

April 14, 2019: Wardens' letter about Holy Week, rectory renovation, and status of the profile

Dear Members and Friends of the Church of the Advent:

This Sunday, Palm Sunday, we begin the most important week in the Church's year. Together with Fr. Welch we invite you all, to borrow from the beautiful words of the Palm Liturgy Collect, to join in the contemplation of those mighty acts whereby we have been given life and immortality. And we look forward to celebrating with all of our Advent family the unequaled joy of Easter, the Day of Days and the Queen of Feasts. We also extend a special "welcome back" to the Rev'd Andrew Mead, formerly our Fourteenth Rector, now retired as rector of St. Thomas Church in the City of New York. It is a great pleasure and blessing to have Fr. Mead with us to celebrate Easter by his preaching of the Good News.

We would also like to share with the whole Parish a report of recent discussions and decisions in the Vestry regarding the Parish's property holdings.

At its March meeting, the Vestry approved acceptance of a proposal from Holland Design & Construction for the complete renovation of the Rectory. This proposal comes after many months and study and discussion led by Tom and Carolyn McDermott, assisted by the Property Committee. We all owe the McDermotts a great debt of gratitude for the devotion of their time and professional skills to the Parish in this way.

The Rectory renovation project meets a desperate need. Almost every aspect of the building is out-of-date, from the kitchen to the electrical system to the plumbing fixtures to the windows to the heating and (nonexistent) air conditioning. The list goes on. So we are using the opportunity of the vacancy in the building created by the transition period to do some long-deferred work.

As you all might imagine, a complete renovation of a row house on Beacon Hill is not an inexpensive proposition. The total contract price for the work on the Rectory is \$970,000, including replacement of all windows. An additional \$165,000 will provide for restoration of the apartment living space on the garden level. Thanks to the sound planning and management of Parish finances by our Treasurer and Finance Committee—as well as a few well-timed donations, in particular a legacy from Vance Hosford—we have sufficient funds available in our revolving capital account to cover this cost. Accounting for the cost of the Rectory work and contingencies, we expect an approximately \$500,000 balance to remain in the revolving capital account for the ongoing upkeep of our Church and buildings. The project will not require any draw from the endowment or use of funds from annual pledges.

The renovation project will bring the Rectory into compliance with current codes at a level of detail and finish that is comfortable and respectable. It will also put the kitchen into a state that will permit the parlor level to be used for more public functions, while maintaining a private family space for living, sleeping, and study on the second and third floors. The project will also include the restoration of the old garden-level apartment to a level that will allow it to be used as a residence or a guest space for a single person or a couple separate from the area the Rector's family will inhabit.

The decision to commit over \$1 million to renovation of the Rectory and restoration of the garden level apartment was taken in the context of a larger assessment of the Parish's real

estate holdings. In addition to the Church, Rectory, and Parish hall, we currently own three residential units on Beacon Hill: a house on South Russell Street, a three-bedroom condominium on Hancock Street, and a two-bedroom condominium on Mt. Vernon Street.

The South Russell Street house is the newest addition to the portfolio: it was purchased just over four years ago, at a significantly below-market rate. At the time, Fr. Wood and his family lived there as tenants. Later, Fr. James and his family would move there. When the house was purchased, the Vestry's decision to do so anticipated that it was to be a relatively short-term holding, justified by the below-market price and the expectation that the return on the investment would equal or match that on the endowment, which supplied the funds for the purchase.

Following on that reasoning, the Vestry has now voted to sell the property while the Beacon Hill real estate market remains robust. Fr. James and his family have moved to Hancock Street, which was formerly rented. (Thanks to them for enduring that in service to the Parish!) And the Mt. Vernon Street apartment is rented on an annual basis, generating nice income for the Parish while leaving open the possibility to reclaim a well-located unit should it be needed in the future for clergy housing. We believe that the sale of South Russell Street will bring our real estate holdings in to a more sensible long-term profile. The proceeds from the South Russell Street sale will be used to "pay back" the Endowment for the funds used to purchase the property, plus "interest" at the Endowment's rate of return over the relevant period. Should the sale generate any additional funds beyond that, the Wardens and the Finance Committee intend to propose to the Vestry that those amounts be added to the revolving capital account.

In other matters, we continue to work on finalizing the Parish Profile. We are currently responding to some very thoughtful and improving comments from the Bishop and the Regional Cannon, and are thankful for the time and thought they have committed to assisting us ensure we have the best possible final document. We appreciate the continued prayers and patience of the entire Parish in support of the search process.

We close with the words of the psalmist, which punctuate the offertory at Maundy Thursday and at the Great Vigil:

The right hand of the Lord hath the preeminence; the right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

May this be our song of praise as we celebrate the Paschal Feast.

Faithfully your brothers in Christ,

Thomas Brown & Paul J. Roberts,
Churchwardens.