

Rector's Ministry Leadership Outlook for the Year Ahead – July, 2020

Uncertain as present times are, our faith and mission compel us to continue providing the best possible leadership to sustain vital, relevant and faithful ministries. I welcome and ask for vestry responses to the following opportunities and questions that have recently come our way.

Pastoral Internship Opportunity: **Bonnie Scott** came to Chicago a year ago to start a three-year MDiv program at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Soon thereafter, she and her fiancé, Joey Keegin, began taking part at Ascension. Bonnie has served as an acolyte and taken part in the young adult fellowship. She hopes to offer a pastoral internship here at Ascension during the coming academic year. Areas of focus would include a) pastoral care (initially by phone) to provide better connection with and support of some of our members who are unable or less able to actively take part in parish life; b) ministry at the altar; and c) helping as possible with reinvigorating the momentum of the young adult cohort.



Financial considerations: Apparently the seminary will provide Bonnie with a small stipend for the internship. There will be little or no cost to Ascension

Deacon/Curate Opportunity: **George Arceneaux** and I had been in contact 'BC' about the prospect of his service at Ascension upon his ordination as transitional deacon, previously scheduled for June. His ordination date is now July 25, and he has asked me to reconsider his ministry. George earned his MDiv at the UChicago Divinity School, has parish experience at St. Christopher's Oak Park, and St. Paul and the Redeemer, Hyde Park, and has worked for a few years as a full-time hospice chaplain. Although a lifelong Episcopalian, he has not been immersed in Anglo-Catholic tradition and is eager to be so. George would likely be at Ascension on Tuesdays and Sundays. Areas of focus would be on a) liturgy and preaching, b) community engagement and mission; and c) administrative features of parish ministry.



Financial Considerations: This will be a part-time position due to his continuing full-time ministry as hospice chaplain. A correspondingly modest stipend may be funded by existing line-items in the operating budget or by a later additional funding request.

Coach House/Social Media & Ongoing Virtual Connections: **Gary Alexander** and I have recently shared a number of conversations, after which I've asked him to consider – subject to Vestry review and approval – a one-year commitment to living in the coach house and devoting an average commitment of ten hours per week to: a) keeping our website current, b) social media development and presence, and c) partnering with Virtual Verger Mary Beth Hwang in development of a sustainable 'tech team' to continue our online worship and connections. I believe this arrangement can positively benefit Ascension based on Gary's excellent leadership in the development and implementation of the parish's new website in 2018, his background in marketing and skills he's already demonstrated in collaboration with Mary Beth.



Gary's role as Senior Warden suggests the appropriateness of extra scrutiny, though I imagine that any initial, understandable concerns will give way to enthusiasm for what Gary has to offer the parish in this role. Also, as church property, use of the coach house must be scrutinized relative to both civil law (to retain our non-profit property tax exemption) and church canons. With regard to

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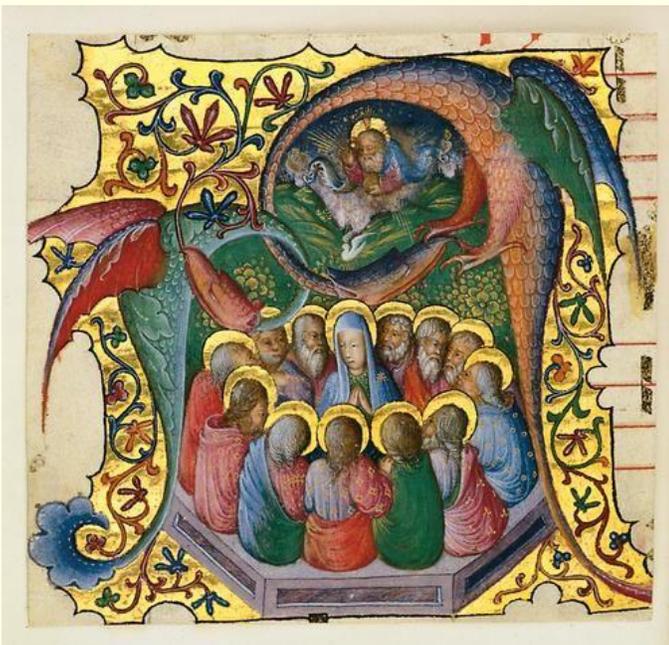
these, I was able to inquire of Todd Young, former longtime diocesan chancellor. He was encouraging and walked me through what steps we may need to take if we move ahead with a written agreement. Todd suggested that both Gary and I should absent ourselves from the Vestry's consideration, which we will plan to do. He also recommended a review by (now Mother) Courtney Reid, Director of Operations for the Diocese of Chicago (and the go-to person for property matters).

Financial Considerations: The budget impact would be unchanged from the prior arrangement with Mother Broadbent. The parish will benefit from the increased and more consistent commitment to online presence and connections.

Additional Considerations:

1. Staff Development. In my experience, part-time positions require as much (and often more) supervision than full-time positions. With this in mind, if some or all of these opportunities come to fruition, I will need to be more intentional about staff development, that is, not only individual staff supervision but at least periodically gathering, communicating and decision-making, to avoid duplication and/or conflict and to maximize opportunity and best leverage our gifts, goals and time.

2. Community Witness and Engagement. I don't believe that clergy, staff or interns *per se* should be responsible for the parish's outreach mission and witness, but of course clergy, staff and interns should be responsive to it and engaged in it and contributing to it. What this may look like in the coming year remains to be seen, but the Vestry's priorities, communication and relationships may be influential in how this unfolds.



Rector's updates for the July 29, 2020 newsletter

- **George Arceneaux** was ordained 'transitional' deacon this past Saturday. He and I are working on a written agreement that will better define his ministry and our mutual commitments and expectations.
- **Gary Alexander** will be moving into the coach house on or about August 15 and will pioneer a role I'm thinking of as Minister of Communications and Technology.
- **Bonnie Scott** will not begin her fall studies until Michaelmas, September 29. Hopeful that her internship at Ascension will materialize, it would begin at that time.