



September 17, 2026

Dear People of the Advocate,

As we enter this time of transition at the Advocate, we have an opportunity to listen deeply to one another and to discern together what comes next.

Over the coming months, we will be continuing the work the Vestry and the congregation have already begun around identifying who we are, what matters most to us, how we care for and communicate with one another, and where God may be calling us in this next chapter. This work will include making space for the grief and change we have experienced, strengthening trust within our community, and considering how we honor and carry forward the traditions and values that have shaped the Advocate while remaining open to where we are being called.

Nathan Kirkpatrick will be joining us to help guide us in this work. Before his arrival, we want to cultivate the soil by starting with listening.

Marti and Ken Williams, experienced facilitators of organizational and community conversations, **will lead a series of small focus groups**. These conversations are an opportunity for everyone to share their experiences and perspectives: What do we value about the Advocate? What has been difficult? What do we want to preserve? Where do we hope to grow? And what do we need from one another as we move forward together?

These focus groups are **a continuation of a process with a purpose**. Our first task is to acknowledge where we are now — what we have experienced, what we value, and what we hope for. Marti and Ken will listen for themes that emerge across these conversations and share them back with the congregation. We will develop **a shared covenant for how we want to be together and a clear description of the Advocate** to share with the congregation for reflection and conversation. From there, we will identify where we want to grow and improve and develop **goals, objectives, and action plans** to help us get there. Each step will build on what we learn along the way, with regular opportunities to check in and share our progress.

But first, we want to hear from you.

We hope everyone who is able will participate in one of the focus groups. Each group will be limited to approximately 10–12 people so that there is room for everyone to be heard.

Focus Group Schedule

- Sunday, October 11 — 12:00 noon
- Friday, October 16 — Men's Fellowship, 8:00 a.m.
- Sunday, October 18 — 9:30 a.m. and 12:00 noon
- Monday, October 19 — 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, October 25 — 9:30 a.m. and 12:00 noon

Please note that the 9:30 a.m. Sunday focus groups may extend beyond the beginning of the 10:30 service.

Sign Up

- Choose **one** focus group to attend.
- If you have a particular need, such as childcare, or would prefer to meet by Zoom, please note that in the "Other" space on the form.
- **Sign up here:** <https://forms.gle/5tNDUd6vFDc39UpR7>

We are asking a small group of members representing a variety of perspectives and experiences to help the Vestry carry this work forward.

This is work we will do together — the Vestry, Nathan, and *especially you*. Our hope is not simply to create statements or plans, but to listen well, build trust, understand what matters most to this community, and discern how we want to be with one another as we move into a sustainable and flourishing next chapter for the Advocate.

In faith and hope,
Your Vestry

The Episcopal Church of the Advocate | 8410 Merin Road | Chapel Hill, NC 27516 US

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