

St. Margaret's

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

2022 Vestry Candidates

Candidate for Senior Warden

Michael Armstrong



1. How many years have you been a member of St. Margaret's?

21

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

St. Margaret's both grounds me in my faith and community and continually challenges me to grow and encounter new facets and deeper knowledge of how Christ is manifested in our world.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

I have served previously as Vestry secretary and two terms as a Vestry member during the Rector Susan Blue years; I began a second tour of duty on Vestry during Kym Lucas' rectorship, starting as Junior Warden for two, two-year terms through the transition to selection of Richard as our Priest-in-Charge then as our Rector, after which I have served as Senior Warden for two years.

My professional career ranges from time as a journalist and editor, to working as an attorney with specializations that included legislative drafting, advice to boards and commissions, HR and trial work, serving in executive leadership in the political and government realms, and currently as a non-profit chief executive officer.

All of these experiences have provided exposure to the dynamics of boards, governance, budget development, strategic planning, communications to key constituents, fundraising, event planning, and advice to senior leaders.

4. St. Margaret's has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

I think it's important to provide a sense of community to that virtual worship cohort. As we learn together regarding the differences between virtual and online worship, I'm hopeful that we will be able to layer in additional elements of virtual interaction and sustained pre- and post- worship engagement. I would also like to see targeted outreach from clergy and lay leaders to attendees whose primary presence is virtual, seeking feedback and assuring that those worshippers feel a connection that goes beyond observing a worship service. Worship itself is an action and not merely a viewing opportunity – we can experiment with ways to make sure the experience is not a passive one.

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent for change?

Building upon its heritage, St. Margaret's must continue to be a safe harbor for important conversations and raising of awareness regarding how the work of anti-racism and social justice is "forever work." But unlike discourse in the secular marketplace of ideas, our focus must be grounded in the lessons of scripture and faith; our human leaders and political process are imperfect vehicles that will always fall short of our Christian ideals.

Our church facility has not yet been fully positioned as a community center to host diverse conversation, to organize and launch community-based action, and intentionally work to reach our immediate neighborhoods in a way that leverages the talent and financial resources in our midst.

This also means an evolved approach to addressing homelessness that moves toward root causes and directing those who enter our facility to experts in addressing needs. And this also means redoubling our efforts to demonstrate thought leadership to the greater church community regarding inclusive language.

Our focus on social justice and anti-racism should also be mindful of seeking to heal those who have been hurt and injured by their previous church experiences. This can occur through intentional welcoming, sustained inclusion, and careful listening.

Candidate for Junior Warden

Jenny Carson



1. How many years have you been a member of St. Margaret's?

28 years

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

The community at St. Margaret's is important to me, because of how supported I feel by the church. I have had the great privilege of raising 3 children in the church, and I know they benefited from the communion of a diverse group of individuals focused on spirituality and important social issues.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

I am a professor and currently chair of my department; both roles require clear communication and the ability to follow up on student and faculty needs. I believe that open communication is important, and I bring that emphasis to the role of Junior Warden.

4. St. Margaret's has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

I support the efforts to invest in continuing to improve online worship. It is probably important to get feedback from virtual worshippers about their experiences; what's working, and what's not? Depending upon the needs of virtual worshippers, we might also expand lay-led online prayer opportunities in places such as compline services, or develop prayer circles.

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent for change?

I think that we need to start at home by hiring BIPOC individuals when possible. We might also intentionally engage with other churches with a predominately BIPOC population in order to collaborate in addressing community needs.

Candidates for Vestry

Karen Castro



1. How many years have you been at St. Margaret's?

I have been a parishioner at St. Margaret's for nearly 8 years.

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

I became an active member of St. Margaret's after a time of loss and transition. The first time I attended Sunday service, I was moved by the authenticity and warmth with which parishioners greeted one another during the Sign of Peace. This same welcoming spirit

was extended to me years ago and continues to be present to all others who come through our doors to this day. Since that time, I have built a life full of love, friendship and fellowship while deepening my connection to God. The church is my living encounter with and participation in the Body of Christ. St. Margaret's is my community, my home and my heart.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

I understand that the Vestry is composed of individuals with varied and diverse backgrounds. They come together to do the work of our parish in concert with our Rector. Accordingly, I believe that finding common ground is central to the success of the Vestry. As such, I am confident that soft skills would be a vital asset to the group.

