



1444 Liberty Street SE  
Salem, Oregon, 97302

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Your Vestry recently voted to invite me to join with you in ministry as your Interim Rector and I am very excited to be with your parish community in this role. My first Sunday with you will be on July 6. I write this letter to you as a way of introducing me and this journey of transition and transformation that we will be taking together.

**Interim Time.** The time between permanent rectors is a time that can be filled with uncertainty and anxiety, but it can also be a time of real growth. Of course the uncertainty we face is compounded by the far reaching impacts of local and world events on our individual and collective lives. I'm impressed with how your parish leaders have pulled together to deal with the challenges presented during this time of transition and I'm very pleased to become a member of your leadership team to help navigate this turbulent time we live in.

During this interim period I will be responsible for overseeing the worship, pastoral care, teaching and administration of the parish. But remember, it is you, the members of this congregation, who have ownership and responsibility for the life and ministry of this faith community. The best an Interim Rector can do is coach, guide and encourage you in carrying out your responsibilities and living into your mission as followers of Christ.

As for time frame, I hope to be with you until you call your permanent Priest. The Bishop, Vestry and I agree that the Interim period will be 18 months or more to allow sufficient time to address the developmental tasks required to achieve a successful search for a permanent Rector. My experience as a Rector and as an Interim Priest has shown me that it is very important for the Rector to be present and available to the congregation and I intend to be with you as much as possible.

**Who am I?** I'm a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Oregonian whose thirty year science-based career took me and my family from Oregon to New York and Massachusetts. Confirmed by Bishop James Carmen while attending St. Paul's in the early 70's, I served on the St. Paul's Youth Commission and Vestry, sang in the Men's Choir directed by May Dudley, served as a Boy Scout leader for Troop 2, and taught Sunday School. I served as a lay leader and Vestry member of local Episcopal parishes when we lived out of state.

I retired from the pharmaceutical industry in 2001 and was appointed Lay Vicar of a parish in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts in 2007. Honoring a life-long call to ministry, I entered the discernment process in 2008 and was ordained a Priest in 2012.

*To know Christ and make Him known.*



I was called as Rector of St. James, Tigard in 2013 and retired in 2018. Following retirement I served as Interim Rector of All Saints, Portland in 2018; Church of the Resurrection, Eugene in 2020-21; and All Saints, Hillsboro in 2021-22. I'm currently serving as an Associate Priest for Saint Bart's, Beaverton.

My formal education includes a BA from Whitman College, MS and PhD degrees from Oregon State University, Theological Education with the University of the South, Sewanee and Andover Newton Theological School, Boston. My professional training includes courses in management, organizational development, strategic resource planning, and multicultural diversity. My priestly training includes theology, ethics, congregational development, mediation, clinical pastoral education (chaplaincy), and transitional ministry. My wife, Sharon and I have two daughters and three granddaughters, whom we enjoy immensely.

Being an active member of St. Paul's for over ten years, this parish was instrumental in shaping me as a Christian. I learned what it means to be a member of the Church, the "body of Christ" at St. Paul's. I was filled with gratitude and appreciation when I recently returned to celebrate the Eucharist here as your supply Priest. It was a Youth Sunday and I was inspired to see the energy and joy of the youth choirs, not to mention the parents and kids packed into the narthex. I felt very much at home, having gone full circle from where I began my journey as an adult Christian.

I'm also overjoyed to see that the long tradition of excellent sacred music continues at St. Paul's under the direction of Dr. Paul Klemme. It is clear to me that St. Paul's has a lot of positive energy and the congregation and staff are to be commended for your patience and perseverance during this transition time.

**Journey Together – what is Interim Ministry?** In addition to the normal tasks of parish ministry, the Interims's job is to facilitate developmental tasks that are integral with the the transition time between rectors. While the emphasis and order of these tasks vary with each situation, they are all present to some degree. They include:

- Coming to terms with the history of the congregation
- Coping with leadership changes during the transition time
- Discovering a new, emerging identity
- Revisioning parish mission
- Renewing supportive relationships with the Diocese
- Commitment to new directions in ministry and the leadership of a new Rector

When faced with the uncertainties that a change in pastoral leadership brings, working through these areas in an intentional way can lead to a deeper appreciation of where God is calling St. Paul's as a faith community. Working with the Vestry, one of my key responsibilities is to ensure that you address these developmental tasks appropriately.

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This transitional period gives the congregation the opportunity to leave behind attitudes and behaviors that keep it focused on the past instead of the present and future. This is a time when you decide what meaningful aspects of your history, tradition, and practice will be carried forward and what will be left behind. This can also be a time to seek more effective ways to organize for ministry, and to recruit, train and develop new leaders.

This transition is an opportunity to assess the way decisions are made in the parish and determine if there are more inclusive ways to organize for ministry. This “in-between-time” can lead to a new vision that will help meet the spiritual needs of members and enhance their ministries, both among current members and potentially those beyond the borders of the church community. Effective ministry during this time is forward-looking and prepares the congregation for the new Rector who will be called in due time.

**Journey Together – Ministry in Action.** All ministries other than those reserved to ordained leaders (such as the sacraments) are best understood as mutual ministries which the people and clergy share together. The Vestry has a special responsibility to lead the congregation, in support and cooperation with the Interim Rector, both in pursuit of parish goals and in the performance of the developmental tasks of this transitional period. What this means is that the Vestry and I hope and expect to have your support during this interim period and we pray that you will remain strong in your commitment to this parish and our common life together. This will be realized, at least in part, by your:

- Regular participation in worship and parish meetings.
- Financial support for the church, its mission, ministries and programs.
- Sustained lay leadership and shared ministries within the congregation.
- Participation in Diocesan programs and activities.

**Communication and Transparency.** These are keys to effective functioning of any faith community where we strive to live into our baptismal vows, including our vow to “respect the dignity of every human being.” For example, if you have a problem with someone, talk directly (privately and respectfully) to the person involved. If you have a problem with me, come to me. If I have a problem with you, I will come to you. If someone has a problem with me and comes to you, send them to me. I’ll do the same for you. If someone consistently will not come to me, say, “Let’s go to Fr. Bob together. I’m sure he will see us about this.” I will do the same for you.

I will be readily accessible to listen. We may not always agree, but I will listen and offer the best guidance that I can. If it’s confidential, don’t tell. If anyone comes to me in

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confidence, I won't tell (unless someone might be abused or harmed). I expect the same from you. I do not read unsigned letters or notes. I do not manipulate; I will not be manipulated; do not let others manipulate you. Do not let others manipulate me through you.

If you have a concern, pray, and then (if led) speak to me or a member of the Vestry. When in doubt, just say it. The only dumb questions are those that don't get asked. If I can answer your questions without misrepresenting something, someone, or breaking a confidence, I will.

I will do my best to follow these guidelines (from Bishop Greg Rickel's Ten Rules for Respect) and invite you to do the same. We may fail at times but through gentle challenge and loving encouragement these guidelines can become a foundation for healthy communication for us all.

It is an honor and privilege to join with you in ministry during this time of transformation. I am confident that God will guide us on our journey together. "Glory to God whose power working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever" (Ephesians 3:20,21).

Faithfully, Fr. Bob

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