

Old South Church in Boston
645 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116
www.oldsouth.org

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

12/5/25

Ministry Consultant for Congregational Belonging and Engagement

A Transformational Role at Old South Church in Boston

Position Overview

Old South Church seeks a skilled ministry consultant for a unique two-year position designed to facilitate meaningful change within our community. The position combines belonging and engagement consulting, organizational change management, and a spiritual vision for this work in the life of religious congregations. The consultant will work collaboratively with church leadership, clergy, and our (G)RACE Speaks initiative to move our congregation beyond aspirational statements to demonstrable, sustainable action in becoming a more inclusive and diverse spiritual community.

Context: About Old South Church

Founded in 1669, Old South Church is a historic church in Boston, MA. Our founders included enslavers and slave traders, a history that we acknowledge and from which we learn. We also have a history of being religiously and politically progressive, and the church has been a leader in movements toward greater equality in society. From the start, we welcomed enslaved people into our membership, including Phillis Wheatley, America's first published African American. We have been at the forefront of movements for abolition, voting rights, LGBTQ rights, and equal marriage.

Even so, we remain a largely white congregation, a notable mismatch for a city whose non-white residents make up more than half of the population. Acknowledging that we are far from perfect, our work toward inclusion and justice is ongoing. We demonstrate our commitment to inclusive values through our actions, educational efforts, and financial contributions. Our clergy have been champions of racial justice, and vocal about our church's complicity in slavery. Our congregants have been active in promoting justice in a wide range of spheres. Our church makes annual grants exceeding \$100,000 to nonprofits active in all forms of social justice.

Our (G)RACE Speaks initiative was established in 2015 with a vision of fostering sacred and difficult conversations about race at the church. Through this consultancy, we are now called to jumpstart the congregation's work toward fostering new levels of belonging, so we might grow into the inclusive community we envision.

Our Vision and Desired Outcomes

We understand that our long term-vision cannot be achieved in two years. But we believe that our goals can organize our strategic planning, and chart our path forward:

From Words to Action: Old South aspires to move beyond lip service to inclusion and belonging. We aspire to demonstrate these commitments through concrete policies, practices, and cultural shifts, creating a sustainable commitment to racial inclusivity that permeates all aspects of church life.

Visible Diversity Growth: We seek to create a community where all feel they *belong*, enabling organic growth in the diversity of our church community, so that we might better reflect the surrounding community and the worldwide church.

Attractive to BIPOC Leadership: As we prepare for future hires of clergy and staff, we wish to take meaningful steps toward becoming a church that is demonstrably supportive of BIPOC leadership. We are eager to become a church where all of our employees feel at home.

Enhanced Cultural Competency: Old South seeks to become more skilled at collaborating with and worshipping alongside BIPOC ministers, lay leaders and congregants. In order to build authentic and respectful relationships, we wish to expand our cultural sensitivity and to improve our ability to learn from each other as we undertake sensitive discussions.

Spiritual Awakening to Inclusion: We aspire to a churchwide spiritual awakening to the profound theological and practical benefits of a more vibrant and diverse membership, both to enrich our collective worship experience and to deepen our understanding of faith in community.

Deepening Connections through Outreach and Social Justice Work: Old South Church seeks to enhance our impact in the broader world by deepening our relationships to outside groups and networks that promote social justice. *(Our consultant will focus primarily on the church's "internal" work of enhancing belonging, but we are also eager to explore how this work might inspire and strengthen our work beyond the church doors.)*

Primary Responsibilities

Inspired by the church's vision and desired outcomes, our 2-year consultant will be charged with the following primary responsibilities, supported by the (G)RACE Speaks BELONG Task Force.

