St. Brendan's Episcopal Church
2365 McAleer Road, Sewickley, PA 15143

2025 Discernment Committee

Updates

The Discernment Committee meets regularly and issues periodic updates. Each update will be delivered by a member of the Committee as an announcement at the 8:00 and 10:00 Sunday Eucharists; repeated during the following week at the Wednesday evening service; published in the next issue of The Navigator*; and posted on this page. Please check back from time to time to see where the process stands.*

Address any comments or concerns to the Committee at discernment@stbrendans.org.

March 29, 2026 - Joyful News

The Discernment Committee is truly delighted to report that the Vestry accepted our recommendation that we should call **Rev. Laura Di Panfilo** as our new full-time Priest in Charge. Accordingly, they first met with Rev. Di Panfilo themselves and then extended our offer … and Rev. Di Panfilo has accepted.

A formal Letter of Agreement, bearing the signatures of Senior Warden Ken Parsons, Rev. Di Panfilo herself, and Bishop Ketlen Solak, was signed a few days ago. Rev. Di Panfilo will begin her ministry at St. Brendan's on June 1. However, because St. Brendan's participation in the Pride Parade downtown will affect the schedule for liturgies on Sunday June 7, she will celebrate and preach for the first time on Sunday, June 14.

The Committee wants to thank everyone at St. Brendan's for the contributions they made to our discernment process. We felt the support of your prayers throughout that time and your active participation as documented in our Parish Profile was applauded by our candidates.

Please join us in praying for Rev. Di Panfilo, her family, and the congregation with whom she will now part ways as she prepares to transition to St. Brendan's.

December 3

December 1 was the deadline for clergy to apply for the position of priest-in-charge. The following evening, the Committee met to review the materials it had received. We agreed unanimously that the applications in hand were sufficient both in number and quality for us to move forward to the next stage in the discernment process. At this point, we will thoroughly review the written materials for each candidate, using an evaluation metric based on the qualities that we listed as desirable in our published position description.

In two weeks, we will meet again to share our impressions and insights and to decide which candidate(s) to move to the next step in the process. That step will involve visiting candidates in their current ministry locations, contacting their references, and inviting them for an interview with the Committee. However, in light of the many responsibilities that all clergy face during Advent and at Christmas – as well as the commitments that ***everyone*** has around the holidays – we will not begin making those visits or reference checks until the first week in January.

Please keep in your prayers those individuals who have asked to enter our discernment process as candidates. You do not know their names – but God does! Pray that they may learn more about us even as the Committee learns more about them, and that both we and they may pursue the next steps frankly, prayerfully and faithfully.

October 23

The Committee has now completed the first phase of its work and the position of Priest-in-Charge at St. Brendan's is now posted in various places (most prominently, the Episcopal News Service's website). To review the relevant materials, use the **Documents** tab in the Discernment Committee's area of St. Brendan's website. The Committee is hugely grateful for the hard work of so many members of the parish and for your prayers of support.

The deadline for applications is December 1, 2025. Until then, there will be no further updates posted to this page, though the Committee will continue to work on preparations for reviewing the applications we receive and for completing the subsequent steps in the process.

Please keep in your prayers not just our Committee and its work but also those priests who are reviewing our materials and discerning whether perhaps the Holy Spirit is prompting them to apply for the position. This is a major decision for them, their family and their friends as well as for

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September 29

At we explained in our August update, the Committee has devoted the month of September to framing three weighty documents that position us to launch a powerful search for a new priest-in-charge: (i) our Parish Profile, (ii) the Community Portfolio required by the national Church's Office of Transition Ministries (OTM), and (iii) our Position Announcement for the *Episcopal Church News*. We are now on a "glide path" that should lead to the completion of this task by the end of the second week of October.

The materials will first be forwarded to those who must approve them: our own Vestry (which has scheduled a Special Meeting for the evening of Thursday, October 16) and Canon Kimberly Karashin (who will review them on behalf of the Bishop). If all goes smoothly, we should then be in a position to announce the start of the search comfortably before the end of the month.

Another update will appear on this page at that time and the documents themselves will be made available on the DOCUMENTS page of the Discernment Committee's website.

August 28

Since our last Update one month ago, the Discernment Committee has held three Discussion Groups: two in-person at the church and one on Zoom. We want to thank everyone who participated. In that process, we learned in greater detail about themes that the **Holy Cow!** parish-wide survey had revealed, and we received wholly new suggestions that will enrich our work.

NOTE: We did discover that some folks are still unclear about the exact nature of the position we are looking to fill: **a full-time priest-in-charge**. Our parish is not yet ready to recruit a rector. **Rectors** are full-time priests who enjoy a form of ecclesiastical "tenure" in that their positions have no time limitation. **Priests-in-charge** can be full-time or part-time, but they all work on contracts that cover a set time period (usually three years). Rev. Smolko and Rev. Jarrell both worked part-time on such contracts; our new priest will be full-time.

At this point in our work, the Committee must frame the three documents that will launch our search for a new priest: (i) our Parish Profile, (ii) the Community Portfolio required by the national Church's Office of Transition Ministries (OTM), and (iii) our position announcement for the *Episcopal Church News*. We will work as quickly and efficiently as we can, but it will be several weeks before you hear from us again. Please be patient and keep us in your prayers at this pivotal time.

July 28

We are tremendously grateful to everyone that submitted their responses to our Holy Cow! Congregational Assessment Survey – for your interest, your promptness and your prayers.

