tuesday evenings from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm. The meetings are held in person and on Zoom. Our Bible Study meetings follow the African Bible Study Method. This format was introduced by the African Delegation to the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church. It focuses on reflective reading and praying of Scriptures.

This year 2022, the Bible Study group decided to read through the Gospel from the beginning to the end. We are now reading Matthew through Mark and then Luke and John.

During the Lenten season of 2022, we met on Wednesday nights at 7:00 pm via Zoom, to worship the Stations of the Cross with Compline. It was facilitated by our Interim Priest, Billie Mae Gordon.

Our interim priest has also started a book reading group. The group meets on Saturdays at 11:00 am to review and discuss various books of interest to the congregation. The group is currently reading and discussing “Looking for God in Messy Places” by Jake Owensby.

One of the hi-lights of Sunday services has been when the children drew and colored pictures of anything that was of interest to them. Then they presented their pictures at the altar to the priest. The priest would then interpret the drawings and discuss how the pictures related to God and the beautiful world He created.

It is our hope to see this practice return in the future along with re-establishing our church school.

St. John's Outreach & Community Events

St. John's parishioners feel very strongly about the apparent needs for outreach programs and community events. We are known as a community driven church or the "The Little Church that Can". We are very motivated and looking forward to initiating new ideas and plans to collaborate with our local churches, to establish intergenerational events and activities. We are excited about the possibilities of increasing our current programs, beyond our mission of collecting items for the Food Pantry and the homeless. When the time presents itself to implement these ideas, we hope to develop new relationships within the community, plus create events and plan faith-based experiences. We pray these new experiences will be life changing and will help take families and individuals to their next step toward Christ. We believe many of our ideas and plans will materialize some day and we will be ready by being the hands and feet of God to offer our service.

Our hope is to provide service to adults in a multitude of ways. We plan to provide space and understanding for several community self-help programs, senior activities and luncheons, Meals on Wheels, Spring & Fall Fairs, yard sales, cook outs, and spaghetti dinners.

We also want to offer many activities for children and their families. We are looking into Summer Bible Camp, Cub Scout Meetings, family activities, children's morning reading and play sessions, movie nights, and Trunk -A- Treat, a community activity sponsored by St. John's and the Cub Scouts. Candy is distributed to children to help celebrate Halloween in a safe environment. The children and parents walk around the church parking lot to look at the decorated car trunks.

We feel it is crucial to reach people within and outside our church walls. We want to make a positive impact on the spiritual, physical and social needs of our congregation, community and beyond.

Meals on Wheels Program

The Meals on Wheels Program is located at Saint John's Parish Hall for distribution of food to our local community.

Volunteers sort and package meals Monday through Friday. They deliver between 60-70 meals daily to senior citizens and others in need of this valuable program.