As an applied linguist, St. Margaret's commitment to inclusive language and diversity is incredibly important to me; I would welcome any opportunity to serve in this endeavor. In addition, my previous experience in Supplier Diversity, championing small, women and minority-owned businesses means that I have had some background addressing racial injustice through programs that promote an inclusive approach.

During my years at St. Margaret's, I have served in many ways: as an usher during the Sunday service, editor the weekly e-newsletter, a member of the Stewardship Committee, the Communications Team, the Flower Guild, the Jewelry Department in the Rummage Sale and co-organizer of our activities for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. From my service and active participation in parish life, I have developed a multi-faceted understanding of the spirit and work of this church and its people.

4. St. Margaret's has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

The fact that St. Margaret's has been able to successfully navigate worship during the pandemic is a testament to the talent, dedication and hard work of our community. I hope that we will continue our online formation programs, ensuring that most, if not all, remain in hybrid form. If not already in place, I would suggest a rota where at least one member of the Vestry be in attendance at the virtual coffee hour.

In May 2020, I organized a watch party as part of our Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM) celebration. At a time of difficulty and uncertainty, it was a true joy to be together as a community in a relaxed and fun way. Perhaps we could have a hybrid

watch party once a month. I'd also suggest a movement and prayer class as a way to diversify our faith and formation offerings.

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent for change?

I am proud to be a member of St. Margaret's because of its long-standing history supporting diversity and inclusion as well as other matters of social justice and anti-racism. In many ways, St. Margaret's has already been an agent for change (The Rev. Vienna Cobb Anderson was the first woman to serve as rector of a parish in the Diocese of Washington and Charlie's Place continues to help the vulnerable in our neighborhood). Our work, then, is to continue this tradition. Programs such as Sacred Ground deepen our knowledge and understanding. Perhaps there could be shorter, less intensive offering. Although we were unable to include bystander intervention training (as part of our APAHM activities) last year, I'm hopeful that we might be able to do so this year as part of our ongoing commitment to education and social justice.

Annie Elliott



1. How many years have you been a member of St. Margaret's?

20+

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

I was baptized Episcopalian, but I wasn't raised in a faith tradition. When I met my now-husband, he invited me to accompany him to St. Margaret's. At first, I was a

fair-weather attendee – and I had reservations. I knew very little about “Church” capital C, and I certainly didn’t know much about being an Episcopalian.

But I kept coming to St. Margaret’s. I took the rectors at their word: no matter who you are, you are welcome here. Through sheer repetition and the relentless kindness of the clergy and parishioners, I gradually became comfortable in this place. And I gradually came to accept God’s love.

Today, St. Margaret’s is important to me for many reasons. Perhaps most important, this church has been a constant as my life has changed – and continues to change. Emotionally, attending services gives me the space to be quiet and think about people not in my immediate orbit. Intellectually, I love the diversity of thought and the diversity of experience of St. Margaret’s parishioners. Spiritually, in this next, empty-nest chapter of my life, I’d like to dedicate more time to spiritual growth and avail myself of the classes St. Margaret’s offers. And finally, it is through St. Margaret’s that I feel most connected to D.C. and am inspired to work to make it a better, kinder place.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

Before I started my own business 18 years ago, I worked in museum development. The fundraising, strategic thinking, and communications skills I acquired in those positions have served me well as Chair of the St. Margaret’s Stewardship Committee, and I’m confident I would put those skills to good use as a Vestry member. My experience analyzing organizational budgets also would be valuable as the Vestry navigates the church’s financial future.

