

THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIM RECTOR

First and foremost, I will be your Rector, the “canonical authority” of the parish, with all the responsibilities, duties and powers that the canons, (Episcopal Laws), Book of Common Prayer, Letter of Agreement, and traditions and practices of the Episcopal Church establish. As a priest, the interim rector will lead the liturgy each Sunday, sharing in the celebration at the Table, and the proclamation of the Word – preaching. Leading and supporting our faithful and gifted vestry in their respective ministries, and the staff are primary functions of the interim rector. I am also the pastor of all of the people of Trinity, and I will depend on you to let me know whenever that ministry is needed.

I have served parishes for nearly all of my 40 plus years of ordained ministry, more than 30 of those years as a rector or interim rector. This is my 12th interim ministry, and I believe I have gained some useful knowledge about the proper role of the interim, as compared to that of a “regular” rector.

The overarching image that I rely on to keep me on track is this: The interim’s role is to be John the Baptist to the new rector’s Jesus. John, the one who makes the rough places smooth and prepares the way of the Lord. *Luke 3:2-6*

I know this is a loaded image; so let’s not push it too far. Yes, I remember what happened to John! And, no, Jesus is not available to be your next rector. Nor do I believe for a moment that this wonderful parish is in a “wilderness,” or is composed of “a nest of vipers.”

But, like John, I will be with you for a relatively short time – three or four months or so, at the end of which I will, “decrease” so that the new rector “may increase.” *John 3:30*

In order to perform that ministry effectively, it will be necessary for me to carefully observe and evaluate how the parish functions, to identify the rough places and the smooth. It is much easier for an “outsider” like me to look with fresh eyes, and to see things, both positive and negative, that an “insider” would likely miss. In this process there is the continual need for input and feedback from every part of the parish. **THIS MEANS YOU!** PLEASE! Nothing you can do in the next few months will be more helpful or faithful. I want

to hear what you think and feel is going well and what could use some attention. Share your concerns, your hopes and your dreams for the future, and your place in it. Tell me in person or by phone; by letter or by email - mauricegoldsmith@gmail.com. **Except on Sunday mornings!** That is the one time I will not be able to give you the attention you deserve, and almost certainly not remember what we discussed.

I will be working closely with your vestry and other parish leadership both in evaluation and implementation. The intention is to have the parish as healthy and prepared as possible to receive its new rector, with everything in place to insure a successful call, an easy and positive transition and a long, fruitful ministry. There are no guarantees, but I know that this process helps. During this period it would be rare that, as an interim, I would institute or end existing programs or ministries except on a provisional basis. Those decisions will be the responsibility and purview of the next rector and your vestry. There may be, however, some changes that the interim rector can and should do, so that the new rector will not be required to.

Very soon you as a parish will begin the active Search/Discernment process of visioning, evaluating, and strategic planning, under the able leadership of Patti McCartney, who is chair of that committee, aided by the Bishop's office. They will keep you abreast of their progress as that process moves forward. I will be available to the Search Committee as a resource only, playing no active part in their discernment. In the next few weeks, you will receive details of how the process will unfold and your vital role in it. If you have not yet completed and returned a search survey, please call the office and we will get one to you, as this is part of "your vital role."

I hope you will find this little "essay" helpful, reassuring and clarifying. Please let me know any questions or comments you may have in relation to this, or to any other aspect of the interim period, my place in it, and yours. Remember FEEDBACK is one of the most helpful ministries you can perform.

God bless you and keep you.