

# THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY THE VIRGIN

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1 August 2023

St. Joseph of Arimathea

Dear St. Mary's family:

As you know, our able Search Committee has been hard at work for a number of months compiling a Parish Profile for use as we seek our next Rector. The individuals on that team have done a fantastic job looking at our parish life, our neighborhood, our facilities, our programs, and our dreams for the future, and they are owed a huge debt of gratitude from us all. Before posting the final profile and after discussion with the diocese, the Board of Trustees voted at our July meeting to temporarily suspend our search process, and in this letter we want to share our reasoning.

Over the past year, we have worked hard to be more attentive to and transparent about parish finances. We ran a robust stewardship campaign last fall, discussed finances at our Annual Meeting, and our Treasurer has written articles for the *Angelus* explaining our budget process and how our endowment works. At present, the unrestricted portion of our endowment stands at \$2.74 million, and this year we have projected a \$400,000 budget deficit. Under these circumstances, the diocese recommended we suspend our search to focus on shoring up our finances before completing the search process and calling a Rector.

To that end, we also voted to call Fr. Sammy Wood to stay on beyond his original term as Interim Rector, which is set to expire in February 2024. With the diocese, we are working out the details of a letter of agreement for Fr. Sammy to serve as our Priest-in-Charge for a period of three years, a length of time that provides significantly more space for us to focus on asset management, parish growth, and stewardship.

Indeed, that work is already underway. The Board has designated two teams to look at our assets with new eyes and think strategically about our future. Our stewardship team continues to foster a culture of giving at St. Mary's and will launch our next campaign this fall. Stay tuned for information about a reconstituted Legacy Society and a new program for "Friends of St. Mary the Virgin" around the world. All the

while, we continue to worship God with all our skill, serve our neighbors in midtown Manhattan, and offer a variety of programs to enrich the lives of every parishioner.

We assure you, as well, this is not a case of a Board calling a rector without undergoing a robust search process. A Priest-in-Charge fills essentially the same role as an interim priest, just for a longer period of time. So our recent vote does not call a halt to what God is doing at St. Mary's, it simply marks entry into a different stage of our ministry together. And while we do the work we've outlined above, here's what you can expect from us:

- Continued commitment to best practices of church governance, including transparency about our finances and the search process
- Opportunity for you to share your thoughts. We want to hear from you, so members of the Board will conduct listening sessions after Mass on Sunday August 20 and September 24
- Intense focus on where God is calling St. Mary's in our next 150 years in Times Square

As trustees of this church we all love, we believe without exception that God has great things in store for our parish family. Please pray for us, for Fr. Sammy and our clergy team, for our wonderful staff, and for the other members and friends of St. Mary's near and far, even as we seek God's guidance in the days to come.

Faithfully,



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Dr. Charles Morgan, Vice President



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Mary Robison, Secretary



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Steven Heffner, Treasurer