

New Rector Announced for St Luke's Church: He Starts This Summer

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The St. Luke's Church vestry on Monday announced that a new rector has been named for the Darien Episcopal church: He is currently a vicar at St. James' Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

The Rev. Ryan Fleenor is a "gifted spiritual leader, as is abundantly clear in both his preaching and teaching," said an announcement from the church's vestry (lay members elected by the parish to run it with the rector).

The gay, married clergyman has "an impressive track record of bringing young families into the church" and for organizing, the announcement added.

Fleenor, originally from Durham, North Carolina, chairs the Board of Governors for the Episcopal Church at

Yale and is Dean of the Manhattan Central Clericus in the Diocese of New York.

The church's Hospitality Committee will hold a series of events where parishioners can meet Fleenor.

St. Luke's Church, either the most active parish in Darien or one of the most active, is the home of Person-to-Person and of numerous events that are open to the community, from community suppers (suspended during the COVID-19 epidemic) to meetings and musical performances.

Here's the full statement from the vestry, the description of Fleenor from the St. James' Church website, a statement from Fleenor and a video attached to the announcement in which he introduces himself to the parish:

Vestry Announcement

The vestry is truly delighted to announce that Saint Luke's has called its new Rector. The Reverend Ryan Fleenor is currently Vicar of St. James' Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. He has accepted our call and will be joining us this summer.

Ryan is a gifted spiritual leader, as is abundantly clear in both his preaching and teaching. He is deeply committed to bringing the love of Christ to people wherever they may be, and will bring new energy and imagination to our outreach ministries.

Like Saint Luke's, St. James' is a large, complex parish with a multitude of ministries and a demographic similar to ours. Over the past decade, Ryan has been part of nearly every ministry, with a real passion for Christian formation for all ages.

He has an impressive track record of bringing young families into the church and also of raising stewardship levels. For a brief look at his background and current work at St. James, go to <https://www.stjames.org/about/clergy-and-lay-staff/> [*Editor's note: The description is added below*].

Ryan grew up in Durham, North Carolina, and holds degrees from the University of Virginia, Yale Divinity School, and Berkeley Divinity School, the Episcopal seminary at Yale. Currently, he chairs the Board of Governors for the Episcopal Church at Yale and is Dean of the Manhattan Central Clericus in the Diocese of New York.

Ryan's husband, Daniel Noble, is a successful lawyer in New York City and a devoted Christian. Dan grew up in southern California and attended Stanford before moving to the east coast. Ryan and Dan met at Yale, so there are Connecticut roots, and they are both looking forward to moving from New York City to Darien.

The search process was extremely rigorous and took many months to complete. Dozens of Saint Luke's parishioners were involved in the process, working on the Communications, Discernment, Hospitality, Prayer and Recruitment Committees, as well as in other capacities.

In addition, more than 250 parishioners participated in focus groups last summer to discern what Saint Luke's really needs and wants in its new Rector.

Guided by the focus group findings, we cast a wide net for applicants. The Recruitment Committee identified more than 20 qualified candidates, then painstakingly narrowed the field to a small number of exceptionally strong finalists.

When the Vestry received the final list, we thought it was going to be extremely hard to agree on just one. We invited these candidates back to Saint Luke's for a second visit, this time with their families, and engaged them in hours of interviews and discussions. In parallel, we interviewed their references.

While the research and prayer that went into the decision took a lot of effort, we were inspired at how easy the decision itself turned out to be. Ryan clearly emerged as the choice for Saint Luke's. The Vestry vote was unanimous.

With the Hospitality Committee and others, we will be arranging a series of events, both large and small, which will allow each of us to get to know Ryan.

We will also be getting the rectory in shape to be a welcoming home for Ryan and Dan and for them to welcome you in it. We will keep you up to date on timing and ways you can be involved.

Words cannot express how excited we are that Ryan has accepted the call to Saint Luke's. We are also ever mindful of the blessing we feel to have completed our search within days of the coronavirus upending our daily and community life.

We have felt God's presence at every step of the way during this process and His strong hand in leading us to Ryan. We believe that Ryan is God's choice for this role and that, working collaboratively with staff and lay leaders, he will lead our Parish to new heights of service to God and community.

Please join us in welcoming Ryan and Dan.

SIDEBAR:

Description of Vicar Ryan Fleenor

From the [St. James' Church website](#):

- Ryan has been at St. James' since July 2010, serving first as Lilly Fellow, then as associate rector of spiritual formation, and now as vicar.
- He is particularly responsible for coordinating our worship ministries and initiatives in adult formation, including the Forum, Bible studies, small groups, retreats and more.

- As vicar, Ryan works with the rector, lay leadership and staff to focus everything we do as a parish on our core mission of forming disciples of Jesus who will actively share God's love with each other, our city and the world.
- Originally from Durham, North Carolina, Ryan studied history at the University of Virginia and earned his M.Div. at Yale Divinity School. He and his partner Dan were married at St. James' and live in Brooklyn.

A Message from the Rev. Ryan Fleenor

Dear People of Saint Luke's,

I am honored and thrilled to accept your Vestry's call to serve as your next rector. I can't wait to meet each of you and begin our ministry together in Christ's name.

For the past ten years, I have served at St. James' Church, Madison Avenue, on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. But before that, my husband Dan and I were both graduate students in New Haven—it's actually where we met, in church of all places!—and we couldn't be happier to be returning to Connecticut and making our home among you.

As I have come to know Saint Luke's better over these past several months, I have been struck by the warmth of your welcome and the joy you find in your life together, your commitment to Christian formation of all ages, and your insistence that faith be lived and make a difference, both in our own lives and in the life of the world.

You are clearly people of prayer who long to know Jesus; you are also people of action who want to walk in his ways and share his love with a world that longs for it. What a privilege to share in this next season in ministry together, listening for where the Holy Spirit is calling us next.

There will be many opportunities to become better acquainted once Dan and I arrive this summer and we are very much looking forward to that. But in the meantime, as I prepare to say goodbye to the wonderful people of St. James', and as we all prepare for Holy Week and Easter in these anxious and uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic, I hope you will keep me in your prayers as I keep you in mine.

Christ is the solid rock upon which we stand. It is his life we share, his love we pass on, his strength we rely on, and his church we seek to build.

May God bless you, and I can't wait to be with you in July!

Ryan

