

Dear People of St Paul's:

It is with great joy and a full heart that I write to you as your next Rector. When I think of all that it took to bring us to this place, I think of grace.

From the moment John Carlisto retired, through the interim period until the day of the announcement of my call, so many of you stepped up and filled roles unexpected. You shared your hopes and concerns with the search committee, gave generously and were faithful in prayer and worship, praying that God would send the Shepherd most needed at this point in your history.

During that very same period of time, God was nudging me to consider leading a congregation in a different way after 25 years of ministry in one place. I began to imagine what serving in another community might look like and how my gifts for ministry would be best expressed. The question I kept asking was, "what is my next, most faithful step?" My mantra was from St. Paul who said that "if anyone be in Christ they are a new creation behold the old has passed away and the new has come..." The Benedictine Monastic hours that are the pattern for our daily offices claim this new life in Christ and urge us to believe that "always we begin again." David and I talked about, and prayed about a new beginning, where we would like to go and decided we were open to anywhere God would call (honestly, David was not excited about Iowa and New Jersey).

What I also knew was that my job as a child of God was simply to listen for that next most faithful step. With the hurricane coming our way, your search committee was determined to interview me, and after two days of boarding up our family's houses, in the midst of the evacuation, time seemed to stand still as we were together and the Holy Spirit moved. It was my cousin who articulated it best when at the dinner table last night said: "it's amazing that it has all come full circle with you and David, his roots and yours bound together by God, bringing you here to St Paul's." I could not agree more.

I grew up on Amelia Island in Florida, seven miles long and three miles wide, spitting distance from Georgia, as did my father and his father and his father before him. David, who was raised an Episcopalian choir boy, likes to say his heart has lived always at Atlantic Beach, where his family has had roots since the late 1930s. He grew up in High Point and his people are from Greene and Davidson counties. We, and Noah the golden retriever and Gracie the cockatiel, look forward to making Beaufort our home.

Advent is a time of fresh starts, new endeavors, and what Madeliene L'Engle called the *Glorious Impossible*. It is a time that invites hope, dreams yet explored, and the grace of new vision. In the coming liturgical year we will have the opportunity as a community of faith to get to know one another, labor together in God's fields and continue the good work God has so faithfully done here from generation to generation, as we listen for what the next most faithful steps are for St Paul's.

You are in our prayers and I bid yours as we continue to make our transition, and I look forward to greeting each of you on the Feast of the Epiphany. May there be many in 2019.

Keep the Faith and let the Faith keep you,

Tammy