



ST. LUKE 'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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To the Members of St. Luke's Episcopal Church:

Nearly one year ago, I stood before the congregation of St. Luke's to discuss a new era – a transition from the ministry of Father Robert Elfvin to what lay ahead for our parish. I spoke that we would continue the ministry of the church and that we would conduct a robust and thorough search for a new Rector.

Today, I announced to the 8 am and 10 am services the election of Martha Kester as the next Rector of St. Luke's.

It has been a long and complete process. First, we began with small groups associated with the Stewardship campaign to understand what was important that we maintain and what the goals and aspirations of the parish were. Next, we conducted a formal survey of the congregation to understand strengths and weaknesses. We sought out members for the Search Committee and announced committee in December. They began a national search for a new Rector that sought out the best and the brightest. And throughout, the Vestry has maintained extensive involvement since the original visit of Bishop Alan Scarfe in June 2009 to discuss the transition.

Some may see the decision to name Rev. Kester as an easy decision or a "slam dunk." Let me suggest that this interpretation would not be accurate. As I said from the beginning, she was an extremely qualified candidate in any scenario and yet we needed the search to ensure the best outcome for St. Luke's.

The Search Committee worked for three months to determine the goals for St. Luke's and the criteria for which to discern a candidate. It received 16 names in the national clergy search and asked the candidates to answer five written questions regarding the goals of our parish for our review. In the end, the Search committee passed along the names of the four finalists during a special meeting in June in which the congregation was invited.

The Vestry then hosted and interviewed each of these four final candidates, probing all areas that were identified as important to the congregation. These interviews were in-depth and in some cases included follow up questions to clarify positions and beliefs. Each of the candidates had unique skills and talents that could benefit St. Luke's.

Starting on July 19, the Vestry met for more than 12 hours during four of five nights to discern the best candidate for St. Luke's and the congregation. This included discussion, prayer and meditation to seek God's will. The election of Rev. Kester occurred on Friday, July 23. Following the election, the Vestry voted unanimously to support the ministry of Rev. Kester as the new Rector at St. Luke's. We know that you will support her in this ministry and leadership as well.

Clearly we have some work left to do. We have been in contact with Bishop Scarfe regarding an interim priest, and there are names which are known to us that would be excellent in this interim role. Do not despair – we will find a leader for the interim to ensure continuity on Sundays and throughout the ministry. Sue Mathison, Jackie Fleming and John Thompson have been named by your Vestry to coordinate with the Bishop on the interim. I know there are some that are uneasy about the short-term future, but rest assured that God will provide in this instance.

As I reflect today, I have been privileged to be the Senior Warden for the last 18 months. As I exit my service as of the next Vestry meeting, I know that this is only one of a half-dozen discernment processes in our 100-plus year history. You can be assured that the Search Committee and Vestry has taken the time and thought necessary to ensure a great future for St. Luke's with Martha Kester as the Rector.

More importantly the congregation should be thanked. There were some outside "experts" that said that our congregation would splinter or die off during a transition. I believe our ministry is as strong as ever and many parishioners have stepped forward to fill voids left by our departing clergy. On a personal note, I appreciate the prayers and encouragement that has been provided to me and the Vestry by many in this process. I personally thank Katherine Langan and George Wilson for their leadership of the Search Committee. Theirs is a service that cannot be overlooked.

Now we enter a different transition. It will be a year until Pastor Martha returns from deployment in Afghanistan. We will continue on in the ministry as she will in hers as a chaplain. We will both be changed and have an opportunity to grow because of the experience. And when we reunite, the ministry of St. Luke's will grow and continue to teach the truth of Christ and enlarge the kingdom of God.

In Christ's Love,
Jeff Russell
Senior Warden



The mission of St. Luke's Episcopal Church is to enlarge the Kingdom of God
through our common witness and to teach the truth of Christ.