



St. David's
Episcopal Church

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Dear People of St. David's,

The purpose of this letter is to update you on the relationship between St. David's Church and St. David's Nursery School and to provide some historical context. In the last communication we advised you that the church had entered into discussions with the nursery school regarding a more formal affiliation between the two entities rather than just a mere landlord-tenant relationship. We write now to inform you that those discussions were not fruitful and have come to an end. However, because the nursery school still has not identified a permanent location, we have offered to extend the lease beyond the current termination date of September 30, 2016 on the terms proposed by the school last fall. The nursery school accepted this offer and the extension is for an additional ten months ending June 30, 2017.

Some have wondered how we have arrived at this moment. To date, we have chosen not to provide an ongoing narrative of all events that have transpired. In speaking with many of you, however, it is apparent that there is a genuine thirst for more information as well as a need to dispel disinformation. So with that in mind, here are the facts.

In the distant past, even though the nursery school was always a separate, independent institution, there was a strong bond between the two organizations and the school consciously furthered the mission and ministry of the Church. Over the years, and perhaps through no fault of either party, those bonds frayed. In the judgment of this vestry and past vestries, the nursery school became increasingly secular and the core value of Christian spirituality became increasingly marginalized as evidenced by the school's resistance to the display of Christian symbols and conditions they imposed on the existing limited chapel program.

In 2014 the church and the school opened lease renewal obligations. Although there were a number of issues, one that was important to the church was our perception that Christian spirituality was no longer a core value of the nursery school. Recognizing this, we tried to address these issues in lease negotiations but without success. In the spring of 2014, the vestry reluctantly concluded that the relationship had become so attenuated that the nursery school no longer fit into our mission to "Know God in Jesus Christ and make Christ known to others." Therefore, we declined to renew the lease effective as of August 31, 2014, and, under the terms of the lease, the school had a two year period to vacate. The two year period provided in the lease before the school had to vacate was intentional because we recognized that it takes time to relocate a school. Thus, the school was permitted to complete two full school years while exploring relocation options. We felt that two years was ample time for the nursery school to accomplish this task.

Unfortunately, the nursery school was unable to do so. In addition, for reasons known only to them, the nursery school chose not to be transparent about their search for a new location. It was not until the fall of 2015 that we learned the nursery school had been unable to identify a suitable new location. At that time, the nursery school approached the vestry and requested an additional lease extension. They told us that they were pursuing a number of still unidentified opportunities, but all were uncertain and therefore they needed more time. Initially, we declined for two reasons. First, we certainly felt that two years notice to find a new location was sufficient. But more importantly, we had formed a task force to identify a use for the Knewstub Building that was consistent with our mission and that task force was in the midst of its work.

As fall turned to winter, two things occurred. First, the nursery school continued to fail in its effort to find new space and their situation became increasingly desperate. Second, as the task force completed its work it became apparent that the Knewstub Building was configured as a school and that was its highest and best use. The vestry concluded that perhaps God was offering us an opportunity. We could alleviate a growing problem for the nursery school and use the Knewstub Building as a school by formally affiliating with the nursery school. To that end, we proposed enfolded the school into the church. Through a series of meetings our proposal evolved to include, among other things, a promise to retain the current school director and offer her a five year employment contract, a promise to retain all teachers and staff, and a promise to inject Christian spirituality into the curriculum gradually over time, including a commitment to make no changes for a year.

In the end, however, it appears that the objectives of the church and the school remain incompatible. This reality merely confirms the original judgment made in 2014 that the nursery school and church no longer share a common mission.

We are also mindful of the fact that no one wants to see the nursery school shut its doors. The staff is dedicated and hard-working and they depend on the school for their livelihood. Similarly, the parents of 166 students need certainty regarding the school's future and fall enrollment commitments are now due. Therefore, in our judgment, offering to extend the lease until June 30, 2017, was the right thing to do.

Although the vestry believes this is the right thing to do in the current situation, we do not believe Saint David's is obligated to act as a perpetual ward of the nursery school. Therefore, it is not our intent to agree to any further requests for extension beyond June 30, 2017. Rather, the vestry has voted to form a task force to evaluate whether Saint David's should start its own faith-based nursery school. We hasten to add that no decision has been made to start a school. A significant amount of work needs to be performed to determine if this is prudent and feasible. We will keep you informed as this work progresses.

We hope this letter accomplishes its goals of advising you both where we are and how we got here. We welcome your questions and comments. Please feel free to talk to any vestry member or email us at vestry@stdavidschurch.org.

The Vestry of Saint David's Episcopal Church