

Gary Hall, dean of the Washington National Cathedral, to retire early; bishop Mariann Budde to serve as interim

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Gary Hall, dean of the Washington National Cathedral, announced in late August that he would be retiring from his position two years early.

“Over the past three years, the bishop, the staff, the chapter, and I have done the hard work of placing the cathedral on solid financial footing: our budget is balanced, and we are closing the books on our most successful year in recent history,” Hall wrote in a letter to the cathedral community.

However, in coming decades the cathedral will need to undertake “a major capital campaign” as well as respond to “the changing face of American religion and our country’s increasing diversity,” he wrote.

The cathedral will require a leader who can commit at least a decade to the job, Hall said. Hall, who became dean in 2012, wrote that “at the age of 66, with two years remaining on my contract, I am not the person for the job ahead.”

The Washington National Cathedral is the seat of both the Episcopal bishop of Washington and the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church. It is governed by its dean and the cathedral chapter and is also overseen by the trustees of the Protestant Episcopal Church Foundation.

Only \$1 million of the cathedral’s annual budget of \$13–15 million comes from its 1,400 members, according to the Episcopal Diocese of Washington communications staff. The rest comes from major donors, tourists, and grants. The cathedral also sustained damage after a 2011 earthquake.

“How do you keep the thing that everyone loves going, the beautiful established thing, but also build a programmatic institution that’s worthy of major philanthropy?” Hall told the Washington Post.

Hall will retire on December 31, and Mariann Budde, bishop of Washington, will serve as interim dean beginning January 1. The search for Hall’s successor will begin

in September and will be conducted by a search committee that she and the chapter will appoint.

Budde and David J. Kautter, chair of the cathedral's chapter, wrote in a letter that they received Hall's notice with sadness and gratitude.

"Sadness because Gary is a principled and creative colleague; gratitude because he has accomplished much in his three years as dean," they wrote. "One of the hallmarks of a leader is the wisdom to discern when to lead and, just as importantly, when to allow the mantle of leadership to be taken up by someone else. Gary is such a leader, and we are thankful for his attentiveness to God's call." —Washington National Cathedral, added sources