



Episcopal Church of Saints Andrew & Matthew

October 9, 2025

Dear beloved members of SsAM,

I am writing to you today with the bittersweet news that our longtime Music Director, David Christopher, has received a new call to serve as the Music Director at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Palm Desert, CA. David has faithfully served our community for more than 24 years. He is one of the most gifted musicians in The Episcopal Church and we are grateful for how he has helped shape and grow our magnificent choir and music program. In addition to that we give thanks for the critical role he has played in shaping our liturgical and musical identity here at SsAM-we are who we are in many ways because of David's ministry. His gifts and talents will be dearly missed.

We as a community, and I personally, are excited for this opportunity for David and I encourage you to read his heartfelt letter sharing about his new call. But I also want to say how grateful we are, and how much we will miss, his heart, his friendship, and his unwavering passion to see this community thrive. David's tenure with us will conclude at the end of the year, so we will have time to say goodbye and give thanks for all the ways that his ministry has blessed us. During the next few weeks I will be working with David and the Vestry regarding the future of the program. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or any member of the Vestry. In the meantime let us give thanks for David, Florentino, their family, and all the ways that they have blessed our community wishing them well in this transition to their new community in Palm Desert.

With immense gratitude,

Patrick+

Dear SsAM Friends

A few years ago I received an unexpected call from Fr. Andrew Butler, the rector of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Palm Desert, California. It turns out that I had been recommended by Quimby Pipe Organs as someone they might want to consider as a candidate for the music director and organist position they were seeking to fill. Although skeptical, I found the idea intriguing and to be honest, I was flattered that they would think of me for this. I even went so far as to go out for a visit to meet Fr. Andrew, the choir, and members of the congregation, all of whom were wonderful folks and I was truly impressed with the impressive work the parish was doing in the community. However, when it came down to it, I decided to withdraw as a candidate. Not only were all still reeling from the pandemic and SsAM was in a very difficult time of transition as most of you will remember, but Jose was still in High School and we didn't want to uproot him at that point in his life. After making that decision, I was convinced that I wanted to spend the next few years finishing my career at SsAM and then retiring to Mexico with Florentino (which we still are hoping to do at some point!)

Fast forward to the present time, I received an e-mail from Fr. Andrew explaining that the person they hired back in 2022 had recently retired earlier than expected, and asked if I would again consider taking the position. This was so unexpected that I barely took it seriously at first, but agreed to at least have a conversation about it. After numerous e-mail exchanges, phone calls and text messages, Florentino and I decided it made sense to take a trip to the west coast to investigate further, which we did a couple of weeks ago. We had a great time on our visit, but we were still unsure if this was something we should take seriously.

Shortly thereafter, I was talking with Fr. Patrick and we were discussing this year's stewardship hymn which is "Tell Out My Soul," a hymn paraphrasing the Magnificat, Mary's song of praise after learning she was being called by God to become the mother of Jesus. It's one of my strong personal beliefs that the reason we sing the Magnificat at evensong is because this is the ideal response to God's call, one that, after which we should model our own response. So with the Magnificat in the back of my mind, I eventually came to the realization that this was something I was being called to do and that the answer I should give is "yes!" Just last week, I received an offer letter from St. Margaret's, and this past Tuesday, I met with Fr. Patrick to inform him that I had made the difficult decision to accept.

Believe me, I'm as surprised as anyone that this is happening, and as you can imagine, this will be a huge change for me, both professionally and existentially. I have served as the music director of SsAM for over 24 years, and it has been one of the most fulfilling and defining experiences of my life. It's very difficult for me to imagine not being an integral part of the SsAM community, but I hope we can all see this as an opportunity to evolve and grow into the vision that God has for all of us. Having had a number of conversations with Fr. Patrick over the past few months about developing a succession plan for music at SsAM after my "retirement," I feel very optimistic that under Fr. Patrick's leadership, SsAM is well positioned to find that path forward. I view this opportunity to begin a new ministry at St. Margaret's as a way for the universe to show me the path forward at a time in my life that I still have something to give, and a creative way to spend my final years as a professional musician.

In the next few months, I hope to have the opportunity to connect with many of you, not only to recount the many wonderful experiences we have had together, but to dream about the possibilities as we seek to grow and live into the plan God has for all of us.

Yours fondly,

David

David Christopher, Organist and Director of Music The Episcopal Church of Saints Andrew and Matthew