4. St. Margaret’s has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

I agree that providing virtual worship opportunities is critical to St. Margaret’s ministry, and I’m extremely grateful to (and in awe of!) our amazing tech team. To enhance the virtual worship experience, we should continue to alternate readings and the prayers of the people between remote and in-person parishioners. In the absence of providing “eucharist-to-go” kits on a weekly basis (which I don’t see as feasible), we also should consider having the entire congregation recite a Eucharist prayer for remote worshippers.

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent for change?

Participating in marches and signing petitions are important ways of demonstrating our commitment to social justice, and St. Margaret's should continue to do those things. I also believe, though, that social change isn't possible unless we help individuals. Strengthening current and exploring new outreach programs is the most powerful way we can bring about social change.

Charlie's Place has been St. Margaret's primary outreach program for years, but it was severely hindered by our inability to serve clients indoors during the pandemic. A fresh look at how Charlie's Place can best serve clients *today*, with the resources we have in hand and adhering to current safety protocols, will ensure its success into the future.

As for new programs, I am extremely excited by the church's current effort to support members of an Afghan family as they begin a new life in the United States. Several parishioners introduced the idea to St. Margaret's, and after much discussion and prayer, they and the clergy discerned a path forward. Thanks to them, the St. Margaret's community will have the privilege of helping a family through a time of stress and upheaval, and that is Christian love in its purest form. Undertaking this and similar efforts – thereby serving as an example to other churches and organizations– is a powerful way to demonstrate our commitment to social justice.

Garrison Gordon



1. How many years have you been a member of St. Margaret's?

I have been a member at St. Margaret's for 2.5 years.

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

St. Margaret's has a long legacy of welcoming all to God's table, often before it was widely accepted to do so. The church noticeably connects with those who've been hurt by another faith community. For both reasons, I saw potential in what St. Margaret's could be to me on that very first visit. These two things create and sustain a community of faith that feels like home to me.

St. Margaret's is equally important to me for what it could be as we continue to live into that legacy. To me, that means continuing to reach and welcome those who are most marginalized. It means being a visible presence to our local community and our diocesan community, seeking opportunities to collaborate and serve.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

I am a financial planning and analytics professional for a healthcare company. I have experience with data analysis, budgeting, and reading financial statements. I also have program and project management experience. These skills have allowed me to participate meaningfully in financial management of the parish and assist with project management of key programs, including Charlie's Place.

4. St. Margaret's has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

St. Margaret's could experiment with opportunities for interaction among Zoom participants during the online service. Creating these windows could elevate the online worship experience to feel more engaging. One opportunity is to unmute participants to allow for exchange of the peace. A second would be to have an online worshiper pray aloud the prayer for spiritual communion while in-person worshipers receive communion.

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent for change?

St. Margaret's might first look inwardly at its own history as a worship community to recognize opportunities for more diversity in our worship leaders and participants. Then St. Margaret's can become an agent for change by expanding our anti-racism programming via partnership with other organizations. That may be co-hosting a program like sacred ground with another parish. It may also involve partnering with a

local organization to provide direct support to those in need (e.g. mutual aid) or to support political action on a local issue.

Linda Heaney



1. How many years have you been a member of St. Margaret's?

32 years

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

St. Margaret's deepens my faith in Christ's teachings, reinforces the power of prayer, and offers a sense of non-judgmental belonging. Weekly readings remind me to welcome the stranger, care for the less fortunate and do what I can to make the world a kinder and more just place. It also gives me the chance to give God thanks and praise and hold up those near and dear to me in prayer. And when I share my joys and sorrows with my fellow parishioners, they love, laugh, celebrate, and grieve with me as I do with them. They are my community.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

As a small business owner who organized and led international recruitment tours for university admissions officers, I have experience in planning and organizing big events, creating budgets, developing staff, and working with people from different nations, economic and education levels, cultures, and religions. I also served three years as Treasurer for St. Margaret's.

4. St. Margaret's has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

As a member of the Regathering Committee, I was struck by the fact that our goal in coming out of the Covid lockdown was to make everyone feel equal and important, whether at home or in church, and not to let the technology "run the show." We need to continue to have programs and services, such as Forums & Bible Studies, where members can interact and participate. As someone who enjoyed the chat rooms in the lockdown days, I'd like to be able to attend church in-person and then pick up an iPad and talk to those who were online after the service.

