



We are very pleased to share with you that Gerardo (pronounced *Herr-rahr'-doh*) Aponte-Safe will be joining our team as the Curate/Associate Priest at St. John's for the next three years as part of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan's Teaching Congregation Program. He will learn from staff and lay leaders in a mentoring relationship in a wide range of experiences in parish life. The goal is for him to learn how to be a rector of a parish our size so that he can go on to serve another parish in the diocese at the end of the three years. The Diocese and St. John's equally share in the expense of this position. While at St. John's, Gerardo will assist Beth in preaching, presiding at sacraments, and providing pastoral care, along with ministry development.

We want to especially thank the Interview Team who met with Gerardo, reviewed his materials and sermons, and provided feedback to Beth in a consultation before her sabbatical departure (Rachel Andrews, Erica Clites, Aubrey Garfield, Holly McNeal, Steve McGhee, Tim Morgan, Lynne Muth, Janice Pedersen, Will Wittig, Sheeba Zacharia, Nicole Stewart - Warden, and Veronica Griffith - Warden). In short, we are simply delighted to have Gerardo join our staff. He comes with a breadth of skills, experience, and training, including a Master of Divinity degree from Bexley Seabury Theological Federation, a PhD from Michigan State University (Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum, Instruction and Teacher Education), a master's degree from Florida State University (Social Studies Education), and recent teaching experience in Global and Multicultural Education on the faculty of University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Gerardo was sponsored for ordination by our sister congregation of All Saints' Episcopal Church in East Lansing, and he did his field education at Calvary Episcopal Church and his clinical pastoral education at Mayo Clinic, both in Rochester, Minnesota. Gerardo's husband Dean is also a pastor, in the ELCA Lutheran tradition. Gerardo shared with us that he is a geography buff, loves taking meandering drives, and really enjoys ice cream (we can't wait to introduce him to our Michigan favorites).

Please know that our rector, Beth Taylor, is very excited to have Gerardo as a partner in ministry and to serve as his mentor. Gerardo has much to offer our congregation, and he is eager to worship with, serve, and learn from our entire St. John's community. He wants to work with all age groups and ministry areas, and we all believe he will be a good fit for our church community.

Gerardo's first day with St. John's will be September 1. Until Beth's return on September 11, Gerardo's primary role will be getting to know people in the congregation. We know you will all welcome him, introduce him to your circle of relationships in the church, and make connections to your ministries. We have experienced Gerardo as a loving, warm, engaging person with a genuine heart for parish ministry, and we can't wait to introduce you to him in person.