

Dear St. Mary's Parish—

February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

I'm so excited to give this introduction of myself to you, and I can't wait to join you all in ministry in the next couple of months!

Last June, I found myself visiting my aunt and uncle (Presbyterians) who live in Whitehall, and I looked online for an Episcopal church to visit on the Sunday I was spending with them. St. Mary's was the closest, and so I visited, without any idea that both you and I were in search processes. I attended the 8:00 service that day and prayed together with those who were gathered: "Lord God, ruler of creation, we thank you for our St. Mary's family. We ask for your grace and guidance of our hearts and minds in the discernment of a Rector for this parish. Bless our search committee as they seek to call our next priest. Bring to them clarity of our people's hopes and fears and let us rejoice in what will be. We ask that you guide them, and guide to them, a pastor who will lead our worship, support our ministry and faith, and love us as one family: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." My experience that Sunday was one saturated with the Holy Spirit and led me to wonder if my search and St. Mary's search might find fulfillment in each other.

I'm a Carolina Girl who has lived all over the world. In fact, I've actually lived in Columbia (briefly) two other times in my life. The first was when I was a couple of months old. I was born in Greenwood, SC, when my parents were getting ready to go to be missionaries in México. Because of some difficulties around my birth, the doctor thought I wasn't strong enough to travel yet. So, my father went on ahead to México, while my mother and I came to Columbia to live with her parents for a couple of months until the doctor said it was OK for me to travel.

Then, when I was in my senior year at Erskine College, I did what they called an "externship" in Church Music at Shandon Presbyterian. This was a requirement for my Church Music major, and I lived with my grandmother for that month on Maple Street (off Millwood), in the house where my mother grew up, and where I spent time that month playing through the Hymnbook on her incredibly out-of-tune Wurlitzer piano. I also majored in Vocal Performance and received my Bachelor's degree from Erskine in 1987.

After two years of working and discerning, I did my MDiv at Yale Divinity School, in New Haven, Connecticut, where I quickly discerned that I was not being called to ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church. I stayed on to do a second Master's, the STM (Master of Sacred Theology), and then moved back South to do a PhD in Old Testament at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. After I completed that degree, I took a job teaching Old Testament at the Pacific Theological College, an ecumenical seminary in the Fiji Islands that serves the many churches of the various Pacific Island

nations. It was there that I began attending Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral in Suva, the capital of Fiji, where I lived. I was confirmed and received on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000, and entered a process of discernment toward ordination to the priesthood. After I completed my three-year contract in Fiji, I moved to Chicago, where I was an adjunct professor at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. As part of my preparation for ordination in the Episcopal Church, I did an Anglican Studies year at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary and received a Certificate in Anglican Studies. I was ordained in the Diocese of Chicago by the Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Lee to the transitional diaconate in 2009 and to the priesthood in 2010. During that time, I served as Pastoral Associate at Montgomery Place Retirement Center, which operates under the auspices of the Diocese of Chicago.

Since then I have served as Rector of St. Bartholomew's, Florence, Alabama; of St. James the Less, Ashland, Virginia; and Interim Rector of St. Paul's, Kingsport, Tennessee.

As I mentioned above, my mother grew up in Columbia, and I have always been enamored with the idea of living in Columbia, someday. I am so happy that my call to St. Mary's coincides with fulfilling that personal wish. I look forward to meeting you all in person and to joining you in ministry for many long years to come.

Blessings and peace—  
Anna