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent of change?

It is in St. Margaret's DNA, and my own, to support issues of anti-racism and social justice. I'm confident we will continue to be an agent of change as we have done in the past: through dedication to Christ's teaching, trust in each other, education, and a willingness to try new things. I've watched St. Margaret's start a feeding program, help a congregation in Honduras, tutor students for the SAT, try (and fail) at a nursery school, and now respond to the Afghan refugee crisis by supporting a family. Our hearts are in the right place and our faith nudges us toward action.

John Lucas



1. How many years have you been a member of St. Margaret's?

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

Everyone needs to feel seen and to feel like they belong. If the church is to be the body of Christ, it has to provide this deeper connection for its members. St. Margaret's is just such an open, inclusive and welcoming place. I personally have felt this deeper connection and rekindled my practice of faith thanks to the open doors and open hearts I found at St. Margaret's. I know that our ministries are transformation not just for me personally but for others and in a myriad of different ways. St. Margaret's refracts and reflects the light of God like the light in our beautiful sanctuary windows. You never know exactly what the flickering colors and play of light and shadow will produce but it's always beautiful. I have seen St. Margaret's start to grow as a Parish both in numbers and in the nature and types of ministry we offer. I have also seen how we face the challenges of this pandemic together. This is a community I want to be my church home.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

I have a wide range of experience in the governance and leadership of non-profit institutions in the education space. I have served as CEO or Vice President (assistant, associate, executive VP) of non-profit organizations for over ten years and have experience on other governing bodies. I am currently Chair of the Board of "The Forum on Education Abroad." This is a national membership organization which is recognized by the US government to define the standards of good practice for the field of education abroad as practiced in the US.

Ensuring that there is healthy, transparent, open communication and good governance is so vital to the long-term health of any institution. In this way a parish community is no different than any other non-profit. "Not of this world, but in this world." We find this sentiment expressed in the New Testament in many ways and forms. We have a higher calling, a purpose and a mission to be the Body of Christ and minister to the world. In that sense we are not of this world, but we do very much live in this world.

One of the roles of the vestry is to help the Rector and the parish manage the worldly affairs of the Church, to guide its strategy, to help shape its vision, to ensure all voices are heard. We also make sure that the worldly foundations of this parish are solid (quite literally in some cases!), that there is a budget, that there are good and just practices

followed in the stewardship of those resources. We are partners of the Rector and our fellow parishioners in this endeavor. We hold ourselves accountable and our Rector for working diligently towards the fulfillment of our strategic plan and upholding the rules and best practices of governance.

If we do our job well, we get to be good stewards of this house for a while and hand the keys of the house over, hopefully in very good order, so that the next vestry members who follow us will continue the work in perpetuity. I have a lot of experience in these matters and very much enjoy helping to ensure that St. Margaret's is a strong, vital and thriving church community beyond my time on the vestry.

4. St. Margaret's has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

I think we are on a good track here. The virtual options have made it easier for current parishioners, many of whom are less mobile due to age or the pandemic, to stay connected. It also provides a way for those in our community who, quite the opposite, are highly mobile, to stay connected while traveling. I have personally met some of the long-term members of this community whom I might never have met because they are now able to join online. So this ministry serves the needs of our existing members already. At the same time, growth of our parish is a key strategic goal; and the online option does provide avenues for extending our reach. We need to spend a little more time experimenting, then we can assess whether we are doing better on one or the other of these goals and continue identifying ways to do better.

I have little technical expertise but am happy to serve as a virtual verger as I do currently and continue to learn new skills if called upon to be helpful. I feel compelled to contribute in some way to this ministry since, as a person who travels frequently for work, I also benefit from this ministry personally. Part of why I fell away from my spiritual practices was because it was difficult to remain connected while away. This is a wonderful way for some of us to feel in touch while we are on the road.

