

Dean Search Committee Update
18 March 2020

It's official! All the preliminary work has been done and the actual search process is on! The two major documents that are required for the search have been approved by both the Vestry and the Bishop. **We are now able to receive applications for the Dean position.**

Here are five important things in this report for your information:

- The “new normal” in search processes
- The Parish Profile
- How to obtain the Parish Profile
- How to recommend someone for the position of Dean
- What happens next

The New Normal

The Rev. Sharon Alexander, the Bishop's Canon and our process consultant shared with the committee the new reality during the current virus crisis. She began by saying there had already been several informal inquiries from good candidates. Here's a portion of her comments that we want to share.

“...they [the interested candidates] have told me they do not have time to consider the search while trying to deal with COVID-19 issues. I have assured them that we understand.

The reality is that the type of priest you all want as the new Dean is not spending time looking at search materials or updating their resumes and OTM profiles. They are scrambling to take care of their own parishes, communities and families. They are exhausted right now.

At least one diocese has put all transitions on hold until April 20, and others are implementing formal delays. At this time, we are not suspending anything, but this process is going to experience a delay as are others across the country due to the situation with COVID-19.”

The committee continues to do additional prep work as we finalize the process we'll be using to evaluate resumes and to ask face-to-face—electronically, that is—questions of interesting candidates. We'll be meeting remotely for the time being because several of us are in higher risk categories.

The Parish Profile is now available.

This document may be thought of as having two purposes. The primary purpose of the Profile is a report of the self-study of the parish that the Search Committee has been conducting. This work included a study of every aspect of the parish—facts, figures, history, present circumstance, parish survey information, and more. That information is then presented in an attractive form that not only provides information but serves a second purpose: marketing. Marketing here means describing in honest, informative and appealing ways, who St. Mary's is, desires to be, and the kind of dean we seek.

How You Can View the Parish Profile

The Profile is on our website and the diocesan website and is available to the general public. It's available electronically because it is a relatively large document containing many full-color photographs. That makes printing a large number of copies very expensive, truly more than we can afford. However, we recognize that not all parishioners have the ability to view material online, so we are printing a limited number of copies for those persons. To receive a physical copy, please contact Emily Pratt, Parish Administrator at the church office (901.527.3361.)

How You Can Recommend a Priest for the Position

There is a process to recommend someone as a candidate. The most useful way is to do these things:

- Contact that priest and determine if he/she might be interested
- If he/she is interested, direct them to The Office of Transition Ministry Community Profile on The Episcopal Church website. He/she will be familiar with it. -OR-
- Provide him/her the email address of the Canon to the Ordinary, Sharon Alexander, and ask him/her to contact her. That address is salexander@episwtn.org. She is the first point of contact for inquiries.
- You may also suggest they visit the St. Mary's website and view the Parish Profile: www.stmarysmemphis.org/news/

Alternatively, you can give the search committee the name and contact information of the person you'd like us to consider and we'll contact him/her. We think it is preferable for you to make that contact yourself because you likely already know him/her, and we don't. However, we will be glad to do it if you prefer not to make contact directly.

What Happens Next?

Originally, we were planning to receive applications for about 60 days. In our new reality, we're unsure of the timeframe. Frankly, if a stellar candidate that quickly rises above all the others shows up, that may shorten the time frame. However, it may well take longer because of the realities Canon Sharon outlined above. But when applications do come in, here's what happens:

As resumés come in, the first review will be made by Canon Sharon. She will call the Canon for Transitions in the priest's diocese and ask if there's anything we should know about this person. This is usually referred to as a "red flag" check. If there is a problem, our committee may never see the application. Red flag problems are uncommon, so most candidates will be passed on to us. As we receive them, we will review and make a preliminary evaluation of the written application. Some will likely be missing some critical characteristic or for some other reason will not be considered further.

Those that "make the first cut" as it were, may be contacted and asked to provide more information, and/or we will interview them electronically using Skype, FaceTime or a similar online tool. The results of this phase will narrow the candidate pool further.

The final group will likely be no more than three persons. If we haven't already done so, we will check references for more information or perhaps do a follow up electronic interview. When we narrow the search to two candidates, we will want to either visit them (our preference, but expensive) or have them come to Memphis. Both options are, of course, as public health conditions permit.

When we have narrowed it to one, a deep background check by an outside agency will be done, and assuming there are no problems, that priest will be recommended to the vestry. At that point, our work is finished and now the vestry and bishop will take over. Our hope is to have a new dean in place by the fall but with things as they are, we must just be open to other possibilities.

Pray for us that the Holy Spirit continues to guide our work.

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