Toy Drive for families in Holbrook

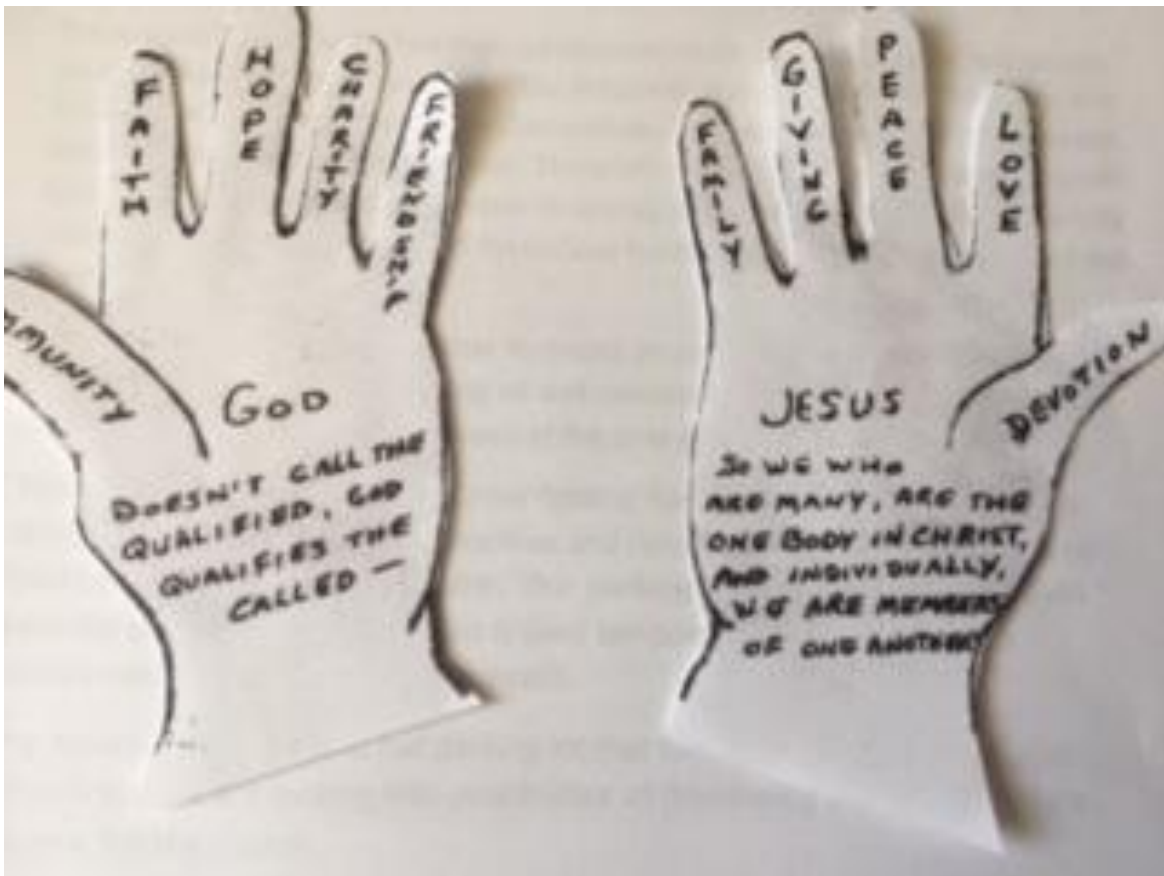


Future Opportunities

Our parishioners are aware that life can be very complicated. We all know neighbors, family members and friends who commonly experience loneliness, polarization, anxiety and helplessness. These symptoms are so prevalent in our society. Our congregation has expressed that attending church and experiencing God's love and support from fellow worshipers can help with some of these issues. We realize the need to attend church is greater now than ever before. Attending church or participating in a faith-based conversation presents an opportunity to talk about God's unconditional love, His forgiveness and acceptance of everyone. Our parish often talks about ways to help individuals who are struggling in life. Some members have suggested, we should develop new ways and tools to reach people of all ages regarding their personal and spiritual issues. In order to make this happen, it was suggested that St. John's needs to broaden its focus from traditions and specific viewpoints to include contemporary issues that are plaguing our community and country. It is important to look at the confusion and pain that is occurring in our world. We can clearly see the opportunity to have conversations regarding human problems and how the teachings of Jesus can help everyone cope with life. Our parish can do this through traditional ways and by expanding our online approach. An online approach may offer a doorway for the curious, for those who are unconvinced or who want to know how to apply God's wisdom to their lives. Also, for those who want to know what Christianity is about and how it can help them in this current world. Our church can do this through Zoom, our website, and we can create "chat sessions" to discuss many spiritual and social issues. These sessions will hopefully reinforce the knowledge that no one is truly alone in this life. Communicating through the digital world may help reach many unconnected people who are seeking meaningful answers. Our parish concurs about the importance to feel and understand God's love and to know He is there to give us daily guidance. We feel this knowledge and understanding is significant for people who are struggling with their health. The parish supports our traditional ministry as well as the new expanded online Christian faith experience. We pray these opportunities may lead people toward a personal connection with Christ, a peaceful existence and a desire to attend church.

The Future is Bright

We are a parish who is committed to following through with our visions. We are very inspired and motivated by our feelings of love and our belief in Jesus Christ. We will continue to strive to be seen and known by how we love and care about our parishioners, community and beyond. As a result, our congregation has come to a consensus, that worshiping at St. John's has given us a sense of peace and has nurtured our love for God and each other. As one parishioner stated, "St. John's never leaves you and you are always a part of St. John's family".