I think continuing to "break the wall" down as our Rector has done...by allowing opportunities for online members to participate as lectors in worship is fantastic. Perhaps with time virtual community members can participate in other ways as well. Many of our educational programs are hybrid or virtual...I think continuing to explore, experiment and to listen to our members as they experience these ministries will be important.

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent for change?

These too are issues that form an important part of our strategic plan and part of the way the Church ministers to a diverse parish. I think we have found some good ways to begin. Small groups of parishioners with talents and interest are beginning to explore environmental justices and racial and gender justice. We can continue to do this by making sure to connect all those voices, ensure the various lines of work are connected, that we communicate even better and even more frequently with the rest of the parish so that this important work can be woven throughout the life of St. Margaret's. I also think partnering with other organizations, churches or other nonprofits, will be important! We cannot do this work alone!

Annika Mitic



1. How many years have you been a member of St. Margaret's?

3 years

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

St. Margaret's is important to me on a spiritual level because my personal faith has benefited from our attendance. Every week, I am challenged and spurred on to grow. Whether through classes, friendship, services, volunteering, or events, my faith has been nurtured. It has also been a blessing to find a place in which both Ray and I can worship together. We come from different faith backgrounds and it is always a challenge to find a happy "medium" that combines high church, solid teaching, and social justice. St. Margaret's has really been a welcomed measure of all the elements that we value in a faith-community. Further, St. Margaret's is important to me because of its historical,

and current, stances on the side of the oppressed. I appreciate the inclusive nature of the community and how we strive to continually advance the causes of the immigrant, LGBTQIA, homeless, plus pursuing racial justice. It is important work and it has been a privilege to be a part of it, both physically and remotely over the past few years.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

During my time at St. Margaret's, I've had the honor of serving on the vestry for the past two years and as a parishioner for the year prior. During that service, I've been a part of numerous committees to help with regathering, communications, and tech solutions. I have facilitated classes and served as tech support for Seeking Shalom and Sacred Ground. At the start of our time at St. Margaret's, I started the Young Adult's Group (YAG) with a few other folks with the goals of building relationships with fellow young adults at St. Margaret's, to serve our community together, and to encourage one another, spurring each other on, in our spiritual journeys. This has been paused until we can find an in-person adult to take up the charge for local events. I also regularly served with Charlie's Place (in person, pre-pandemic).

At the start of 2020, I led a team of St. Margaret's staff and volunteers to revamp our communications and branding. Together, we worked on the rebrand of St. Margaret's with an updated website to help increase our reach, be more easily found, and improve our communications with the parish and new-comers. I still help manage our digital presence and hope to expand it in the coming years. With COVID, my service has morphed a bit and I shifted into serving as a virtual verger for our services, creating documentation and training new volunteers. I've also volunteered for events like the Rummage Sale.

Outside of St. Margaret's, I served on the Young Professional's Board with Nomi Network for three years. With that board seat, I helped plan/volunteer at events, fundraised, recruited new members, and edited their curriculum for the women in their programs. When we moved from NYC to DC, I shifted to support Nomi Network by providing bi-weekly pro-bono consultation for their marketing and communications staff and sponsoring a woman in their program. I've also served domestically and oversees with demolition and construction projects to benefit communities hard-hit by things like hurricanes and tsunamis.

Professionally, I have worked in numerous industries providing marketing and communications expertise. I have applied this experience here at St. Margaret's and am

hoping to expand our impact by focusing on our digital presence through advertising, social media, and website updates.

4. St. Margaret's has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

As someone who only has access to virtual worship now, I would like to support and represent our online community. To make it a more equitable experience, I think we should:

- Offer Eucharist elements via mail or to be picked up at the offices for those who primarily worship online
- Have a rotating schedule of pastoral visits to the online coffee hour so that there is representation and a point of connection each week
- Continued investment in connecting the in-person and online experiences with lectors, acknowledgement during the service, and increased visibility of those on screen in the service to build connection
- Offer versions of all events and classes so those online can still join and participate (we will need to keep getting creative for this as the pandemic evolves)
- Create online events for those who normally worship online to join and connect with others (aside from coffee hour on Sundays)
- Creative approaches to prayer so that all requests are heard; virtual verger praying the prayer after the Eucharist is provided for those who couldn't participate online
- Have a virtual vestry rep each week, in addition to the two in the service
- Hold virtual "office hours" with Richard, Diana, and vestry for folks to drop into and express questions, concerns, ideas

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent for change?

