This is an exciting moment in our search process—the profile team has completed its work, and the baton is being passed to the search committee on the charge from the vestry! The results from the Congregational Assessment Tool survey have been shared publicly, and we have a lot to ponder and pray about with increased specificity and energy. As we pray, however, it seems easy to fall into a rut of petitioning God for concerns that we want God to manage. It's only natural to ask God for what we want or need. But what are we missing if that's the only lens we use to reflect on our search process?

Petition is only one of **seven types of prayer** outlined in the catechism (Book of Common Prayer, pages 856–7). How might the other six types of prayer expand and inform our perspective?

**Adoration** draws us out of our own narrative; as we occupy space to respond to the beauty of God, we begin to realize that we are not the center of our own story! St. Thomas’s Church is not about us.

*One thing I ask; one thing I seek – to gaze on your beauty, O Lord. Psalm 27:4*

**Praise** helps us to expand our view of God, which in turn brings us down to size; there is a paradigmatic shift that happens in true praise; suddenly our need to fill a rectorship is small in light of the character—especially the power and goodness—of God. Our felt needs shrink in the light of Day.

*Heaven and earth are full of your glory! Isaiah 6:3*

**Thanksgiving** helps us to hone in and honor God’s movement and presence in our midst during all points in our timeline. What if we could see God in the moments when we felt abandoned or frustrated? What happens when we cultivate true gratitude for God’s gifts to us as a parish?

*I thank you, Lord, for your are good; your steadfast love endures forever! 1 Chronicles 16:34*

**Penitence** is our friend; all these other modes of prayer tend to shine a light on ways that we may have been missing what God has been desiring for our individual and corporate worship; penitence becomes the bridge to aligning ourselves with God’s will.

*God, be merciful to me, a sinner! Luke 18:13*

**Oblation** is easy to pass over because it demands so much of us; following on the heels of penitence, oblation brings us afresh to God’s feet with renewed abandon; we are God’s church, and we are ready to follow without holding back anything. Just the thought of this kind of prayer brings me back to my need for penitence—I usually find myself resisting this kind of response to God. What might such resistance say about my heart? What might I be missing out on when I avoid genuine prayers of oblation?

*Here am I; send me! Isaiah 6:8*
**Intercession** creates space to consider the needs of others as we move through a time of change and soul-searching. Whether it is expanding our thoughts to the people within our community that feel connected to us or intentionally remembering the needs of those who would be invisible to us, intercession works to expand our hearts even as we seek God’s intervention in specific ways.

*I bow my knees before the Father... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.* Ephesians 3:14–19

**Petition** weaves in and out of each of these other types of prayer as they expose more and more of our hearts and our true need.

Yes, God, help us steward well our finances; also help us to deal with conflict; help us toward trusting relationship with good leadership! But forgive us for the ways we have perpetuated cycles of death in our finances, conflict management, and leadership. Thank you for provoking us to think more deeply about our journey of worship together, even when the provocation has felt uncomfortable. Thank you for your faithfulness to guide us and help us to our destination....

*In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* Philippians 4:6

This is critical – we each must find ways to bring our concerns to God in prayer on a frequent basis. Even if you feel like a failure in your prayer habits (welcome, friend!), our interim period is important enough that it is worth your being intentional to carve out some space in your life on a regular basis to ask and to receive from God. You may need to seek out like-minded community to support you as you pray. Build structures if you need structure, or find an existing structure and engage with it. Find a way to show up and ask God to lead us deeper in the knowledge and love of Christ, both during our search and in the times to come. Try using all seven types of prayer to move you out of your areas of comfortability, so that you may have a well-rounded appetite for the desires of God.

Speaking of structures, **every Sunday morning at 9:15 in McCausland Chapel**, we are dedicating a half hour to unpack the collect of the day and reflect on what God might be saying to the church through one or more of the day’s scripture readings. Please come be present with us as we take time to discuss and listen for God’s heartbeat during our search for our next rector. Or come and share with us about your prayer journey during our transition. The ‘prayer team’ needs your encouragement; we need to know that you’re praying, too.

“Prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.”
– from the Catechism

Will Gillespie
from the prayer initiative for transition
at St. Thomas’s Church in Whitemarsh