

In an effort keep the congregation apprised of activities and developments affecting Bethesda, the Vestry will periodically provide updates such as this one.

Father Thomas T. Parke's Retirement

In accordance with the provisions of Episcopal Church Canon III.9.7, Father Parke has submitted his letter of resignation as Rector of Bethesda effective on the Pension Fund date of August 1, 2011. Father Parke has accepted Bishop Love's extension of his time at Bethesda through to the celebration of Epiphany in January 2012, which will make his service to Bethesda a remarkable 44 years.

During the next five months, Father Parke will continue to provide many of the Sunday services, particularly on holy days and special occasions (e.g., Deacon T.J. Pettigrew's ordination). Other services will be held by Father Paul Evans and what are termed "Supply Priests." The Vestry has and will continue to identify such priests to provide us with the Holy Eucharist and inspiration. None of these priests will be exactly like Father Parke, but we will have a sample of different preaching styles. This should help us as a congregation in our transition from Father Parke who we are accustomed to, and when, during the rector-search process, the Vestry seeks input from the congregation about likes/dislikes and preferences in a new Rector, we will have been exposed to a broader range priests. Much more information on the search process is to come; now is time to celebrate and remember Father Parke's 44 years of service at Bethesda.

A committee is forming to arrange for a party this fall in honor of Father Parke and his tremendous contributions to Bethesda and the greater community. Those interested in helping should call John Van Der Veer at 584-0083.

While we as a parish, and as individuals, will have opportunities in the next five months to express our gratitude to Father Parke, the Vestry is extremely grateful for his dedicated service, leadership, and friendship. We ask that you please keep Father Parke in your prayers as he continues his fight against cancer and transitions into a new phase of his life. The prayer in the box below was written by Hillary Tucker for Father Parke, and we hope that it inspires you.

Father Marshall Vang to Serve as Bethesda's Interim Rector

After conducting a search, the Vestry has unanimously voted to retain the services of Father Marshall Vang to serve as an Interim Rector, starting after Epiphany 2012. Bishop Love has approved the Vestry's calling of Father Vang as Interim Rector. Father Vang has a distinguished career which includes several years as the Dean of the Cathedral of All Saints in Albany and as Rector of Saint George's in Schenectady. More recently he has served as the priest-in-charge of the Church of the Holy Cross in Warrensburg. Father Vang will continue the Anglo-Catholic traditions familiar to Bethesda as the Vestry conducts an extensive national search for a new permanent Rector.

This search process, which will include getting in-depth input from the congregation, traditionally takes between 18 to 24 months. As exemplified by Father Parke, we have a history of long-tenured service by our Rectors. Therefore, it is important that we as a congregation have a period of thoughtful discernment and that the Vestry's search process be thorough and without haste.

In Closing ...

The Vestry greatly appreciates the prayers and support that we have received as we undertake for the first time in over 40 years a transition from one Rector to another. Please feel free to speak with any of the Vestry members or email us at Vestry@Bethesdachurch.org. With your help, we look forward to leading Bethesda as it continues its spiritual growth and development as a community in Christ.

Lord, we thank you for the love, joy, peace, and patience of Father Parke who answered your call and has worked hard for over 43 years for the good of your kingdom. We pray for his spiritual, emotional and physical well being during this time of transition. Bless Father Parke with strength, peace, perseverance and a joyful spirit as he enters a new phase of his life. May he continue to faithfully serve you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.