This is a question we have been asking a lot lately, especially in our Sacred Ground group. Some of these activities are in progress but I think more light could be shed on the work we are doing to understand St. Margaret's participation and perpetuation of racial injustices. Where we can, we can right wrongs, offer apologies, repent, and be able to move forward. I think we should be a place that continues to have these discussions, as a parish, with ongoing curriculum, book studies, and forums. As we have these events, I think that we should commit to ending each one with an action item so we do not become complacent with mere discussion.

As the situation allows, I think we also need to be more vocal in advocacy and policy. The church has expertise and influential people who attend who could provide guidance in how we can best serve our community and fight for anti-racism with laws, policies and procedures. I would love to see additional partnerships with local churches who might already be active in this area so we can support and come alongside them, rather than trying to start “our own thing” unnecessarily.

We do a great job of highlighting specific months and including various creeds. However, I think we could be an agent for change if we intentionally highlighted non-white and cisgender male voices as theologians referenced/quoted in services, authors of books we choose to read, composers of the music we worship with. Further, I think we need to be more intentional with having more diversity at the altar with our choir and service leaders.

Finally, I feel that in order for there to be marked change, vestry members, in particular, should each have a commitment and a plan for how they personally plan to pursue anti-racism and social justice during their term. It can, and should, look different for every person given their background and maturity. It could look like a commitment to speak up at work within a week of hearing an offensive comment, addressing hiring policies within their place of influence, attending/facilitating Sacred Ground classes, leading their families in weekly discussions about social justice issues, commitment to serving or donating to an organization that is pushing for justice. Whatever it might be, I think we need to push the leaders within the parish to demonstrate action and growth as individuals too.

John Payne



1. How many years have you been a member of St. Margaret's?

I have been a member of St. Margaret's for 30 years. I first came to St. Margaret's with my former wife and two small children. We came to St. Margaret's looking for a welcoming church with strong women leaders to provide good role models for our daughter and son.

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

St. Margaret's has been my church home, family, and support--first for me and my young family--and then by maintaining love and support for me when I came out as gay. St. Margaret's has been welcoming to my husband and encourages us to be our authentic selves as we seek to be a witness to God in the world.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

Before retirement, I spent six years in the military and nearly thirty-four years in various government executive and management positions with USDA and USTR, and as US representative to WTO and NATO committees.

After retirement, I was a member of a small grassroots community group that founded and then led the non-profit Neighbors Helping Neighbors of College Park. NHN-CP was created to organize volunteers to provide services to seniors living in their own homes. We partnered with the City's Senior Services to help fill a critical need for seniors for services not provided by the City.

I would bring to the Vestry my experience prioritizing and managing during lean budget years in Federal service. My years of grassroots organizing and managing a small non-profit taught me lessons that might benefit Charlie's Place and St. Margaret's.

4. St. Margaret's has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

We must build on the actions we have started to engage new Parishioners, whether they worship with us in person or online, and get them involved in the life and community of the church. We should foster personal interaction with them, getting to know their wants and needs. Extending the formation and enrichment activities to online participation, like has happened with the "On The Way" discussion group, is one way to

engage with more parishioners outside of the worship service. It would be fun if we could figure out an online equivalent for the personal interaction of our potlucks and Sunday brunches.

We also need to continue to explore the ways that we can use technology to provide a more immediate and personal experience of worship. We need on-line worshiper's feedback on what works best for them, and to hear what ways we use technology that might be intruding on their worship experience. We need also to be mindful that the introduction of technology has an impact on the worship experience of those in St. Margaret's Sanctuary—we must take care that it does not create an impediment to in-person worship.

