



A LETTER FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN

Dear People of St. Alban's Parish --

I'm writing to you out of a commitment to transparency and communication, to let you know how the Vestry is moving forward with our discernment of a potential call to our Priest-in-Charge, the Rev'd Geoffrey Hoare, to serve as our Rector, and to invite you to let the Vestry know of any thoughts you have on the matter.

As I announced to the parish at the recent Annual Meeting and at last Sunday's services, a first task of the new Vestry is to discern whether to call Geoffrey to become our Rector. It's the Vestry's duty, acting on behalf of the parish, to make this decision.

Geoffrey began serving as our Priest-in-Charge on March 1, 2017, under a three-year letter of agreement providing that:

"After 18 months the Vestry, the Priest-in-Charge and the Bishop shall meet and determine whether it is in the mutual interest of the congregation and the Priest-in-Charge to call the Priest-in-Charge as Rector. If the Vestry, the Priest-in-Charge and the Bishop agree that the Priest-in-Charge is to be called to serve as Rector, they will agree on a process to implement this transition. If it is the decision of the Vestry not to call the Priest-in-Charge as Rector, the Priest-in-Charge will be given the opportunity to serve the remaining 18 months of this agreement as the Interim Rector, not eligible to be called as Rector."

Geoffrey has been with us for almost a year. It has been, in effect, a year-long job interview by the congregation as a whole.[1] The Vestry believes that we are ready now to make the determination, on behalf of the congregation. Our Bishop, the Right Rev'd Mariann Budde, met with the Vestry last week and assured us that the 18-month timeframe is not fixed, and that it's appropriate to proceed sooner if the Vestry is confident that it is reading the congregation accurately and confident of the Vestry's own sense as to whether or not Geoffrey would be well suited to lead the parish as Rector in the context of our present situation, needs, and goals.

An array of important factors have led us to this point. For example:

The congregation has had ample opportunity to get to know Geoffrey personally. He's been highly visible at parish events, and has actively engaged with individual parishioners, making himself available

as pastor, counselor, teacher, and interlocutor on matters great and small. (A short bio is on the St. Alban's website.) He and his wonderful family have been generous in spirit and service to our community.

We've learned a lot about Geoffrey's faith and his ability to lead us in developing our own faith. Right after joining us, he led five Lenten Forum sessions on Worship, giving us insight into his theology and style of ministry. In more than two dozen finely-preached sermons, he has shown us how he connects Scripture and our faith traditions to the issues and challenges in our lives today. In his current Enquirers' Class, he's leading about 30 people in exploring the foundations of our faith. In more private ways, he has served as pastor to many among us.

We've witnessed Geoffrey's skill in leading worship, streamlining and energizing our Sunday services. We know he highly values beautiful liturgy, and especially liturgical music, and has deep appreciation for our worship traditions.

We've seen Geoffrey discern our programmatic priorities for the parish, and creatively marshal resources to accomplish them. As soon as he came on board, he recognized that three priority needs were shoring up our youth program, developing a children's music program, and supporting the San Albano community. He's already taken us well along those roads. In addition, he has worked to better integrate our outreach ministries.

Geoffrey's personnel and management skills have been manifest, to the Vestry, Executive Committee, Personnel Committee, and staff. He has optimized the allocation of staff time and energy, and has regularized staff accountability and performance reviews. His executive abilities are apparent in his leadership of our Vestry meetings.

Geoffrey's three-decades' experience in leading parishes is especially evident in his financial acumen and ability to balance the strategic with the tactical. While he inherited a rock-solid financial system, he has worked well with our Treasurer and Director of Finance to improve its transparency and nimbleness. The optimism and confidence he instills in the community in this regard was evident in the very strong response to our recent annual pledge drive.

All that being said, THERE IS NO PURPLE SQUIRREL. Geoffrey isn't perfect – but neither is any of us, and nor is our community. What's important for our purpose now is that Geoffrey and we know each other pretty well by this time, and our decision about a call to him at this time will be an informed one.

Accordingly, at the Vestry's regular meeting on March 21, the Vestry will vote on whether to extend a call to Geoffrey. Between now and then, in addition to addressing contractual terms, we will do the following:

By means of this letter (as well as my recent announcements, and reports of last week's Vestry meeting, and through personal contacts), we're informing parishioners – orally, electronically, and in print – about what we're doing, and we're inviting any parishioner who wishes us to consider his or her views on the matter to contact us before March 21.

We – the Vestry -- have discussed this project with Bishop Mariann and with Geoffrey, both of whom have stated that they would support/accept a call, if made.

The Vestry will have the opportunity to prayerfully reflect on and discuss our discernment, together, at the upcoming Vestry retreat, as well as at our regular meeting on February 28 and otherwise as necessary prior to March 21.

Our new Junior Warden, Diane Adams, and Vestry member Tom Gustafson, as Chair of the Standing Personnel Committee, will (a) meet with each staff member (clergy, lay, and volunteer) to elicit comments on the matter; (b) ascertain that all staff job-descriptions are up-to-date, and performance reviews have been appropriately conducted; and (c) report back to the Vestry.

We will continue our conversation with Geoffrey about how he envisions leading us forward into the next arc of our community's ministry (as he discussed in his annual State of the Parish report, found on the website under "About Us: Our Lay Leaders: archive").

In the meantime, if you wish to contact the Vestry, you may:

- email us collectively at thevestry@stalbandsdc.org;
- email us individually at our personal email addresses, found on the St. Alban's website under "About Us: Our Lay Leaders";
- phone me (202/480-6132) or Junior Warden Diane Adams (202/255-6253), or any other Vestry member;
- speak with any of us when you see us at St. Alban's or elsewhere (our photos and names are on the website and posted in the church entryway);
- write to any Vestry member in care of the Parish Office; and/or
- use any other means of communication you wish, to ensure we hear you.

Please know that we can't consider anonymous comments; in the interests of transparency, we need to know whose views we are hearing!

We are finding this discernment and decision-making process to be an occasion for joy and optimism and hope, as well as for serious reflection on how best to match our collective dreams to our Parish's finite resources of time, energy, staff, and funds. And we have found Geoffrey to be an extraordinarily gifted partner in that process. We look forward to continuing to hear from our fellow parishioners as we determine the prospects for our shared life in faith and service together with him.

Faithfully,

Laura Ingersoll
Senior Warden

[1] This is an extraordinary opportunity, because the usual rector search process involves vetting and decisions by only a search committee and vestry.