

We have a celebration of new ministry planned for Sunday afternoon. The Bishop will be here. The choir has been hard at work. Carlton even wrote a piece of music for the occasion. The weather looks decent. The picnic following is looking great.

And... I don't know about you, but it feels a little weird to me to be having a celebration of new ministry 15 months into our time together. Why are we doing this?

Well, first off, in this post-pandemic summer, we don't need much of an excuse to have a party. So there is that.

More importantly, though, we are celebrating a new ministry together. For 62 of the first 65 weeks I was with you, we were in crisis mode. We didn't worship in person. Or learn in person. Or play BINGO in person. We survived, even thrived as a church, but a church in the (God willing) unique context of a global pandemic. We are back in person and we don't know each other nearly as well as we should a year and a half in. Life in Christ *together* is new!

And this place, St. Francis by the Sea Episcopal Church is moving into a time of renewal. We have children here, newborns (and about-to-be-borns) through high school. We are hiring our first coordinator of family, children and youth ministry! Our outreach into the community is growing. The St. Francis Fair is over and we have a lot of energy and love to share and the time to discern how to share it. Our liturgical life together is in transition into a slightly more traditional posture. Attendance is up. New folks are around. The world and a lot of us in it are seeking new ways to make meaning of things and to connect with our neighbors, and we are one of the very best places to do that here on the peninsula.

The world has always needed Jesus Christ. The world desperately needs His love and care right now. When we celebrate on Sunday at 4:00, we will not be simply celebrating my arrival, or the work that we have done and will do together. When we gather on Sunday we will be celebrating the new life in this congregation, on this peninsula, in this world, and how we, as a people, joined in Christ, can do our part, and joyously. And I truly don't think that is an unreasonable expectation.