Saint Peter's is a church on a mission: To embody the love of God as Christ's heart, mind, and hands.
About Us

St. Peter’s Church in the City of Philadelphia is thriving—an historic church seeking to deepen our relationship with Christ and each other. We are a congregation of 425 souls of all ages. Some have been members for decades, others are passing through. Some of us are Episcopalians, many are not. We represent a broad diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds and are welcoming to all. We are singles, couples, and families; straight and gay. Many of us understand ourselves to be on a journey of faith, responding to God’s call and seeking to live in the Way of Christ. We are eager to integrate our faith into our daily lives. Our commitment to welcoming and honoring each person is evident in the rich diversity of our ministries and the enthusiasm and energy with which we carry them out.
History of St. Peters Church

The first service at St. Peter’s Church was held on September 4, 1761, and the church has been in continuous use ever since.

St. Peter’s was founded in 1758 by members of Christ Church living in newly-settled Society Hill. Rising on land donated by William Penn’s sons, Thomas and Richard, it was designed and built by Scottish architect/builder Robert Smith. St. Peter’s and Christ Church were united until 1832. William White, Rector of both churches from 1779 until his death in 1836, was chaplain to the U.S. Congress during the Revolution, founder of the Episcopal Church in 1784, its first presiding bishop and first bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

Most of the church remains as it was in the eighteenth century. Smith designed it in the mid-Georgian auditory style, with the classical lines and clear glass windows of the Age of Reason. The pulpit and lectern are set at the opposite end of the aisle from the altar, projecting into the congregation, in order to focus attention on the Word of God, a reflection of the religious thought of the day. The original high-backed box pews, including Mayor Samuel Powel’s box which George and Martha Washington often frequented, were designed to retain heat in winter. With the advent of central heating, many churches removed their box pews, but since St. Peter’s services are conducted at both ends of the church, the original arrangement has been kept.

The tower and steeple, designed by renowned Philadelphia architect William Strickland, was added in 1842 to house a chime of eight bells donated by Benjamin Chew Wilcocks and cast at the Whitechapel Foundry in London where the Liberty Bell came from. Slaves and servants of members sat on hard benches at the west end of the gallery. One of these slaves, Absalom Jones, became a highly-respected leader of the original African-American community of Philadelphia, founded the first African-American Episcopal Church, the African Church of St. Thomas, in 1794 and was the first black Episcopal priest.

St. Peter’s has ministered to its changing community through nearly 250 years, through the American Revolution, the arrival of many groups of immigrants, urban decline and rebirth, and is committed to continuing into the future its original mission of service and sanctuary for all in need.
St. Peter’s Today

St. Peter’s is a thriving urban parish whose members nourish one another in lives of faith, share the love of Christ, and serve the people of this neighborhood and city.

By the Numbers

- 174 average Sunday attendance
- 423 active parishioners
- 19 new members welcomed in 2014
- 7 marriages and 12 births in 2014
- 55 choir members

CLICK HERE to watch a video about St. Peter’s church and congregation.
Outreach at St. Peter’s Church

St. Peter’s Food Cupboard
In 1987, someone knocked on the doors of St. Peter’s Church and asked for food. This simple question sparked the creation of the St. Peter’s Food Cupboard, which now serves an average of 180 families each week. In 2011, Philabundance bestowed upon the St. Peter’s Food Cupboard its highest rating, placing us in the top 5% of Philadelphia food cupboards for quality and scale of service. The Food Cupboard is managed by more than 100 volunteers from the church, neighborhood, and community. We believe that no one should go hungry, and we make food available at no cost to our clients.

CLICK HERE to watch a 3-minute video about the St. Peter’s Food Cupboard.

The Guatemala Partnership
Since 2005, St. Peter’s has had a partnership with The Canterbury School in Guatemala City, a school of 175 students enrolled from preschool through sixth grade, many of whom could not afford to attend school without our support.

Each year we send a group down to the school, to continue our friendship with the children and teachers and to complete a project to improve the school. Service projects have included the planting of more than 200 trees, painting the entire school (inside and out), planting a vegetable garden, and updating old playground equipment. During the past few years, St. Peter’s has funded a computer lab, audiovisual equipment, musical instruments, new bathrooms and new flooring, windows and electricity for its second floor classrooms. A group from St. Peter’s Church most recently visited The Canterbury School in August 2014.
Christian Formation

The Christian life is a journey of faith—a journey of learning and relearning. We find strength and food for this journey through meeting and praying with others, wrestling with questions of faith, learning more about God and each other, and serving the community.

Children & Youth

We believe that children are gifts from God. They bring their own spiritual gifts and perspectives, both giving and receiving ministry. They are an essential and integral part of the St. Peter’s community. Christian formation that is engaging, creative and welcoming fosters a deeper relationship with God, helps children connect their story to the larger Christian story and inspires service to the world in God’s name.

