At the departure of our current priest, the Senior Warden requested volunteers to participate in a Search Committee to begin the process of finding a new priest. Those that volunteered were: Pat Williams, Judy Ball, & Mary Neal. The new team reached out to the St. Luke’s Vestry to determine whether they would like to continue sharing a priest and, if so, to request volunteers. Kathlene Bilger volunteered, indicating that two other parishioners may also be joining.

The first meeting was held on July 30, 2020, opening with prayer, and continuing with a discussion of possible avenues for beginning the process. A brief summary of the Transition Process and Guidelines, as found on the Diocese website, was discussed. A list of “Seven Common Mistakes Pastor/Minister Search Committees Make” was also reviewed. Official decisions were not made; however, the sharing of a minister by the two churches seemed like a good idea. Conversation of whether both churches should have services every week (when COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, and a priest called) ensued.

Based upon the varied discussions and guidance found on the Dioceses website, it was decided that the Committee should obtain input from each of the congregations, publish a Vestry- and Bishop-approved Office of Transition Ministry (OTM) Community Portfolio for both of the churches, and update the churches’ websites.

Monthly meetings followed with the eventual team consisting of:

Grace Church Casanova: Pat Williams, Judy Ball, & Mary

St. Luke’s Remington: Kathlene Bilger, Linda Winslow, & Tom Bilger

Committee Roles were decided as follows: Judy Ball – Chair, Mary Neal – Note Taker.

Additional discussion and research revealed that distribution of a survey of members (whether in good-standing or not) was necessary before an accurate Office of Transition Ministry (OTM) Community Portfolio could be completed. St. Luke’s, having already been frequently without a priest-in-charge or rector in the recent past, had already completed the survey process more than once and was able to prepare a rough draft of their OTM portfolio.

Discussion was held regarding how Grace and St. Luke’s would share the rector and/or services. It was again decided that Grace would first need to obtain survey results and St. Luke’s thought that perhaps their parish would need to be surveyed again. It was also mentioned that services may be dependent also upon what the priest/rector would be able/willing to do. Additionally, the chair recommended that the team work with the Diocese, as per the Diocese eBook recommendation for “Seeking a New Shepherd: A Guide to the Transition Process in the Diocese of Virginia.” The Guide proved very helpful, to include providing samples of surveys. Surveys from other websites were also reviewed. The committee developed a rough idea of what it thought our survey should include, by adding, deleting, inserting, and rearranging the samples. It was agreed that each member of a household should complete the survey and that member profile data should be placed at the end. The Guide also referred to the Search Committee as being the “Discernment Committee” (DC.) The team adopted that title with each person taking an assignment to complete the final survey in preparation for mailing.

Surveys were completed and mailing lists prepared. The mailing took place in September with a two-week turn around time, making them also due in September. By the end of September, both churches had received and tallied their respective survey results.

Judy arranged a meeting with the Diocese Transition Team (DTT) early in October and Tom set up a Zoom session. The DTT consisted of the Rev. Sarah Brockenbrough, Transition Minister for the Diocese and [Ed Keithly,](http://www.thediocese.net/staff/ed-keithly)Vocational Development Minister for the Diocese.

At the close of the October meeting, the DTT was to finish reading the portfolios (submitted to them before the meeting) and contact the DC with any questions, after which, the DTT would post the position.

Follow-up contact did occur in November and the posting displayed by the DTT in December. The closing date for the posting is February 14, 2021. As of the end of the year, no responses to our posting had been received.

A summary of the actual recommended process is shown below:

1. Vestry converse with Diocese Transition Ministry Office
2. All say goodbye to departing priest
3. Vestry call an interim priest (see Senior Warden’s Report)
4. Vestry call a Search Committee (referred to by the Diocese as a Discernment Committee (DC))
5. DC perform self-study of the seeking church with input from all
6. Publish a Vestry- and Bishop-approved Community Ministry Portfolio (overview of Grace church) *[published for 8 weeks]*
7. Improve church website, where needed, and keep updated for the benefit of potential candidates
8. DC receive names and select a finalist, based on Office of Transition Ministry vetting *[posting will remain open for 8 weeks]*
9. Vestry vote on finalist and, if affirmed, Vestry extends a call
10. Vestry and candidate negotiate terms and set out in a letter of agreement
11. Senior Warden and Bishop sign letter of agreement
12. Vestry and new priest conduct Mutual Ministry Review after first year of service