



Patrick Raymond <praymond@ascensionchicago.org>

Fwd: An important message from Mother Erika

Patrick Raymond <praymond@ascensionchicago.org>
To: Patrick Raymond <praymond@ascensionchicago.org>

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Feb. 22, 2022

Beloved in Christ,

It is with a grateful heart for my time as your rector that I write to tell you that, after a period of intense prayer and discernment, my husband and I have decided to move on from our time in Chicago. This past week, I informed the wardens and the vestry of my intention to resign; Sun., May 1, will be my last Sunday as your rector.

This decision is a hopeful one for us, even as it is bittersweet. There are two primary reasons for our move. The first is that we both have a powerful longing to live closer to our families. Many of you know that we have spent time in North Carolina this past year, where we were able to visit with both sets of parents. Our time there was revelatory in several ways: we realized the depth of our desire to be able to spend more time with our immediate family, and we realized, as many of us have in these past two years, that this life is short, and we do not have an infinite amount of time to be able to truly enjoy that kind of proximity. As our families are settled, and, thankfully, settled relatively close together, we knew that we would need to be the ones to change location. Just after Christmas, my husband was offered a job that allows him to work fully and permanently remotely; with that opportunity, we knew the time was right to make a move. We have purchased a home in North Carolina near Greensboro, where we will be very close to both of our families.

The second reason for this decision has to do with my own sense of vocation. Some of you know that I have begun a program in pastoral counseling at the Institute for Pastoral Studies at Loyola University. I have had an interest in pastoral counseling for as long as I have been a priest. I can remember sitting in seminary and hearing my professors describe the difference between pastoral work in the parish and professional pastoral counseling and finding myself thinking that both contexts interested me in equal measure. It is only in the past few years, after the nudge towards the counseling world continued in its persistence, that I began to wonder if this nudge might, in fact, be a calling. I entered into a period of discernment, praying for clarity and inviting conversation with spiritual friends and my own therapist. The discernment was quick and clear: I am strongly feeling a call to pastoral counseling, and I believe that God will be able to use my unique gifts in that context to continue to effect healing and reveal Grace in the world.

This is not to say that I will no longer be serving in a parish. My hope is that once we are settled in our new home, I will find a place where I can offer my presence and my talents for the building up of the Church. The life of font, altar, and pulpit is fundamental to my vocation, and I see this new calling as an outgrowth of that priestly ministry.

This has not been an easy decision, but it does feel like the right one. Because this process has felt so guided and blessed for me, I have every hope and confidence that the next stage of your life at Atonement will be equally guided and blessed. In my time here, I have consistently been humbled by what this parish can do. Together, we have opened our doors to new people, increased our presence in the community (both in person and online), and found a remarkable amount of resilience and creativity during these years of pandemic. Again and again, we have raised up talented and passionate lay leaders. We have also, importantly, done the hard work of putting systems in place that have prepared you for the next stage of your journey – creating more transparency in the church's governance and financial policies, assessing the state of the buildings and organ, and creating partnerships with community organizations to help with visioning and implementation of new plans for restoration, outreach, and growth. All the while we have worshiped and sung, baptized and buried, married and celebrated, served and sacrificed, shared in good food and good laughter, and cared for one another—in good times and in bad—as fellow disciples, loving one another as Christ loved us. Beloved, you are ready for a new stage of your life together, and you are ready for a new leader with the gifts and skills to help guide you there.

In order for this new leadership to have the kind of presence and authority they will need, it is important for us all to remember that once I leave, your new priest will assume all pastoral leadership. I will not be returning for weddings or funerals, and, much as I love you, it would not be appropriate for us to maintain an abiding pastoral relationship. Saying hello on Facebook is fine, but when you have a challenge or a spiritual question you need to talk through, you should lean on the new priest who will be serving here. While this may seem like a hard line, it is an important one, and one that has been proven through countless parish transitions to be the healthiest path, both for me, and also for you. Atonement handled the transition of my election and beginning ministry

so beautifully; I have no doubt that you will also handle this transition well—and not just “handle” the transition but also use it as an opportunity for discernment and growth as well.

We are about to enter into the season of Lent. This seems to me to be a fortuitous time for us to begin the process of saying goodbye to one another. We will walk through this season together, taking the time to look back and give thanks for the ways that our time together has been a blessing for all of us. And we will affirm, in every step of this journey, that our God is a God of new hope and new possibilities—of new and abundant life.

I will always be grateful for the opportunity to have served as the eleventh rector of this marvelous, beautiful, and holy parish. May God bless you, now and forever.

Yours in Christ,

Erika+

[The Very Rev'd Erika L. Takacs](#)
Rector, Church of the Atonement

A Message from the Wardens

Dear Fellow Parishioners of Atonement,

During her time at Atonement, Mother Erika has helped us to maintain our congregation's traditions, strengthen our commitment to one another, and expand our role in the community. This has been an extraordinary effort on her part during a very challenging time.

Although we will miss her very much, we'll always be grateful for her service and wish her the best in all of her future endeavors.

At the same time, we know that changes and transitions can be difficult.

Please rest assured that we have already begun discussions with the bishop's staff to start a transition. The Diocese certainly recognizes Atonement's strengths and capabilities, and we know that they will respectfully and helpfully assist us through this process.

The transition process is of course at a very, very early stage, and there will be much more to share with the congregation in the future.

In the meantime, please keep this process and Mother Erika in your prayers, and feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Liz Sarnik & Tim Fox
Wardens, Church of the Atonement



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"It is not that I want merely to be called a Christian but to actually be one." - Ignatius of Antioch

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