



ST. MARY'S E-LETTER

ST. MARY'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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Dear Friends in Christ:

Merry Christmas! I hope this e-letter finds you all well after a busy yet joyful and Blessed Christmas.

As we leave the Christmas celebrations and move towards the New Year, I write to you to let you know that I have accepted Matthew Swickey's resignation as church organist and choirmaster. His letter of December 15 states that December 31st will be his last day at St. Mary's. Matt has chosen to resign for the reason that it was "time" for him to move on.



This will come as a shock and as sad news for many because Matt has been a faithful minister of the Gospel and a sign of stability for so many years. His time among us at St. Mary's has been an example of loving and caring service to the people of the parish and he will be missed.

Before moving on, I need to address two aspects of Matt's resignation: first of all, the rumors that often surround an unexpected resignation of a long-time friend and employee. There is only one person who ultimately knows why Matt resigned and that is Matt. To speculate other than the reason given is to buy into rumor, inference and innuendo. And those assumptions are good neither for St. Mary's nor for Matt. I ask you to please take him at his word. In addition, Matt made it clear to me that he does not want a farewell event of any kind and it is my intention to honor that request. The best way to respond to this moment in the life of St. Mary's and to Matt is to take the time to personally thank him for all that he has done for you and the congregation in his time at St. Mary's. Please remember Dinah in your thoughts, prayers, words and actions. A decision to leave a parish family no matter the reason is a difficult one.

Second, the rumor that we will "cut out the music ministry at St. Mary's" is false. There is nothing further from the truth. Indeed, music is a vital ministry in the life of an Episcopal congregation and it is my goal as the rector to build on what has been done and move forward to build up that which the Lord has given us to do.

To that end, once I knew that Matt was resigning I moved immediately to replace him. With input from Henry Woodroffe, Bev Menard, the clergy and from the music and academic community in Tampa, I have hired an interim organist/choirmaster. Ryan Hebert will begin on Sunday, January 1 and continue until Easter Sunday, April 8. He will be with us on Sundays from 9:00 AM -12 Noon so that he can warm up, rehearse the choir and accompany the choir and the congregation at the 10:00 AM Celebration of the Holy Eucharist. In addition, he will hold choir rehearsals on Thursdays. Ryan is an Assistant Professor of Music, Director of Choral Studies and University Organist at the University of Tampa.

During this interim period, my goals are two-fold: 1) continue a music program based on Episcopal/Anglican hymnody and service music, expand to use all of the Episcopal music tradition available to us (there are four authorized hymnals) and explore the use of the entire Christian musical tradition. 2) create a music ministry team (clergy, vestry members and parishioners) that will help me find a permanent minister of music for the parish. My premise for both goals - interim and permanent - is that we become a congregation where the professional musician and parish-based choir enable the members to sing, play instruments and in all ways make a joyful noise unto the Lord. In an agreement with Ryan I will select the music for Sundays until he is ready

to make that transition.

I will report to the vestry that which I have shared with you. Then, I will decide with them who among them will serve on the music ministry team and decide what financial resources will be available to me and the team to make the necessary choices for the future of St. Mary's.

I am most appreciative of the members of the congregation and those of the vestry who have called/texted/emailed me directly to ask about the rumors and express their concerns for St. Mary's, Matt and the music ministry. I assured them as I am assuring you that as rector I am acting (with the input of others) within all appropriate and pastoral authority to make the best decisions for St. Mary's.

My next step will be to write a longer "Pastoral Letter for the New Year" that will explain decisions regarding personnel and programs, and, then, prescribe a plan for 2012.

But until then what can you do?

First of all, you can pray for the Holy Spirit to give us His wisdom, enable us to understand His will for us and then empower us to fulfill that will. Second, you can pray, asking the Lord to discern whether or not you are called to sing in the choir or play an instrument as a soloist or as part of a group in support of the worship of the Lord at St. Mary's.

And, I invite you to pray for me as your rector.

I especially invite and encourage you to let me know what hymns you would love to sing. I want to create a "Top 50" list so that these hymns will be among those selected for Sunday worship. You will be able to respond via a new pew card that will be available beginning Sunday, January 8.

Peace In Him Who Is Peace,
Eric+