Although St. Peter’s welcomes children at all times, a special service for young children and their families takes place at 9 a.m. every Sunday. This service is designed to nurture children’s spiritual formation and growth through singing, stories, and communion. St. Peter’s also offers a world-class music education for children grades 1-8 with its boys and girls choirs, Sunday morning Church School, a parents group, and an active youth group.

Faith Matters and Adult Formation

Covering a wide range of topics from “Can Bioethics be Christian?” to Gospel Parables to the poetry of WH Auden to exploring the origins of Celtic prayer and everything in between, Faith Matters is designed to address topics of interest and issues of importance, both secular and religious, in the world today. Although we usually have speakers, ample time is also given for conversations and questions. Meets Sunday mornings from September through early June.

St. Peter’s also offers an online church school, occasional classes about the Episcopal Church and faith, gifts discernment workshops, and many other ministries and small groups.
About Society Hill

The spire of St. Peter’s Church rises above the historic Society Hill neighborhood in Center City, Philadelphia.

Laid out in the last quarter of the 17th century, Society Hill encompasses Washington Square, one of four central parks in William Penn’s original grid plan of Philadelphia. The neighborhood abuts the Delaware River, which it overlooks from a hill named for the Free Society of Traders — a company chartered in 1682 by Penn and the namesake of Society Hill.

The neighborhood flourished as a residential and commercial district into the 19th century, as fashionable Georgian and Federal style homes were built alongside taverns, market halls, and churches. Today, Society Hill continues to be one of Philadelphia’s most desirable residential neighborhoods. Historic institutions, including churches and a hospital, still exist, complementing an atmosphere of mature trees, granite block streets, brick sidewalks, and reproduction “Franklin” street lamps.

Society Hill is home to Washington Square, one of Philadelphia’s five public squares laid out by William Penn in his original plan for the city, has been a scenic modern-day park for 200 years. Its proximity to Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell and the Independence Visitor Center make it hard for visitors and locals to resist the appeal of walking the same land and streets the nation’s founders once strolled. Today’s beautiful park setting and the lovely homes and buildings that surround it complete the experience.

Two blocks from St. Peter’s Church sits Headhouse Square. With its cobblestone streets and original 18th- and 19th-century buildings that line the streets, Headhouse Square remains as picture-perfect today as it was hundreds of years ago. It’s also home to Headhouse Square Farmers’ Market, the oldest farmers’ market in Philadelphia. Held every Sunday May through December, the market boasts more than 25 farmers and producers, all displaying their fresh produce, baked goods and local meats, cheeses and wines.
How to Apply

St. Peter’s Church in the City of Philadelphia is a church on a mission: To embody the love of God as Christ’s heart, mind, and hands. We are looking for an Associate Rector to help us grow more fully into our vision.

The Associate Rector will be primarily responsible for two aspects of parish life: Serving Others (outreach) and Christian Formation for all ages.

Outreach: Oversee all current outreach initiatives for adults, children, and youth as well as explore new outreach opportunities, especially partnerships with other churches and organizations.

- Bring fresh vision and leadership to existing programs
- Support, nurture, and expand our Food Cupboard and its satellites, currently feeding over 200 families per week.
- Support our partnership with the Canterbury School in Guatemala City, and work with the Guatemala Partnership committee to plan and execute our yearly trip to the school.
- Working with the Director of Music, develop a plan for an after school music/academic support/mentoring program for underserved children in Philadelphia.
- Engage parishioners in existing and new ministries.

Christian Formation:
- Bring fresh vision and leadership to existing programs.
- Work with the Adult Education Committee to plan Faith Matters, our weekly adult forum, as well as seasonal or occasional offerings (Lenten evenings, retreats, Quiet days, etc).
- Work with the youth group leaders to develop and implement an engaging program for our youth.
- Gather and lead a small group in developing and implementing an intergenerational Sunday morning offering.

Liturgical Leadership/Pastoral Care
Celebrate and preach regularly, working with the Rector and Director of Music to plan liturgy. With the Rector and a lay pastoral care team, provide pastoral care, including preparation for Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals.

The Associate Rector reports to the Rector. S/he will have a performance review after 6 months and then annually thereafter.

This full time position is available beginning Sept. 1, 2015.

The successful candidate will be energetic, self-starting, creative, warm and welcoming, and as good at implementation and organizing as they are skilled at vision and reflection. We are seeking someone who is eager to lend their talents to the development of a growing program sized parish that is missional and deeply engaged in our neighborhood and city. While the
position is posted as primarily Christian Formation and Serving Others, there is some flexibility in specific ministry areas depending on the experience and passion of the successful candidate.

To apply please send a cover letter, resume, and 3 references to Kate Randall, Parish Administrator, at randall@stpetersphila.org.