

June Congregational Meeting

By Margaret Odell

On Sunday, June 27th, The Rev. Canon Lee Curtis, Canon to the Ordinary (CATO) and Diocesan Transition Officer, spoke to TOTH parishioners about milestones for the TOTH transition to a permanent Rector. He began by highlighting 5 characteristics of this type of transition.

- TOTH will grow closer to the Diocese through our interactions with the CATO.
- We will all learn pieces of TOTH history.
- There will be changes in lay leadership.
- Some parishioners will find it too difficult to come to church during this time and others may renew their membership and activities.
- A new vision for TOTH will emerge, culminating in the calling of our permanent Rector.

Canon Curtis explained that under the leadership of Bishop Hunn, the Vestry drives the search process, beginning with the forming of a Search Committee, hopefully by no later than mid-September. Rather than the Search Committee being sequestered from the Vestry, as in previous searches, the Committee will actually consist of at least one-third Vestry members, so there will be close communication.

Canon Curtis will be back at TOTH in October or November for a larger congregational meeting in Kelly Hall. At that time, all parishioners will be encouraged to provide their opinions and answers to a set of short-answer questions, so the Search Committee can then flesh out the Parish Profile. The Parish Profile, written by the Search Committee in January and early February, will be presented to the Vestry for approval in late February, with an eye to posting the profile nationwide by March 1st. The Search Committee should begin receiving applications and conducting Zoom interviews in April and May, presenting their final candidates to the Vestry for consideration in June. The Vestry then invites the candidates whom they feel are the best potential fit for TOTH to visit for in-person interviews. If a suitable candidate emerges from those interviews, the Vestry could, with the Bishop's approval, issue a call, with the new Rector starting at TOTH in the early fall of 2022.

Canon Curtis did remind us that the Episcopal Church is experiencing an unprecedented shortage of clergy and that COVID has disrupted the typical search processes. This could mean that aiming for a new Rector to begin in the fall of 2022 is overly optimistic. We could have to repost the parish profile if no suitable candidate emerges or if our first choice accepts a call from another congregation. He reiterated that the Vestry, Search Committee, and parish should not become fixated on a particular timeline because this is all being done in **God's time** – not ours.

While all this search activity is taking place, TOTH is incredibly lucky to have Fr. Raney as our Interim Priest-in-Charge. It is his job to attend to the spiritual life of our parish, to help us learn more about ourselves as a congregation, and to provide advice to the Vestry. Fr. Raney will not be actively involved in the search, nor will he be a candidate for the position of permanent Rector.

Canon Curtis reminded us that those parishioners who are not directly involved with the search, either on the Vestry or Search Committee, have two particularly important responsibilities during this time of transition. First, **PRAY!!** As the Bible says, “the prayers of the saints availeth much,” (James 5:16, KJV) and we are all saints, who can be supporting the search process with strong and frequent prayers. Second, **GIVE!!** This is not the time to back off on financial support for TOTH. Canon Curtis said it is actually the time to double down on stewardship. If we cannot show potential candidates that we are a strong, committed congregation with a healthy budget and vibrant stewardship, this transition period could go on far beyond fall, 2022!

Canon Curtis expressed his enthusiasm for working with TOTH during this difficult but exciting time. This is a chance for TOTH to take stock of where we are in our ministry and to discern where the Lord is calling us for the future. The Vestry will be naming a chair for the Search Committee shortly, followed by instructions to the parish for how to either volunteer to serve or to nominate someone else for that committee. Please continue to pray for the Vestry and bring any questions or concerns about this transition time to our attention. With God’s help, we are all in this together!