



4729 Ellsworth Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
412-621-4361
ascensionpittsburgh.org

August 21, 2020

Dear Church Family,

Update on Search Process for Assistant Rector:

I write to share news concerning our search to fill the Assistant Rector vacancy. Over the past two months we received eighteen applications for this position, with some very promising candidates among them. However, at this week's Vestry meeting, I shared my concern that it might not be prudent for us to fill this position until next year. In this current climate of great uncertainty there are three specific things that we don't now know, but about which we will or may have more clarity by early in the new year:

- First, we will know how 2020 ended for us financially. Currently our giving, year to date, is ahead of where we budgeted it to be, but we have also seen giving drop in June and July.
- Second, we will know what will have been pledged for 2021. I have been truly amazed, humbled, and deeply grateful at the generosity of our Ascension family in recent years, including this year of pandemic and your over and above generosity in giving to the More Than Stones campaign. It is also the case that some among us have been furloughed or lost their jobs.
- Third, we may know more about if and when a vaccine may become available, which will likely have a significant impact on our common life together as well as on the economy.

In the light of these uncertainties, the Vestry and I agreed that wise stewardship means that we should delay the appointment of an Assistant Rector. The Vestry rightly raised the question of how we will manage and indeed thrive during this delay. They also expressed their concern for the clergy and staff team who are working so very hard. We are so grateful for the staff team, the many volunteers, and the prayerful support of the congregation. I am also grateful for the good work Karen Stevenson is doing as our part-time interim Assistant Rector.

A Commitment and A Challenge:

My *commitment* is not to drive anyone to burnout and my *challenge* is to everyone at Ascension is to ***play your part***. If you catch yourself thinking or saying, "The church should do...", please remember that you are the church. In this long "winter" of the pandemic, many things are having to be done on a much smaller scale. Currently we simply cannot and should not expect to gather

500 + people together on Sunday mornings as we did at the start of this year. But we can gather together in smaller groups. We can invite friends and neighbors to meet with us outside or in well ventilated spaces, in our backyards, porches, decks, or local parks. Furthermore, all of us can pick up the phone and reach out to others. We can also pray daily for our family, friends, work colleagues, and neighbors. There are so many ways that we can be faithful followers of Jesus, even while there is much that we cannot do. **Who will you call, meet with, or pray for in the coming weeks?**

An Invitation:

It has been wonderful to have people attend our Sunday Services in person. While we continue to livestream our services and offer a walk-through communion following, I want to invite you to consider attending in person. If you have been holding back to make way for others, please know that we have enough space to accommodate more people! Seating is spread out as we make use of every third pew, the service is approximately one hour in length, and face coverings are worn at all times. Register on our website to attend the service in-person, or come along afterwards to receive communion and/or to visit with other parishioners on the lawn.

Looking forward to seeing many of you on Sunday.

Yours in Christ,

Jonathan Millard
Rector