Building and Grounds

In 1953, four acres of land were donated to St. John's by a devoted parishioner. The church was dedicated on Ash Wednesday, 1955. The main floor of the church consists of the narthex, nave, sanctuary, and altar. The sanctuary may comfortably accommodate up to eighty parishioners during a Sunday Worship service. Outside the sanctuary is a memorial garden surrounded by arborvitae bushes. The garden is located close to the front door of the church.

Downstairs is our church hall that can accommodate 100 people. The hall houses an office for the clergy and one for the treasurer and her assistant. There are two rooms that are in the forecast for renovations. They may be used for future needs such as a library or for Bible classes. There are two handicap accessible bathrooms located on this floor and an elevator to access the main floor. Also, there is a fully operational kitchen that is used for various functions throughout the year and our Sunday coffee hour.

The parishioners worked together to create an outside "Chapel in the Pines". This is located adjacent to the parking lot and consists of a walking path, benches to rest, reflect, and pray in the privacy of the pine grove.

Throughout the past four years, new lighting has been installed in the church. Windows were replaced in the narthex and recently a new drainage system to take care of seeping ground water. The parking lot can accommodate 30-40 vehicles and often our parking lot is used temporarily by the local police department for overflow parking needs.

We have property behind our parking lot that has not been developed. Our church leaders are looking into possibilities of developing the land for future income for the church.

History of Saint John's Church

In Europe, during the “war to end all wars”, a new Episcopal parish was quietly being established in the small rural community of Holbrook on the South Shore. The year was 1914, the place was an upper room situated unpretentiously over the town's only drug store. In this new space, two Bostonians, Reverend William W. Love and Deaconess Marion M. Furness conducted worship services.

By the fall of 1917, the loyal parishioners had vacated the rented hall above the corner drug store for new larger quarters near Holbrook Square. A house was purchased and renovated for use as the house of worship. For the next thirty-eight years this would be the parish center for the Episcopal Church. The church was rumored to have the shortest altar rail in the diocese which could accommodate all of four communicants.

By 1953, some four acres of land had been gifted by a devoted parishioner. Nine months later, on June 6, 1954, construction began. This was to be the site of the present church building on South Franklin Street. On Ash Wednesday, 1955, St. John's was dedicated to the Glory of God by the Bishop of Massachusetts, the Right Reverend Norman B. Nash, and opened for public worship.

Over the years St. John's has been a center for scouts, civil-rights activists, veteran's organizations, Alcoholics Anonymous, community youth programs, The Food Pantry and Meals on Wheels. The Parish has provided shelter for the homeless and meals for the hungry.

St. John's gained in membership by providing programs to integrate newcomers into parish life and activities. The membership list also reflected outreach to minorities that composed a small but growing segment of the town population. St. John's reorganized to meet the needs of its people. At present, because of some significant changes such as population shift, inflation, the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Parish has experienced sadly, loss of membership and again is living through a difficult period of adjustment. Lay leadership is traditionally strong and there remains a dedicated core group of people struggling and seeking new ways to serve the Lord and each other. Our congregation sincerely believes they have a God-given mission to fulfill, not only in our church community, but in Holbrook and the larger community. God's guidance and wisdom will help us to continue with hope and trust as did the earlier founders of St. John's.

About the Town of Holbrook

The Town of Holbrook's first settlers in 1634 were the Cochatos. Later in the year 1640, the Town of Holbrook was incorporated as part of the newly formed Town of Braintree. The Town of Holbrook and other portions of Braintree separated in 1793 to form the new Town of Randolph in which Holbrook was known as East Randolph. On leap year day, February 29, 1872, the village of East Randolph separated from the Town of Randolph and incorporated as the Town of Holbrook. The town uses this unique birthday in that it will be 'forever young' as an opportunity to gather with friends both old and new as it celebrates this unusual birthday. Also, during this time of incorporation, Holbrook was a leading center of boot and shoe production in the United States.

