

Introducing Our New Ministry Council

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Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (NRSV)

Here at St. Martin's, we are blessed to have a variety of ways to serve God and the world through the church. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, he noted spiritual gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, and healing; specifically, Paul mentioned leadership roles such as apostles, prophets, teachers, healers, helpers, and administrators. In our parish there are lay people who serve in just about every one of those roles—and in several more that never occurred to Paul. Some of us fill more than one role. A few of our more seasoned lay leaders seem to fit Paul's most wondrous category: workers of miracles! All too often, they are the ones we rely on the most—until fatigue and frustration overtake the fun and fulfillment of serving. Others, equally earnest and eager, seek to serve but haven't yet found the right fit for their talents or their time. Yet all of us are called to the "ministry of the baptized" as members of the Body of Christ.

During this time of pastoral transition, we've taken time to reflect on the variety and organization of our many lay ministries in the light of our mission. In her work with our Vestry and our Profile Committee, our Interim Rector, the Rev. Carren Sheldon+, discerned a need to develop a more coordinated model that would empower our varied ministries, streamline communications among lay leaders and clergy, and foster more effective cooperation across ministries. Following the series of All-Parish Conversations this spring, Carren and the Vestry began to envision a new Ministry Council that would support and coordinate lay ministries. A dedicated Ministry Council, they soon realized, could also free the Vestry to focus more fully on the work of governance, strategy, and policy. At the Town Hall in May, more than one hundred parishioners gathered to hear about this new model. As we clustered in groups around five ministry areas, it was inspiring to see the breadth and depth of the commitments we make to minister in Christ's name. It was also exciting to see the connections we might make by networking our efforts.

The new Ministry Council embraces five ministry areas: Worship, Christian Formation, Life in Community, Church in the World, and Sacred Grounds. The council consists of five lay people, each serving as Chair of a corresponding Ministry Commission, joined by several clergy advisors. The Commission Chairs, in turn, will be responsible for convening their respective commissions with leaders from relevant ministry programs. The Christian Formation Commission, for example, will include leaders from the nursery, children's formation (including Godly Play), youth formation (including TYGMOS), campus ministry, and adult formation (including Education for Ministry). Meeting monthly as the Ministry Council, the Commission Chairs and clergy advisors will then work to coordinate and collaborate across ministry areas. We'll work on practical necessities like event calendaring and room use planning; programmatic possibilities like seasonal themes and special events; and personnel prerequisites like recruiting and training. At our first meeting in mid-June, the sense of opportunity for creative collaboration was powerful.

If this description of the Ministry Council leads you to picture a rigidly hierarchical organization chart, we encourage you instead to imagine two older, much richer, metaphors for the structure of Christian life and mission. Jesus said, “I am the vine, and you’re the branches.” Paul wrote that Christ is the head of the Body, and we are its members. As these metaphors suggest, the Ministry Council seeks to serve as a more organic and adaptable structure that binds our diverse gifts together for the common good; that connects our distinct ministries for purposeful action and graceful growth; that nourishes every part of the body and bears fruit for the world.

Because the Ministry Council is a new structure for St. Martin’s, the five Commission Chairs were appointed by the Interim Rector in consultation with the Vestry, clergy, and staff. Introduced and commissioned on Pentecost, each has agreed to serve for a three-year term from 2017 through 2020. The five chairs are:

- Worship: Carole Hom
- Christian Formation: Jim Schaal
- Life in Community: Selinda Shontz
- Church in the World: Adam Russ
- Sacred Grounds: Michael Rushton

Stay tuned for more details as we convene the five commissions this summer. In the meantime, we ask for your innovative ideas, your constructive criticisms, and above all, for your patient prayers as we grow together in this model of shared ministry.