

From Pastor Gordy

When Bishop Strickland asked me to serve the interim at St. Andrew on Pr. Lippard's retirement, I had expected something quite different from what has transpired during the past fifteen months. I looked forward to leading worship in St. Andrew's beautiful worship space, in listening to the fine organ (and organist). I was imagining renewing old acquaintances and meeting many of the people who have become part of the St. Andrew community since I left to serve in the bishop's office in late 2007.

Things don't always go as planned. Only two weeks after the interim began, COVID-19 necessitated a shutdown of in-person meetings and worship. The ways I was accustomed to being a pastor, present with people who were ill, home-bound, grieving, or in the hospital, were no longer available. Add to that the resignation of several key lay leaders and staff, and, as I said, this was not the interim any of us was expecting.

Early on in the pandemic those of us on the St. Andrew staff learned to communicate via video and meet via Zoom. We found out that many of the gifts we most needed in this time were right here in the community all along. Pr. Michelle Kuhlman and Liza Hawkins have stepped up competently and creatively to fill the big shoes left by Pr. Museus Dabay and Sandy Vollmer.

Facilities manager Joe York has made sure that St. Andrew's beautiful building looks better each week. He has done a lot of painting, cleaning, and polishing up. Brian Russell and the music staff have managed to keep our praise of God going through their talent, hard work, and creativity. Brian also brought St. Andrew into the 21st century where social media and video technology are concerned. Pr. Eric Pearson assumed some of the responsibility for pastoral care during this time when his usual work of new member development has been in abeyance. He has also been helpful as a wise counselor to me and others on the staff.

As she has for fourteen years, Parish Administrator Jolene Richardson has worked tirelessly and with exceptional competence for the sake of this congregation she obviously loves, and she was – not surprising - a quick study as we significantly upped our cyber communication skills. Council President Jen Fisher brought together some of the talented members of the parish to form a communications and technology committee when it became clear that we will need to continue our cyber efforts if we are to include our homebound members and to reach out into the community after COVID-19 is over.

As usual, most of the staff's work has been done behind the scenes, but I know you join me in gratitude for their work, commitment, and care for St. Andrew. Through all the weirdness of these past sixteen months, the staff, as well as the council, and congregation of St. Andrew have supported and encouraged me in my work as interim pastor. Thank you for that.

Pastors Pauline Farrington and Eric Murray will begin their work at St. Andrew on the first day of July. Their leadership will be important as St. Andrew continues to be the body of Christ here in our community. I know both of St. Andrew's new pastors to be skilled, dedicated, and wise leaders. Under their leadership, I am sure that the good work begun here nearly fifty years ago when the Lutheran Church in America sent a young Pr. Eric Pearson to develop a congregation on the outskirts of Franklin will continue and grow, and that the love that St. Andrew's people have for this parish, this community, and one another will flourish.

Please know how grateful I am for the opportunity to have served as the interim pastor at St. Andrew. It has been an honor to do this work with you in this challenging and opportunity-filled time.

And, as always, thank you for your partnership in the gospel,
+Julian Gordy