

Seminarians at VTS are given the opportunity to do field-education as part of their overall formation for leadership in the Church. Seminarians are encouraged to choose places that will allow them grow. It is not a process of checking-the-box, meaning the field experience should hopefully bring something new to the seminarian. For seminarians that come in with a good amount of parish or ministry experience, the temptation to say “I don’t need to learn anything else” is an easy pit to fall in to. It’s simply not true! Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams writes in *Being Disciples*, “It’s a sad reflection on any Christian if we come to the point of thinking, ‘Well, I’ve done my spiritual growing. I’ve reached a point that suits me. I’ve found a style of discipleship that I’m comfortable with.’”* I’m happy to say that this has not been my experience of The Falls Church.

Williams’ point is that growth is a process that never stops. Part of the reason I was initially attracted to The Falls Church was due to its growth. I have found that this community is dedicated to the hard work that growth requires. It requires listening to one another. It requires a desire to see people for who they are. It requires a dedication to the difficult work of understanding disagreement. For Episcopalians, it requires us to pay attention to the good work we are tasked with in our Baptismal Covenant: “Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?”

This commitment to walk together in love *and* difference is a rare trait that will continue to serve you all well as you continue in your transitional time. Growth means that God might be calling us in new directions. The ability to walk together in difference is a trait that will allow such growth to happen. As we all continue to grow in community, in our spiritual journeys, and

in our faith, I hope that we embrace openness, embrace diversity, and embrace the differences that make up God's beautiful world. This is the true work that growth requires of us.

There are too many people to thank, so I will not attempt to do it. However, I would like to give a special shout out to the members of my Lay Support Committee who met with me over the past two years to give me feedback on my time, as well as some wonderful fellowship. I'd also like to say thank you to Rev. Andy, Rev. John, Rev. Kelly, and Rev. Michael, who have all given me invaluable support and guidance during the past two years.

It seems nearly impossible that my two years with The Falls Church Episcopal are now finished. As with many things in the past couple of months, this is not the way I had envisioned this relationship ending. I write you now from Hickory, North Carolina. My wife and I moved down here earlier than expected to get ready for the arrival of our baby at the end of this month. In June, I'll be starting my new job as the Curate at The Episcopal Church of the Ascension. We're very excited to start this new phase of our life and ministry. I'll be taking so much of what I learned at The Falls Church with me.

I can say undoubtedly that I have been formed by all of you and I thank you so much for welcoming me into your community with such open hearts. As you continue your journey of transformation and growth in the coming weeks, months, and years, I hope these words from Archbishop Williams remind you that the hard work of growth is worth it: "To expect to grow, to approach our prayer and our acts of worships with the quiet assumption that at the end of the exercise, there will be slightly more of me than there was at the start, this is what we're called to do in sustaining life in the Spirit."

**Being Disciples* is part of a 3-part series which also includes *Being Christian* and *Being Human*. These books by Archbishop Williams are some of the most helpful, accessible, and quotable books on our Christian life together that I've found. Please check them out!