

RETIREMENT ACCLIMATION

I retired for the first time in 1998, after a 26-year career as a Special Agent of the FBI. That didn't take, because within four years I finally responded to a call I had been putting off for more than 20 years, and started the almost four-year-long process to be ordained a Deacon.

For the next thirteen years I had the great good fortune of serving as a Deacon at St. Andrew's in Morehead City. I worked with a great guy as Rector, The Rev. Dr. John Pollock, and quickly fell in love with the wonderful community of faith that was and is St. Andrew's. And that was a great experience – challenging, comforting, and rewarding. But what captured my life, and a lot of my time and energy, was my Diaconal ministry, which was working with those dealing with severe and persistent mental illnesses and their families and caregivers.

Last year a number of factors fell in place together. I turned 76, and was beginning to feel the weight of the years, both physically and mentally. Donna and I lived in a three-level house, which was becoming a significant challenge to all four of our aging knees; our rather high-maintenance yard was also a problem. And both of us concluded that we still had some other directions we wanted to go. So, in February of this year, with the Bishop's, Fr. John's, and the wonderful congregation of St. Andrew's blessings, I retired for the second time.

So, how am I acclimating to retirement? Well, the sale of our house, our 39 days "in the wilderness" of three different temporary housings (with 2 cats) while our new house (one level!) in New Bern was being finished, and moving in and setting up our new abode have not been without some stress. But we're getting there. Though I have given up leadership positions, I'm still participating in the New Bern, mental health support group, one of two that I ran, and likely always will. Donna and I are now attending Christ Church in New Bern, and I must confess feeling somewhat "out of uniform" sitting in the congregation; I do miss my Diaconal duties, even preaching. So, with my wife's kind understanding and agreement, I will be offering my services as a Deacon *on occasion* when they are needed or wanted on a parish level; I will do the same on a diocesan level. Will this retirement take? I think so, but I also think that as long as I am physically and mentally capable, it will never be complete. And maybe that's not a bad thing.