

From the Grace Church Brooklyn Heights 2017 Annual Report:

THE NEW RECTOR SEARCH

The Search Committee - Barbara Becker and Vivian Harrison

Our search for the 15th Rector of Grace Brooklyn Heights spanned 18 months, starting in mid-2016. In order that a comprehensive summary of the process be recorded in one place for historical purposes, a recap of our 2016 activities is included in the report below.

2016 Review

- * Cochairs Vivian Harrison and Barbara Becker were officially appointed in **June**.
- * Based on recommendations from the Cochairs and Vestry, a Search Committee consisting of Thomas Baldwin, Sarah Davies, Marilyn Grant, Chris Larson, Brianna McCarty, Michael Rycheck, Anne Silver and Craig Whitney was assembled in **July** and approved by the Vestry.
- * The Search Committee first met on **August 8**. Planning began immediately, with input from our search consultant the Rev. Canon Thomas Orso.
- * The Committee was formally commissioned by the Vestry at Sunday services on **September 25**.
- * The Cochairs met with Canon John Betit in the Office of Transition Ministry on **October 13**, to review Diocese of Long Island search requirements and discuss coordination of efforts between the Search Committee and the diocese.
- * Two informational forums for the parish, describing the search process, were held on Sunday, **October 16**.
- * Five parish-wide input sessions were held in **October and November**, to solicit parishioners' opinions on the parish, our ministries and parishioners' desired characteristics of the new Rector.
- * Meantime the Committee was developing a detailed Parish Survey questionnaire, as required by the diocese. The survey was available in electronic and hard copy format and remained open from **November 12 to mid-December**. We received 246 responses to the survey.

2017 Activities

* **January and February 2017** were devoted to the preparation of four critical documents required by the diocese. Working with the Wardens to meet an aggressive deadline, we developed and obtained final Vestry and diocesan approval for:

- * The Parish Profile
- * Our "OTM" (Office of Transition Ministry) document
- * The Rector Position Description

* The new Rector's Compensation Package

* Aggregate survey data and feedback from the input sessions were incorporated into the Parish Profile, which included a section on our "wish list" for the characteristics of the new Rector, into our "OTM" and, where appropriate, into the official Position Description.

* The Parish Profile, our "marketing piece," required pictures, layout and design, in addition to well-crafted copy. Fortunately, we were able to utilize the skills of the superb graphic designer who was working on the new Grace Church website at the same time. The result was a colorful, professional-quality document that was posted on the Rector Search page of the new website, for the purpose of introducing our parish to applicants and other readers alike.

* Meeting our deadline, on **March 3** we "went live." Our documents were posted on the websites of the Diocese of Long Island, the Office of Transition Ministry at the national Church Center, and the Spring Transition Ministry Conference (TMC) for the eastern United States. We planned for a two-month period of Receiving Names (the recommended minimum), to end on May 1.

* Tom Orso presented Grace Church's profile at the TMC, which took place **March 6-9**. Upon his return he shared the profiles of several candidates he recommended we consider. (Two of them made it to the final three we presented to the Vestry.)

* Throughout **March** we worked to extend the reach of our posting. We notified appropriate officials at the Church Center, and Transition Ministry Officers in nearly every diocese across the country. We arranged for our posting to be prominently displayed on the Episcopal Digital Network for a modest fee. Announcements were also made to targeted audiences, such as at General Theological Seminary and on the Diocese of New York priests listserve.

* In **March** we also began a series of weekly announcements in Grace Notes, as part of our obligation to keep the parish informed of the progress of the search.

* We received our first application on March 5, and 10 more throughout the month. Knowing it takes time for a search to build momentum, mindful of Holy Week and Easter obligations, and in an effort to enable as many priests as possible to prepare their applications, on **April 9** we officially extended our period of Receiving Names to June 15. We ultimately received 71 applications (many more than usual for a church our size), from 48 men and 23 women. Each application included a cover letter, a resume and the applicant's own detailed 8- to 10-page "OTM."

* Serious deliberations about candidates began in **April**, continuing through **May** and **June**. By **June 28** we had narrowed our pool to 17. On **July 11** we finalized our list of the 12 candidates with whom we wished to have preliminary interviews by telephone, pending approval from Bishop Provenzano. Although he was on vacation for the entire month, we submitted our list to the Bishop on **July 20**. He responded with approval of 9 names on **August 3** and subsequently approved the addition of one more name for a total of 10, which included 8 men and 2 women.

* On **June 15** we had a special meeting with Tom Orso, specifically about interviewing techniques and developing questions for both our telephone and live interviews.

* **August** was devoted to two things: 1) Scheduling September telephone interviews with the 10 candidates, many of whom were on vacation in August. 2) Continuing the development of our interview questions.

* We had the privilege of a visit by Bishop Provenzano, who came to Grace for a meeting with the Vestry and Search Committee on **August 10**. Citing Grace's position in the diocese, the Bishop emphasized the importance of our search and assured us of his support for our efforts. He shared an abundance of advice about what to look for in our next Rector, and, most important, reminded us of the spiritual nature of our discernment processes.

* We conducted telephone interviews with all 10 candidates between **September 6 and 20**. One candidate, a woman, withdrew shortly afterwards. On **September 27** the Committee chose five semifinalists with whom to conduct live interviews.

* Five day-long semifinalist interviews at Grace, each including a Eucharist service with a sermon and hymns, were conducted on Saturdays in **October and November**.

* On **November 20** the Committee engaged in its ultimate discernment task: determining who the three final candidates would be.

* On **November 27**, the Search Committee presented detailed profiles of these three finalists to the Wardens and Vestry. The Search Committee's work was complete; the Vestry's work had begun!

Factoids

* The Committee met 45 times, including parish-wide forums, meetings with the Vestry and the Bishop, and phone and live interviews

* We had 71 applicants (not including the late ones), each one submitting at least 10 pages of materials to be reviewed

* We consumed an inestimable number of bags of potato chips and gallons of lemonade and iced tea

* We were paperless; all documents were stored in a secure site on the cloud

* We bonded socially and spiritually, beginning and ending each meeting with a prayer and a meditation

Finally, we wish to thank...

...the many people whose support and assistance were invaluable throughout the process: The Rev. Canon Thomas Orso, our search consultant; The Rev. Anne F.C. Richards, Interim Rector; The Rev. Jim Hagen, Assisting Priest; Christian DeRuijter, Parish Administrator; Felipe Guerra, Head Sexton; Wardens Vivian Toan and Kate Rock; members of the Vestry; and with very special gratitude, the members of the Search Committee itself, for their amazing hard work and faithful dedication to the future of our parish.

The Wardens and Vestry – Vivian Toan & Kate Rock

Following the November 27 meeting when the Search Committee “turned over” the final three candidates, the Vestry moved into action. The priests came to Brooklyn on separate weekends in December, engaging in long discussions with Bishop Provenzano in Garden City, sharing a Friday night dinner with the Wardens, and then participating in a day-long meeting with the Vestry on Saturday. On December 18, the Vestry engaged in a long discernment meeting and reached a unanimous decision to issue a call to the Reverend Dr. Allen F. Robinson, from St. James’ Episcopal Church in Baltimore, Maryland to become our Fifteenth Rector. The Wardens finalized a Ministry Covenant with Dr. Robinson a few days later, and the Covenant was formally approved by Bishop Provenzano in early January. The Rev. Robinson will celebrate his first services with us on Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018.