



St. David's Episcopal Church and School

Transforming Lives Through Christ

September 18, 2022

Dear St. David's Parishioners,

The Wardens and Vestry are excited to announce that at the request of the Vestry of St. David's Episcopal Church and School, Bishop Susan Goff of the Diocese of Virginia, has called The Reverend Susan B. Pinkerton to be the Interim Rector at St. David's. Susan will be joining St. David's from California on December 1, 2022, in time to celebrate the Advent and Christmas season with us, and the beginning of the church liturgical year!

In the Episcopal tradition when a Rector leaves without an identified replacement being immediately available, an Interim Rector is called for 2-3 years to provide stability and continuity as well as to prepare the congregation for the next Rector while the search for a permanent Rector is conducted. This includes helping the parish to work through grief, prepare for transition changes, address unresolved issues, and facilitate healing. Today as we navigate the new normal and the fragmented status of the United States, that position has become especially important.

There has been a significant shrinkage in the population of active Episcopal Priests in the past two years so searches that used to take months may now take years. As an example, currently more than 20 of the 178 congregations in the Diocese of Virginia are seeking Rectors. Similar statistics are reflected in other dioceses in the US.

At St. David's, Susan will be serving as the Interim Rector for a two-year term. If a new Rector has not been selected by then, the term may be extended on a month-to-month basis. Susan will be serving on a three-quarter time basis since she is retired from the active priesthood. We will enjoy a regular, well-known face and voice to lead our worship three Sundays a month, with the presence of visiting clergy one Sunday a month. Susan will be present in the office during the week, will provide pastoral care with Maureen Carey and the Pastoral Care Team as needed, will direct the staff, oversee the School, and will conduct baptisms, weddings, and funerals. She will be our worship leader in every way, offering a listening ear, an opportunity to work through challenges, and guidance toward visioning the future. It will be a major step toward realizing God's plan and purpose for St. David's here in Ashburn.

Perhaps the best way to sum up Susan is to quote directly from her resume.

"I am passionate about building up a vibrant faith community through the development of new ministries, education, and mission opportunities. I am a strong advocate of lay leadership and collaboration. I use my gifts for preaching, teaching, and pastoral care to invite, nurture and serve. As a spiritual leader I view worship as the heart of the faith community where we gather to deepen our relationships with God and each other, enabling us to be a part of God's mission for the world."



St. David's Episcopal Church and School

Transforming Lives Through Christ

Susan entered ordained ministry after a successful career as a trial lawyer. She graduated with a BA from the University of Texas at San Antonio, a Doctor of Law (JD) from the University of Oklahoma, College of Law and a Masters in Divinity from Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut. Susan also studied at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. She will be relocating from California to Northern Virginia in October and November of 2022. She has adult children in California, Colorado and Northern Virginia.

Susan has served in a variety of roles and churches since her ordination. She began as a Deacon at Trinity Wall Street, New York, New York. Upon ordination as a priest, she moved to St. Marks on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC as an Associate Rector and simultaneously served as a Chaplain at the National Cathedral. She was then called to be the Associate Rector at The Church of the Holy Spirit in Lake Forest, IL where she served until 2014.

At that time, Susan was asked by the Provisional Bishop of Chicago to move to Peoria, IL to be the Interim Rector of St. Paul's Church whose congregation had been heavily impacted by the turmoil between the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church in North America. The congregation was in deep need of healing clergy leadership.

After completing that assignment, Susan was called to be the Rector of St. John's Church in West Harford, CT. In 2020 she retired following a 5-year term as Rector of that Parish, and then moved to California. Subsequently she was called as the Interim Priest in Charge for St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Corona Del Mar, CA where she is completing her term of service. That congregation is aware of her departure.

A series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is available on the website www.sdlife.org and will be handed out with this letter for parishioners seeking more information about our Transition. In addition, please feel free to engage any member of the Vestry with questions or comments. Alternatively, you can send your questions and comments to Transition@sdlife.org. All will be acknowledged within one business day and responses provided within 3 business days.

We ask for your support and prayers for the Wardens and Vestry of St. David's as well as for Reverend Susan Pinkerton as we follow where God is leading and commence this exciting new phase in the life of St. David's.

On behalf of the Vestry,

Katherine Beckett-Goodwin
Sr. Warden, Vestry

Jenifer Bluhm
Jr. Warden, Vestry



St. David's Episcopal Church and School

Transforming Lives Through Christ

Frequently Asked Questions

How should St. David's Interim Rector be addressed?