Holbrook, population 11,405, is situated on the South Shore approximately 22 miles south of Boston. We have excellent rail, air and highway facilities. The principal highways are Route 37 and 139, which intersects at the center of town and will bring you to Route 3 and Route 24. The commuter rail services of South Station, Boston are available on the Middleboro line from Holbrook/Randolph Rail Station located off Union Street. Holbrook is a member of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) which provides fixed bus route services to Quincy Adams, Quincy Center and Braintree Stations. The MBTA also provides 'The Ride', a paratransit service for the elderly and disabled.

All statistical information for Holbrook can be obtained on-line:
townofholbrookma.gov



Our New Rector

The parishioners at St. John's Episcopal Church are searching for a new part-time priest. We began preparing for our search by collecting written answers to our church questionnaire, engaging in many conversations and investing a great deal of time in listening to requests and concerns. Our preparation has provided the necessary information to help define the set of skills and qualities the congregation deems important in a priest. The qualities and skills identified below are not meant to be overwhelming, and we do not anticipate a potential candidate to exhibit everything mentioned. Our congregation has already gone through an adjustment period and a transition process that is needed to accept a part-time priest. The congregation knows how to work and function within this type of setting. We will rally to do whatever is required to help our new priest and to move forward to keep our church going.

The parishioners at St. John's church are looking for a priest who is caring, compassionate, understanding and accepting of diversity. We wish to find someone who exhibits leadership qualities and is prepared to give their opinion or advice to solve problems. A person who is welcoming, friendly, and approachable. An individual who is called to listen, console, motivate, and provide assistance to members of our congregation and community. We are looking for a priest who will help work with us to increase the attendance at St. John's and is willing to support our outreach goals.

The congregation hopes to find someone who shares our love for music, who demonstrates a healthy sense of humor, energy, and is charismatic. Most of all, it is important for our future priest to explain and spread the Gospel to our parishioners and beyond. Also, to teach and guide us how to apply scripture to our daily lives, especially in areas of personal struggles.

As mentioned before, we understand our new priest will be limited to a part-time position. Therefore, we are aware this will require all members of the church to help in various ways to lighten the responsibilities of the priest. Our goal is to work together to be effective, productive, and to spread God's love through his words and our actions.

ST. JOHN'S FINANCES 2018-2021

INCOME	2018	2019	2020	2021
Pledge Plate Special Offerings	36,492	39,668	40,721	44,192
Fund Raisers	11,266	11,064	0	5,069
Property Usage	6,496	6,490	3,200	3,100
Other Income	55,057	43,133	51,417	43,367
Totals	109,311	100,355	95,338	95,738
EXPENSES	2018	2019	2020	2021
Salaries	51,837	51,117	38,820	57,845
Diocese Assessment	2,000	2,016	2,854	1,000
Gas & Electric	9,947	8,074	5,923	6,228
All other expenses	41,767	36,148	46,741	32,586
Totals	105,368	94,355	94,338	97,659
Pledge Cards Received	31 28,813	32 32,482	33 35,092	22 33,998
Pledges Received	28,694	30,964	34,651	35,394
Plate	5,783	7,096	4,426	6,523

Church Leadership & Staff:

Clergy: Reverend Billie Mae Gordon, Interim Priest

Deacon: Liz Good

Music Director: Jeffery Williams

Sexton: Monique De Oliveira

Vestry:

Senior Warden: Susan Sullivan Junior Warden: Karla Semeter

Treasurer: Linda Brown Assistant Treasure: Marilyn Webb

Clerk: Linda Meeker

Vestry Members: Bill Schell, David Hall, Gary Sodergren, Gerri Butler,
Michial Barnes and Jeffery Kasica

Search Committee:

Chairperson: Geraldine Butler

Search Committee Clerk: Linda Meeker

Search Committee Members: Evadne Symister, Gary Sodergren,
Carolyn Murphy, and Marge Richards

Search Committee Consultant: Steve Williams

Contact Information:

Business e-mail: stjohns.holbrook@gmail.com

Web page: stjohnschurchholbrook.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stjohnsholbrookma

Photo Events at St. John's



St John's Pumpkin Patch 2018. Proceeds were collected for our church and shared with the Navajo Nation in New Mexico.





Holiday fair at St. John's 2021



Trunk- A- Treat at St. John's



Mardi Gras Sunday at St. John's

A King or Queen of Mardi Gras is selected and given the crown to wear for the year.