Cultural audit: Assess church culture, policies, and practices through a "Belonging and Engagement" lens, identifying opportunities for growth and change • Collect relevant data. • Identify and implement evaluation metrics to measure progress moving forward

Strategic plan: Implement a comprehensive, data-based plan for the 2 years of the consultancy, setting up a sustainable 5-year strategic plan for the years after •

Document progress and recommendations to ensure continuity beyond the term of this position

Engage, educate, and inspire the church: Support clergy and lay leaders in incorporating inclusive practices into worship, education, and community outreach • Collaborate with the (G)RACE Speaks initiative to build upon the existing work • Attend worship services regularly and actively contribute to the worship life of the church • With a focus on congregants of all ages, implement educational workshops, training sessions, and discussion groups focused on race, diversity, inclusion, and belonging • Create forums for the church to wrestle with contentious issues we face

Review of policies and systems. Engage clergy, staff, and committee chairs in identifying belonging and inclusion goals • Examine and advise on hiring, search, and employee evaluation processes to ensure they reflect our commitments to principles of belonging and inclusion

By the end of two years, we expect that congregants, staff and clergy will be educated, organized and prepared to implement a longer-term strategic plan.

We are looking to our consultant for guidance in the procedures and timelines for initiating and implementing these tasks. We look forward to refining and adapting these plans as we begin our work together.

Preferred Qualifications

Experience with churches: Experience working collaboratively with religious people and organizations on “belonging and engagement” initiatives • Experience in faith-based or nonprofit organizational change management • Ability to connect theological concepts with practical belonging and inclusion implementation • A heart and passion for people • Background in ministry, theological education, or religious leadership is helpful but not necessary

Track record of success in belonging and inclusion work: Cultural competence and demonstrated commitment to anti-racism work • Demonstrated expertise in diversity and inclusion practices and principles • Strong communication and facilitation skills for difficult, trauma-informed conversations around race, diversity, and inclusion • Experience building consensus among diverse stakeholders

Success with strategic planning: Proven ability to develop and implement strategic plans with measurable outcomes • Experience in developing metrics to measure cultural change • Ability to educate people through presentation of data

Availability for substantial in-person work

Support

Old South Church Council: The consultant will ultimately report to the Old South Church Council, which will be the recipient of the completed contract and final deliverables.

BELONG Task Force: On a practical level, the consultant will work most closely with Old South's (G)RACE Speaks Committee (see oldsouth.org/grace-speaks), which will organize a BELONG Task Force for the 2 year duration of the consultancy. Working collaboratively with the consultant, the task force will support the work of the consultancy. Senior Minister John Edgerton will serve on the task force, and the group will maintain strong connections to the church council and staff to ensure that needs of the consultancy can be efficiently addressed.

Budget and Resources: To be negotiated in the contract process

Terms

Duration: Two years

Budget: We expect that proposed budgets may range substantially, depending on the specific work you propose. We expect to be a significant client for the 2 years of this consultancy, and we invite you to submit a budget that will maximize your success with the specific work you propose.

\$50,000 per year is comfortably within our budget range. We welcome proposals substantially lower and higher, and will base our decisions on our assessment of the value of the proposed services.

Timeline: We anticipate finalizing an offer by mid-March 2026 at latest, with a start date as soon as mutually feasible.

Process

Proposal due date: 1/12/26

Qualified candidates should submit:

1. Resume/CV highlighting relevant experience
2. Proposal (10 pages or fewer)

Proposal for fulfilling the above-described responsibilities for the position, guided by the church Vision and Desired Outcomes. We expect that this proposal may appropriately re-set our expectations for what may be achievable in 2 years. Similarly we expect that the proposal could include a phase of working with us to refine or alter our stated goals.

The proposal should include:

- Explanation of approaches to assessment, strategic plan creation, capacity building.
 - Descriptions of how you work with lay leadership, clergy, and congregants
 - Timelines for proposed work
 - Proposed budget of consulting fees, including an indication of monthly hours on site and monthly hours to be billed for work off site
 - Your budget should also include a breakdown of other expenses you expect.
 - Requests for other forms of support that may be needed or desirable
3. Statement of faith and philosophy on diversity within religious congregations. If possible, this statement should address your personal experiences of being an outsider. (1-2 pages)
4. Contact information for three references from leaders of institutions who have hired you for similar work

Semifinalists will be interviewed via Zoom. Ideally, finalists will be interviewed in person.

Please submit proposals to:

belongsearch@oldsouth.org

All submitted attached documents should be named to start with either your name or the name of your firm.

Old South Church is committed to practicing the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our hiring process and workplace culture. We actively encourage applications from candidates of diverse backgrounds