



Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields
8000 St. Martin's Lane · Philadelphia, PA 19118

November 16, 2023

Dear Members and Friends of the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields,

With deep regret, we are announcing that the Rev. James (Jim) Littrell will be leaving his role as our Interim Rector, effective immediately. This mutual decision was not reached easily, and we understand that it may be met with a wide range of feelings among parishioners. We are here to listen to any concerns or questions you may have.

In March, Jim formed a Personnel Committee consisting of Carolyn Green (Chair), Paula Wineland, and David Adams. Since September, the committee has been working hard to complete a faithful and thorough professional performance review of Jim's role as Interim Rector. This process is stipulated in Jim's Letter of Agreement with St. Martin's. They interviewed the staff, ministerial leadership, and other members of our community and congregation, including more than twenty people suggested by Jim. They asked everyone the same questions about strengths, challenges, relationships, and immediate actions needed concerning Jim's ministry with us.

Over time, and reflected in the Performance Review, it has become evident that Jim's management and leadership styles are not compatible with the needs of the St. Martin's community during our time of transition. The responses among those interviewed were consistent, and unfortunately, the responses also detailed concerns and issues that could not be remedied during our time frame for transition. Following his appraisal, the Rev. Jim Littrell offered his resignation to support the health and wellbeing of St. Martin's. With heavy hearts, the Vestry unanimously supports Jim's decision to resign.

Jim came out of retirement to become our Interim Rector, and we are grateful to him for stepping up in our time of need. He brought hope and optimism—validating that we are a caring community rooted in faith and love. Jim's strengths were also consistently reflected in the responses received by the Personnel Committee during the interviews conducted.

We are thankful to the Rev. Laura Palmer, who graciously rose to the task of leading us during Jim's four-week administrative leave and who will continue to lead us going forward. She brings us wonderful leadership, light, hope, and compassion. Our community will continue to have pastoral support, liturgical leadership, and sacramental services as well as programming and events. In

addition to Laura; our Deacon, the Rev. Carol Duncan; and Stephen Ministers, we have our wonderful staff and volunteers, and diocesan support.

This Sunday, the Rev. Canon Jane Gober, Canon for Transitions Ministry for the Offices of the Diocese, will preach at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Canon Gober has supported St. Martin's during this time of discernment regarding Jim's role with us. The Vestry thanks her for her thoughtful guidance. She reminded us that upon an Interim Rector's departure requires a Covenant of Departure. This is reflected in Jim's letter of resignation and acknowledged by the Vestry:

I covenant and promise henceforth not to have contact with members of the St. Martin's congregation for purposes of pastoral care or to give advice and counsel regarding the functioning of the church. I will, however, answer appropriate questions initiated by the staff. My family and I will be absent from the congregation throughout the upcoming discernment process and for a minimum of one year following the arrival of the newly settled clergyperson, including attendance at any worship services, fellowship events, or participation in church programs. I will leave any on-line groups that are dedicated to the work of the parish (such as a Facebook page, etc.), but I understand that I may continue as an electronic "connection" of individual members of the congregation within the letter and spirit of the behaviors named above.

The Rev. Laura Palmer will lead a moment of prayer for Jim on Sunday morning. All our Vestry members are available to you for questions, although we cannot share confidential details regarding personnel issues. Cassie Houtz, Secretary to the Vestry, has volunteered to be the lead contact person and can be reached at cassie.houtz@gmail.com. Your questions and concerns are important to us; please reach out at any time.

Faithfully and with gratitude for our community,

Barbara Thomson, Rector's Warden

Tom Sibson, Finance Warden



Contacts:

Barbara Thomson, Rector's Warden: warden@stmartinec.org

The Rev. Laura Palmer, Interim Priest Associate: lpalmer@stmartinec.org

Lorie Hershey, Parish Administrator: lhershey@stmartinec.org