

## From the Bishop

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick  
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai‘i



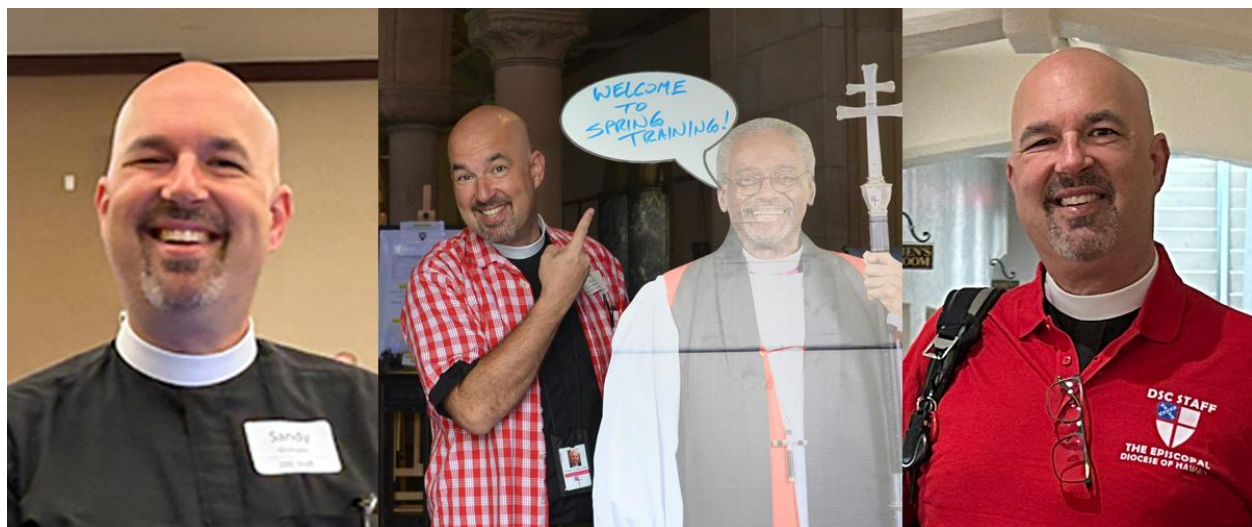
May 14, 2026

### A Reflection on Transitions

My dear Siblings in Christ Jesus,

There are times that life does not go as you plan. As we look to elect the sixth Bishop of Hawai‘i this coming Saturday, we received the notice that Dean Heather Patton-Graham has answered the call to become the senior chaplain at St. Christopher’s School, Richmond, Virginia. I do pray for her as she returns full-time to her vocation as a school chaplain.

This, of course, means that Canon Sandy Graham will be moving to Virginia and will, therefore, resign as Canon to the Bishop. This is a keen loss for the Diocese. I am particularly saddened not to have Sandy with me for my last months as Bishop Diocesan.



The role of Canon to the Bishop (sometimes called “Canon to the Ordinary”) is very special. I often joke that it is like being the Godfather’s consigliere. The Canon serves as the Bishop’s advisor and sounding board. The Canon is often called upon to step into difficult situations. The canon often holds the concerns of clergy and congregations. The Canon is the advisor and guide during transitions. Finally, the Canon must step back and allow the Bishop to step forward. It takes a special person to serve as the Canon to a Bishop.

Sandy has so done faithfully and well for the past ten years. He knows the Diocese better than anyone – dare I say – except for me. He has guided many congregations in search processes for clergy. This is no easy task in our times of a clergy shortage.



We cannot overlook Sandy's valiant efforts on Maui when the 2023 fires destroyed the town of Lahaina and Holy Innocents Church along with it. For over a year, he flew over regularly to provide pastoral care and lead services from members' homes, and later at their current temporary worship site in Napili. He retrieved church records and artifacts from the ash and rubble, blessed the site dressed in Tyvek suit, joined with Maui clergy, community groups, disaster and local officials, as the island struggled to recover. The care he provided to members who lost so much has been invaluable.



He has been called upon to help congregations in distress. This has been especially true this past year at St. Elizabeth's Church, Honolulu, the first incorporated Parish in our Diocese to ever be made an Aided Parish by action of the Standing Committee and Bishop. I named Sandy Priest-in-Charge as new Wardens and members of the Vestry were appointed. He brought calm to a congregation in conflict. He has guided them through a reordering of the finances. He has affirmed the outreach ministries while providing pastoral care to all the members. He has essentially held down two full-time ministries serving both the Diocese and the congregation. His efforts have been heroic.

In the months ahead, I will sorely miss his counsel and calm presence. I will miss having a clergy friend down the hall with whom to talk. I will not have a Canon to consult or lean on. Sandy, you will be missed.



Between their vacation already planned for June and Dean Heather's new ministry at a school scheduled to begin in July, there will not be much time to say aloha.

There will be a special farewell service for both Canon Sandy and Dean Heather on Thursday, May 28th, at 6:30 PM, in the Cathedral of St. Andrew, Honolulu. If you are on O'ahu, I do hope you will join us.

I also encourage you to contact or write Sandy directly to share your aloha and mahalo.

The words of the author of Ecclesiastes (3:1-7; 7:8, 10, 13-14), called "Qoheleth" (often translated as "Preacher" or "Teacher"), have recently been much on my mind. This all the more true this week:

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to be born and a time to die;  
a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
a time to kill and a time to heal;  
a time to break down and a time to build up;  
a time to weep and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn and a time to dance;  
a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;  
a time to seek and a time to lose;  
a time to keep and a time to throw away;  
a time to tear and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silent and a time to speak;

Better is the end of a thing than its beginning; the patient in spirit are better than the proud in spirit.... Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.... Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity, be joyful, and in the day of adversity, consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that mortals may not find out anything that comes after them.

Finally, please keep Sandy in your prayers as he seeks God's guidance for the next phase of his ministry.

"No ia mea, e nā hoahānau, e kūpa'a 'oukou, me ka nāueue 'ole, me ka ho'omau i kā 'oukou hana nui 'ana i ka hana a ka Haku, no ka mea, ua 'ike nō 'oukou, 'a'ole i make hewa kā 'oukou hana 'ana ma ka Haku." Korineto I 15.58

"Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:58

Aloha ma o Iesu Kristo, ko mākou Haku,

+Bob

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Bishop Diocesan  
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i  
*The Episcopal Church in the Hawaiian Islands, Guam and Saipan*