On August 14, the Committee will meet via Zoom with Holy Cow!'s analysts, who will help us explore what all those responses reveal about St. Brendan's. Immediately after that meeting (if there is time) or on August 19 (if necessary), the Committee will convene again to discuss all that we have learned and to prepare for the next step in the discernment process.

On some of the topics addressed in the Survey, responses may tend to show substantial agreement. In others, however, opinions or beliefs may vary – perhaps widely. Our Committee would view such divergence not as a problem but as a challenge. Beneath apparently conflicting views, the Holy Spirit may be prompting us to uncover new opportunities for creativity and growth. The only way to find out is to tackle those subjects directly in thoughtful, prayerful conversation with our fellow members of St. Brendan's.

The Committee has therefore scheduled a series of Discussion Groups. Each will be led by one member of our Committee (the Facilitator), while a second takes careful notes (the Recorder). This will not be an unstructured or open-ended conversation, nor will it be a chance for you to question the Committee about the work we are doing. Instead, each Facilitator, using a shared "script," will offer a series of prompts that relate directly to topics on which we seek further guidance in understanding the life of our parish. The Recorder's notes will then serve as a second source of input for the three key documents we must draft before we can formally begin the search for our next priest-in-charge.

The Discussion Groups have been scheduled as follows:

Saturday, August 23rd. 10:30 - 12:00 In person at St. Brendans's

Tuesday, August 26th. 6:30 - 8:00 In person at St. Brendan's

Wednesday, August 27th. 6:30 - 8:00 via Zoom

Sign-up sheets are already set out in the Narthex (or lobby) of the church. Feel free to sign up for whichever group is most convenient for you – or for no group if you prefer not to engage in this part of the process. Best practice is for groups of this kind not to exceed 12, but if all the available slots for a group have been taken, you are free to sign up as an "alternate" in the space provided. Please notify us at once (discernment@stbrendans.org or 508-688-9554) if you will not be able to attend a meeting for which you signed up. Someone else will then be able to fill the seat you vacate.

July 11

Early this morning, the parish was notified that the **Holy Cow!** Congregational Assessment Survey was open for completion.

> Church members who regularly receive *The Navigator* online received two eBlast messages: one contained directions on how to take the survey and the other included the link to the instrument itself.
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> Those who had requested printed copies of the survey document received them (together with a stamped self-addressed envelope) by US Mail.

The survey will now remain open through 11:59 p.m. on Monday, July 28. We have created an FAQ page on the Committee's website and will be working hard to persuade as many people as possible to submit their responses.

June 22

At this stage in its work, the Discernment Committee needs to learn as much as possible about St. Brendan's and about the views of its members – newer arrivals and longstanding members, regular attenders and those who come more occasionally, lifelong Episcopalians, former Roman Catholics and folks still seeking their first church "home." Nobody should feel that their thoughts and priorities are too obvious, too naive, or too unconventional to merit our careful attention.

We will be using a survey instrument developed by a respected national consulting firm called **Holy Cow!** The survey will be available between Friday, July 11 and Monday, July 28 -- that's two full weeks as well as both of the flanking weekends. **Please mark your calendars now, setting aside an hour or so somewhere within that window to complete the survey thoughtfully and prayerfully.**

However, before we can launch the survey, we need to be sure that it is readily accessible to everyone we hope to reach. So, please ask yourselves these questions and then follow the directions in bold type:

> Do you currently receive The Navigator (St. Brendan's digital newsletter) each Friday, and will you be comfortable completing our survey online once we send you the link?
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> > **** If YES, no further action is needed. Simply wait to receive your link to the survey on July 11.**
>
> If you do not currently receive The Navigator, would you still be happy to complete our survey online?

**** If YES, then please either**

give your email address to one of the Discernment Committee members who will be standing by the doors after the 10:00 Sunday service on June 22 and June 29

or

send a message to discernment@stbrendans.org.

*(NOTE: We will use your email address **only** for our survey; you are not signing up for The Navigator. Please contact Mtr. Nancy or Katie Cervone at the Church Office if you are interested in any other form of contact with the parish.)*

Whether you receive The Navigator or not, would you simply prefer to complete the survey instrument by hand?

**** If YES, the Committee will be happy to mail you a paper copy to fill out. So please either**

give your preferred postal address to the Committee member at the doors on June 22 or June 29

or

send that address to discernment@stbrendans.org

Thank you so much for your help!

June 8

During the Hospitality Hour after the 10:00 Eucharist, the Discernment Committee made a 20-minute presentation outlining the months-long process on which we have embarked. The end-goal, of course, is the calling of a new full-time priest-in-charge early in 2026. If you were unable to attend, please go to St. Brendan's Web page (www.stbrendans.org) and scroll down to Discernment Process (in the left hand column near the foot of the page). Links there will allow you to access a digital recording of the presentation online or view the PowerPoint slides that were used.

May 14

The Discernment Committee that will ultimately seek an individual to serve as St. Brendan's next priest-in-charge met for the first time on May 14. During that three-hour meeting, we received the Vestry's formal charge, learned from Canon Kim Karashin about the key steps in the process, and reached some preliminary decisions about how the Committee will function.

We were especially pleased to learn that the Vestry has determined that we are in a position to advertise this position as full-time, although we must take care to stay within certain limits when it comes to compensation.

Please plan to join us immediately following the 10:00 a.m. Sunday Eucharist on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, for a comprehensive overview of the discernment process and an opportunity for Q&A with the Committee. The presentation will be live-streamed and also recorded for our website.