

## INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE FROM REV. DIANE GIVENS MOFFETT

Dear Salem Presbytery Colleagues and Friends in Christ Jesus:

*“ ... I do not count my life as any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God’s grace.”*  
(Acts [20:24](#))

I am writing to share Sam Marshall’s announcement of his retirement as our General Presbyter. Sam’s gracious letter to the Executive Council and Presbytery is attached.

Sam’s outstanding leadership to our Presbytery over the past decade cannot be overstated. His compassionate care, his reasoned and valuable advice, his brilliant intellect, and his unswerving devotion to our beloved Church and the saving grace of Jesus Christ have been blessings to all of us. Sam’s work in Salem has been significantly supported by his wife, Cecelia, who will herself retire this fall from her practice of counseling.

The opportunity to celebrate Sam and his countless gifts will be our joy when the Presbytery meets [on Tuesday, November 14](#) in Greensboro.

The Executive Council will begin to study and engage in the process (as outlined in our Presbytery Manual) for identifying Sam’s successor, including the provision of interim leadership.

Please join me in prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude to our God for Sam’s service and leadership in Christian ministry, and for continued blessings and discernment as he and Cecelia prepare to take up the happy vocation of retirement.

The Rev. Diane Givens Moffett, Moderator  
Salem Presbytery Executive Council

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### Notice to Salem Presbytery of Retirement Date August 31, 2017 – The Rev. Sam P. Marshall

As Rev. Bob Dunham gave notice of retirement to his congregation at University Church in Durham, he led with a poem from Mary Oliver,

*To live in this world you must be able  
to do three things: to love what is mortal;  
to hold it against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.*

“In Blackwater Woods” by Mary Oliver, from [American Primitive](#). © Back Bay Books, 1983.

As your General Presbyter I have held Salem Presbytery “against my bones” for ten years. It has been the most distinct honor of my working life to have served Salem as the General Presbyter. You have all bestowed upon me and my family kindness and support and friendship unsurpassed. As I approach the end of 2017 I believe I am being called in my service as General Presbyter to retire and “let it go” as of December 31, 2017. It has been an honor and privilege to serve among you as your General Presbyter for ten years. I will always value the congregations, pastors, educators, and church staffs I have come to know, and the honor it has been to be part of your faithful witness to the Church of Jesus Christ. I thank my wife Cecilia, my daughters Anne and Hallie, for their support of my service to the Presbyterian Church USA as a Minister of Word and Sacrament for forty-two years. It has been a delight to serve with your talented and dedicated Presbytery Staff. My sincerest thanks go to each of them for the commitment and talent they bring to their own call to ministry in the name of Jesus Christ. There may be some Presbytery staffs of equal gifts, but surely none better than Salem’s.

For the road ahead Salem’s Executive Council will be in charge of finding the Transitional -Interim Leader to help Salem Presbytery and its Dream Team move the Presbytery further down the way of mission and service and compassion. The resources of the staff of the Synod of Mid-Atlantic will also be available to help in this process. You will be in good hands! There is much more to say, but I have four months in which to speak/write, so I’ll not try to say everything in one page – there will be time ahead for me to continue to affirm my affection for you all.

It is the Presbyterian way- not clinging to what was, but letting go and making way for God’s new work to be done cheerfully and with great joy. There is always a bit of “dying” and death in saying goodbye, and moving from one call to another. You have experienced that as your pastors have left you and accepted a new call. I think of your own native Asheville son, Thomas Wolfe, in his words about these times of transition and goodbye - a hopeful vision of the wind of the Holy Spirit and the unending rivers of God’s Holy Grace:

*To lose the earth you know for greater knowing; to lose the life you have for greater life; to leave the friends you loved for greater loving; to find a land more kind than home, more large than earth, whereon the pillars of this earth are founded, towards which the conscience of the world is tending – a wind is rising and the rivers flow.*

Gracefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam P. Marshall" with a small flourish at the end.