



# The Episcopal Church of St Thomas the Apostle

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December 16, 2019

Dear St. Thomas Parishioners and Friends:

It is with great rejoicing that we announce that The Rev. Christopher Blake Thomas has been called to serve as the 5<sup>th</sup> rector of the Episcopal Church of St. Thomas the Apostle. Father Christopher's new ministry with us will begin on February 1, 2020. Father Leo, our Interim Rector, will continue in his current position through January 31, 2020.

Father Christopher has been serving as a curate and assisting priest for the past two years at St. Elisabeth/Christ the King, Fort Worth, and at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Keller, in the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth. Fr. Christopher notes:

*"I am so joyfully excited about this new call, about all the possibilities that this new ministry holds, for doing the work of Jesus Christ, in Dallas, and North Texas, and beyond. St. Thomas has been on the forefront of crucial issues of social justice throughout the entirety of its life, starting with being the first church in the diocese of Dallas to have females serve on Vestry, and the first to be fully integrated in worship. Later, it was the only parish that ministered freely and openly to those suffering with and through the HIV/AIDS crisis. Most recently, it has championed the cause of same-gender marriage rights within the diocese. And so, now, having developed its social justice "chops," I believe it stands ready to discern, facilitate, and actuate the next great call to action that God has in store for us. And that really, really excites me!*

*My experience of exclusion as an LGBTQ person has meant that one of my touchstones is relentless inclusion. . . I have also spent a great deal of time on my own spiritual journey searching for the radical other, because I believe that is where we find (and continue to find) God, over and over. Genesis 1:27 is the foundation of my faith – we are all created in the image of God, each and every one of us."*

Father Christopher has done significant work in social justice advocacy in Fort Worth and Tarrant County, including cross-boundary interfaith work with the Multicultural Alliance of Fort Worth. He also helped to design and implement a curriculum to provide Fort Worth's Police Academy corps of cadets with multicultural training. He is passionate about

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drawing people together across perceived boundaries into community where the work of God can take place.

Father Christopher was born in Morgan City, Louisiana, but considers Houston home. He has undergraduate (BBA, '88) and graduate (MBA, '04) degrees in business administration from the University of Houston. Much of his career has been spent in the service of the church, as a church business administrator. He holds the designation Certified Church Administrator (CCA) through his professional organization, the National Association of Church Business Administration. He has served large program-sized congregations (Episcopal, Presbyterian, & UCC) in Houston, New York City, Dallas, and Fort Worth, most recently at the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration, Dallas. Father Christopher moved to North Texas in 2009, and completed and received the Master of Divinity from Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University in 2011.

We all are thankful for Fr. Leo Loyola's inspired leadership of St. Thomas, first as our Assisting Priest and then as our Interim Rector, and for the participation of Benjamin and Melody in the life of the congregation. Fr. Leo will be honored for his leadership of St. Thomas at a reception following the 10.00 a.m. church service on Sunday, January 26, 2020 (more details to follow)

We also need to thank the members of our Search Committee for their committed service over the past nine months: Nan Alexander, Susan Arellano, Joe DeuPree, David Hess, Michael Legacy, Jack McCroskey, Charles Mullins, Lisa Pearson and Rusty Rippamonti (Jack and Charles deserve an extra measure of thanks for their service on the Vestry as well as the Search Committee). We are indebted to these individuals for pouring themselves into their mission and cheerfully performing the many tasks associated with calling a new Rector.



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Finally, we wish to express gratitude for our parishioners and friends who continue to reflect the loving spirit and inclusive mission of St. Thomas. Best wishes for a wonderful Christmas and New Year!

Faithfully yours,

  
Nancy LeGros  
Senior Warden

  
Rusty Rippamonti  
Chm. of Search Committee

  
Fr. Leo Loyola  
Interim Rector

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