

Hi, for those who don't know me, I'm Thomas Ewers, and I've served as the Senior Warden for the past year. I know this past year has been very difficult for you all and it has impacted us all in very different ways.

I want to thank you for your continued support of our parish during this period and I hope that you'll continue to do so. While this year has brought us many challenges, I do believe that we will emerge as a stronger parish with a clearer mission and better bonds with the church and with each other. I think this time has brought a reflection to each of us as to what the church truly means to you, both personally and spiritually.

First, I want to thank The Rev. Bill Queen for his service to our parish. While most parishioners probably didn't get to know him in person as most of his time was spent online, he did serve our parish extremely well and set us up to come out of our transition/interim period in a very strong and robust way. Most of what Bill did cannot be seen by most parishioners as he really strived to get the administrative side of our church in order. However, he did move to make the Vestry more transparent, he started listening sessions and the access to staff was improved.

I'm so happy to leave my tenure as Senior Warden with a new Rector. This past year has brought a lot of doubt for many of us as to what the future of our church would bring. The Discernment Committee picked Duane and I cannot think of a better candidate for this position. I know he's going to do an excellent job. I do believe we will be the envy of all Richmond Episcopal churches.

Duane's almost two months in office has already begun to bring change to our parish, all for the better. From the improved online services to his new processes just in and around the church, change can be seen each week.

Second, I want to thank the Vestry for their hard work this past year, beginning with just going virtually for our meetings. Most of us had never done that before and it was a challenge that brought about a bond that is seen to this day. This pandemic period brought more work for the Vestry rather than less, and it included calling campaigns, making very tough decisions to keep the church in compliance and to make the church stronger. All your work will not go unnoticed, and I hope that each of you will thank a Vestry member when you see them.

Next I want to give a special thanks to the outgoing Vestry class: David Hetherington, Lara Wulff, Bill Perkins, Rosalie West, and Lisa Dawson. You have served three long years, it feels like, and I want to thank you personally and I hope the parish will do the same.

I also want to thank our staff. Our staff had again a very hard year, they had to adjust their work times and work locations to fit the church's needs during this period. You all kept our church open in a way and kept it running, and without you we would not be where we are today. Thank you from me, and from the parish.

Finally, I want to thank the Discernment Committee. The Discernment Committee spent a very long year planning and executing their vision for what our rector would be and they nailed it. They took an approach that definitely took up more time and more effort on their behalf but it included so many voices from our parish, and they went out and interviewed more candidates than I'm sure they would have liked. They settled on a final candidate who will serve our parish very well. Your sacrifices of time and from your family will not go unnoticed, and thank you again.

Finally, I want to say we'll be electing six new members to the Vestry this year. We have seven candidates but we will be electing six this year due to a Vestry member resigning. Of those six members that are elected one will be chosen at random to serve out the one-year term of that vestry resignation. That person will be eligible to run again if they wish for Vestry next year.

We have an excellent slate of candidates and I hope that each of you have read their bios and that you've prayed and thought about who you're going to choose.

Finally, I want to say I hope that everyone continues to stay safe and to reach out to the church if you need anything. We're here to serve you.

Thank you and have a great day.