The Reverend Susan B. Pinkerton prefers to be addressed as "Susan". Or if you prefer to include a title, Rev. Susan. Whichever you are comfortable with is fine.

What is an Interim Rector?

"The Interim shall lead the Church as pastor, priest, and teacher, sharing in the councils of this congregation and of the whole Church, in communion with the Bishop of Virginia. By word and action, informed at all times by the Holy Scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention and of our Diocese, the Interim shall proclaim the Gospel, love and serve Christ's people, nourish them, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.

The Interim's ministry includes not only activities directed to the parish and its wellbeing but also to the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia and the community. The Interim shall attend Convention, Clergy Conferences, Fresh Start, and others "Councils of the Church" and is encouraged to participate in a clergy support group and/or spiritual direction.

The Vestry and the Interim will work together to help the Church fulfill its continuing purpose: to help each other experience and worship God, to share openly the Good News of Jesus Christ, and to respond in love to the needs of others.

Section A – General Duties

The Interim shall work closely with the wardens, Vestry, staff, and other parish leaders to prepare the congregation for the coming of the next rector by identifying and facilitating healing where there are internal conflicts and divisions within the congregation. The Interim will also help the Vestry and lay leaders align parish life and administration with the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention and of the Diocese of Virginia.

In this capacity, the Interim will perform functions normally undertaken by a rector on a part-time or full-time basis. Working with the Vestry and other lay leaders, the Interim will:

- 1) Manage the church office and will provide general direction to the staff;*
- 2) Attend and preside at vestry meetings and any planned retreats;*
- 3) Conduct the worship of the parish; and,*
- 4) Tend to the pastoral needs of the staff and congregation."*

Extracted from the Interim Rector Letter of Agreement Template of the Diocese of Virginia.

What happens to the search for a permanent Rector?

The permanent Rector search will continue at a pace consistent with the anticipated interim term end date of November 30, 2024. Current conditions suggest a sharply reduced number of candidates from previous years going into 2023 and 2024. As such, we anticipate completing our



St. David's Episcopal Church and School

Transforming Lives Through Christ

search around the timeline designated by this interim period, and perhaps with an improving pool of candidates as we go forward into 2024.

What happens if we find “the perfect candidate” for the permanent Rector position before November 30, 2024?

A notice will be available for any interested parties that St. David's interim period is expected to end on November 30, 2024. We anticipate completing our search around the timeline designated by this interim period. Timelines can be flexible, service with a candidate's current parish could continue, time off between jobs may be desired. For example, if the Discernment Committee finds “the right candidate” with 6 months left of the interim period, it can still be arranged and timed with all parties understanding the timeline. We will trust in God to guide Rev. Susan and St. David's through the interim period. In God's time, not our own time, and when we are ready as a parish, St. David's will be led to its next permanent priest.

Is there really a shortage of Episcopal Clergy?

“In 2002, the Church Pension Group's data analyst (and chief prognostication officer) Matthew Price wrote this: “At present we have a relative shortage of clergy caused by a mismatch of persons and the parishes that need them. But it is possible, given current trends in recruitment and retirement, that this relative shortage could become an absolute shortage.” Twenty years hence, Dr. Price's vision seems to have become our reality.

Keep in mind, many clergy were already approaching retirement age and have endured a pandemic related, high-stress job over recent years. Some clergy have even re-evaluated their work and calling. As such, with fewer clergy overall across the US, the availability of clergy has been steeply affected and has become somewhat of a scarce resource in many regions, including ours.

“Consider whether my observations align with your own:

- Of all the small and rural congregations that I know, very few would say that they are adequately supplied with clergy leadership.
- Of all the large and urban congregations that I know, almost none expect to have an easy time recruiting associates or curates.
- Search processes for rectors seem to be getting longer while length of a rector's tenure seems to be getting shorter.
- Many full-time clergy positions remain vacant for months if not longer.”

Extracted from “Our Current Clergy Shortage”, written by Sandy Webb, published by the Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF) Vital Practices, dated April 12, 2022.

Why can't Rev. Susan start earlier than December 1, 2022?

Rev. Susan is finishing her service with her current church, she will be relocating across the country, and then taking a break before she begins a joyous new start at St. David's as Interim Rector!