



Vestry Priorities

This is the third article in the four-part Special Edition Messenger series to help us prepare for welcoming our new rector. It focuses on the **Five Priorities for St. Mary's** that the Vestry identified and how those priorities were incorporated into the search process the Transition Team used to find our next rector.

We will follow up this newsletter with a discussion at coffee hour between the services this next **Sunday, April 10th**, or connect via Zoom (questions can be asked in the chat).

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81368548861?pwd=ZStOemdmSHhzYmU2YWpqRytDWElnUT09>

Meeting ID: 813 6854 8861 Passcode: 830294

The Five Priorities for St. Mary's as identified by the Vestry are:

- Fellowship
- Formation/Education
- Stewardship
- Outreach
- Congregational Development

We looked at the opportunities and the challenges in each of these areas through the lens of our mission and vision and the Parish Covenant we created for how we want to work together to accomplish this vision.

This led us to identify the experience and skills we needed in our next rector so we could call the person best qualified to lead us in bringing these priorities to life.

The Transition Team (the Team) then created an interview process to help assess every candidate against these Vestry priorities. It was also important to ensure, during the interview process, that each candidate understood St. Mary's challenges and our vision for the future. The Vestry was not involved in the interview process, although the Team provided regular updates. The Diocese of MD provided candidate applications gathered through the national Office of Transitional Ministry. A candidate's identity was only shared with the Vestry once the Team completed their interviews and determined that the person was a viable candidate to become our next rector.

When the Team developed their interview process, each of the five Vestry priorities were assigned to one or two Team members. Each member wrote interview questions pertinent to their area and all questions were reviewed and agreed to by the whole Team. During the interviews, questions were posed by the Team member who wrote them, allowing everyone an opportunity to interact one-on-one with every candidate.

All candidates were initially evaluated by the Team through online sermons, church websites, and other published information. Next, two Zoom interviews would be conducted with a candidate where they were invited to share their faith story (why they chose to become a priest) and were asked the questions described above.

A few of the candidates did not progress past the initial research screening. Most candidates did complete the two Zoom interviews. When a candidate completed the Zoom interviews, the Team would meet to share their impressions and decide if the candidate's skills and personality matched the requirements of the Vestry and the Congregation. This evaluation was done for each candidate based on their own merit, in other words, candidates were not compared with one other. The Team trusted the Holy Spirit to guide St. Mary's to the right person; they did not hesitate to disqualify someone that did not seem like a good fit for St. Mary's, even when there were no other candidates in the pipeline.

When the Team identified a potential good fit candidate, they provided a written summary to the Vestry, and then met with them to take comments and questions. If the Vestry decided to proceed with the candidate, a site visit was scheduled to visit our campus, meet the Team in person, meet and spend time with the Vestry, and have a chance to explore Harford County.

Four candidates were forwarded to the Vestry through this process. Two accepted calls from other churches before they reached the site visit stage. One candidate to whom we extended a call was also in discernment for another position. He was unable to accept our call immediately, so the Team kept researching and interviewing. Our final candidate completed a highly successful site visit in January that resulted in the Vestry extending a call, which they have accepted. The Letter of Agreement has been completed, and plans are moving forward to welcome them to St. Mary's by early June.

We truly feel that we found a rector that isn't going to conform us to their vision but will meet us where we are and help us grow into what we desire to be.

The next Special Edition Messenger is the one you are waiting for! On *April 5th* we will be able to share information about our new priest and their family. So watch for that very *special* Special Edition and come to the follow-up discussion on Sunday, *April 10th* between services or connect via Zoom. We hope to be able to share a timeline for arrival and first sermon in that discussion.

*For more detail on this topic, view the information originally published in our [Parish Profile](#), available under the new **Resources** tab on our website [here](#). You can also find past Special Edition Messenger issues in that location.*