March 9, 2021

Dear Seekers,

On behalf of the Vestry and all St. Philippians, it is with joy and gladness that we, the Rector Search Committee, extend to you a most warm and loving WELCOME TO ST. PHILIP’S.

We consider your presence with us today to be a gift, especially in this extraordinary season of pandemic restrictions when a visit to our website is tantamount to visiting us in person. Take a look around and see what it means to be a St. Philippian. Please spend some time in this space getting acquainted with our beloved community of worship, love and action: this church for ALL people.

Since August of last year, St. Philip’s has been in a state of transition following the departure of our most recent Rector. We – the Rector Search Committee – are a small group of St. Philippians appointed and charged by the Vestry act on its behalf in conducting a thorough, thoughtful and prayerful search and evaluation of qualified candidates discerning a call to serve God and neighbor in this parish as its Rector. Getting to know the Rector Search Committee is as good a place as any to start gaining a virtual first impression of just who St. Philippians are. We invite you to take a few moments in our little corner of the parish website for a quick first visit with each of us.

In your virtual exploration of St. Philip’s today, we expect you’ll quickly ascertain its people to be a diverse, jovial and loving bunch, and you’ll likely notice that we keep ourselves busy across 50+ ministries. St. Philippians are doers. We take quite seriously our call to mission and ministry. We also take seriously God’s command that we love one other and our neighbors as we earnestly aim to honor our baptismal covenant by seeking Christ in all persons, striving for justice and peace, and respecting the dignity of every human being. We are committed to racial and social justice, and there is energy among some laity to become more active in our pursuit of racial justice and anti-racism, including a resolution on the topic by the vestry last year. We trust that you’ll come away from your visit today with little doubt as to why St. Philip’s would be a wonderful place to land for anyone who prioritizes serving God and one another with gladness and singleness of heart.
In addition to exploring the parish website, do be sure and linger a bit with our Parish Profile for some insights into how worship, love and action come together to make St. Philip’s a church for all people. Keep reading to find out how St. Philip’s has found itself at a crossroads of big decisions, including the future of St. Philip’s in the Trees, a Campus Study for our downtown Durham property, and exciting questions about our financial operations.

We listened carefully to our parish, hosting six listening sessions (including one for youth) and distributing a survey. More than 100 people shared the following ideas about what we are looking for in the next rector of St. Philip’s:

Worship

• Insightful, invigorating and intellectual preaching
• Liturgist who is committed to inclusivity and diversity
• An approachable, authentic, loving and energetic pastor
• Commitment to engaging children and youth in our common life

Love

• Commitment to LGBTQIA+ equality
• A systematic, creative vision for spiritual formation
• A community builder who will help us reconnect and care for one another
• A prayerful and discerning presence
• Experience leading through, rather than avoiding, conflict
• An active listener
• A collaborative administrator who delegates, not micromanages

Action

• Demonstrated commitment to and experience with working for racial justice
• Experience empowering and equipping lay ministry
• A networker who can seed and sustain community partnerships
• Conversant in budgeting, endowments and congregational economic models
• A well-articulated theology of money and stewardship
• An entrepreneur who will help us imagine new ways of loving our neighbors
What does all this mean with regard to calling a Rector? The Parish Profile provides a bit of insight here as well. Understanding that there always will be room for growth across the board, one of the gifts of the interim period has been the opportunity to identify areas to which we might want to pay particular attention. From time spent engaging a representative parish-wide sample of voluntary survey respondents and listening session attendees, some themes emerged: more fully living in beloved community with our neighbors in rapidly changing Downtown Durham, enriching personal spirituality through formation, empowering and equipping laity for pastoral care and leadership.

As we bring this greeting full circle, we can’t not address the pandemic. We likely will call a new Rector to begin at a time when returning to pre-pandemic worship protocols are in full swing. Emerging from what for many has felt like one long Lenten fast into what no doubt will feel like the extended mix of Easter, it is going to be a truly exciting time for the Church and for St. Philip’s, a long and joyous season of resurrection in which the ideal leader is one resembling Mary Magdalene in the Easter story: the one who is unafraid to go and spread the good news that Jesus has risen indeed. Might you be the Magdalene?

In Peace,

The Rector Search Committee of St. Philip’s Church, Durham, NC