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent for change?

St Margaret's members continue to identify issues of social justice, including racism, and many are seeking ways for St. Margaret's to be an active agent for change in the world. The current process is a good process: surfacing new issues from members or the clergy, creating a small group to discuss and start a discernment process as to what actions that might be within the realm of the possible for St. Margaret's to carry out, and then opening those possibilities to the discernment of the congregation.

For each of the issues we decide as a congregation to address, it is best to organize a core group of Parishioners with passion to address that issue. We then should charge them with identification of the ways we can all get involved and bring that back to the congregation.

Julie Polter



1. How many years have you been a member of St. Margaret's?

21 years

2. Why is St. Margaret's important to you?

On a personal level, being part of St. Margaret's has deepened and broadened my experience of God, through worship, study groups, coffee hour chats, and working with others on projects or events. I've found solace and challenge here, and precious friendships. This community has helped me grow in unexpected ways, such as co-chairing the rummage sale multiple times, which definitely revealed capabilities I didn't know were in me.

But I also feel the Holy Spirit moving in St. Margaret in larger ways that may ripple out beyond our comprehension—in our commitment to inclusion and justice as intrinsic to Jesus' call on our lives; in our willingness to look at where we have fallen short; in our prayers, our laughter, lofty conversations, and earthy jokes; in our legacy of nurturing of servant leaders for the broader church and the world; in our failures as much as our triumphs; and in the humble service, seen and unseen, given by so many members of this congregation. I want to be part of that work of the Spirit, invite others to walk with us, and help this community continue to be a healthy, generative witness in the world.

3. What experiences and expertise from your professional and/or community service background would you bring to the Vestry?

I've been an editor with *Sojourners*, a Christian social justice magazine, for more than 30 years, the last few as managing editor. I bring an eye for clear communication, a commitment to equitable processes, and experience working as part of a team on matters both idealistic and practical. My work exposes me to models of how churches with similar values and commitments as ours innovate and deal with the challenges of these times, as well as biblical and theological resources for integrating justice and mercy more fully into the faith life of individuals and the church.

4. St. Margaret's has committed to hybrid worship, with both in-person and virtual participation. How can the parish deepen an equitable worship and formation experience for primarily online worshippers?

The incorporation of online readers in the worship and option to submit prayer requests during the service were great first steps. We should survey primarily online folks, now that we've been doing this for many months, to ask about their needs and desires. I

wonder about periodic zoom-only socials/coffee hours to provide opportunities as a whole congregation to meet and talk with one another. For those who are in the D.C. area and worshipping online primarily because of COVID, could we have an outdoor Eucharist in the spring or small-group picnics? Can we form small groups for socializing or prayer that blend in-person and online members?

We also need to fully support our amazing tech team, recognizing and blessing their ministry and recruiting new members as needed to ward off burnout.

5. What role should St. Margaret's play in supporting issues of anti-racism and social justice? How can St. Margaret's become an agent for change?

I'm part of the nascent history committee for St. Margaret's, charged in part to look at both the good and the bad of how our congregation and its founders impacted Black lives and the lives of other people of color throughout our history. It's a way to understand our community better and how we may be the beneficiaries of unjust acts and attitudes. What might our congregation need to acknowledge, repent for, and seek to repair or redress? Likewise, what can we learn from forgotten models of courage and right action in our congregational cloud of witnesses? This might seem abstract, but how we tell our story—as individuals and a community—shapes who we become and how we affect the world around us.

As a participant in the Sacred Ground groups, I would be interested in us exploring both further study of racial justice and related issues AND more action steps. Might there be interest in a group for the many managers and executives in our congregation to provide mutual support, accountability, and learning from one another as they work at creating more equitable structures and policies in their workplaces? Are there organizing campaigns on housing, economic inequality, or criminal justice reform in St. Margaret's neighborhood or the city that we could join or support as a congregation? And as a vestry, how can we continue to improve equity and inclusion in the financial and management practices of the church?