

From: Joe Robinson
First Parish Communication with the Church of the Holy Spirit
December 31, 2020

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I'll begin by saying how grateful I am to your wardens and vestry for the time and passion they have invested in visiting with me about the possibilities of our sharing a time of ministry together, and for their generous patience while all of us waited for some decisions from the Church Pension Fund about my employment. The Episcopal Church has been a huge part of my life since I entered the Church at the age of 19 in a small college town in Mississippi. Even then, I was aware that God was calling me to some form of service to others, and in just a few years it became clear that my path would include the ordained ministry of priest. My very favorite part of priestly ministry has been sharing in the lives, the joys and pains, the ups and downs, the thin years and the fat years of a community of faith. In God's goodness, I have been blessed to work with six congregations in three dioceses, Mississippi, Colorado, and Massachusetts.

What I bring from that experience over 37 years is, a lot of technical "churchy" knowledge, a faith developed, deepened, and continually polished by the good folks I've worked with, a wonderful collection of friends and colleagues, and a deep commitment to the Episcopal Church which, (do forgive me) I believe is the closest thing to God's will concerning what a church should look like and how it should operate. It is not perfect, but then, it is made up of humans - also not perfect, but my experience has been that there are glimpses of perfection that we might just see in one another when our hearts and minds are in the groove of God's will and care.

I do not see priesthood as an office of privilege, raised above God's people, but as a mode of servanthood to help bring out the very best in a community. That's what I love doing and that is when I am at my best. More specifically, I delight in teaching, I enjoy preaching, and I love making the annual journey of faith that you started as a congregation on the first Sunday of Advent. I have a large and, most would say, healthy sense of humor, that is never far from what I am working on, and I find that my humor has been a discipline that touches most all my ministry. Because we are a people of resurrection, joy, and faith, we can find humor even in those moments when we feel pressed down by the world's weight.

I am a cook, a baker, a painter, a poet and musician; a dad, a grandpa, and for the last year I have been a full-time carpenter restoring a classic old house in Wareham. My son, Chris, presently serves as rector at The Church of the Redeemer in Biloxi, Mississippi, and my daughter, Sarah Catherine, lives in Hattiesburg, Mississippi with her husband and two sons. I miss seeing all of them so much during this time of separation. I'm sure that most all of us are suffering similar isolation.

It seems to me that the work we have before us comes in two veins. The first vein is the *pastoral* care of a community that has been together for many years, one that has developed particular ways of doing things, and particular ways of defining itself. The second vein involves the *prophetic* care of a community that is seeking a new rector. In this vein, we will take time to look at some of our local particularities and how they help or hinder our journey as we prepare to welcome a new rector to lead us in the future God has for us. On top of these there will be a steep learning curve for me involving the use of technology for gatherings and communications.

This year that I have been away from active ministry has been a game-changer in so many aspects of parish life. All of this is holy, life-giving work, and it is swimming with possibilities and promise. I look forward to sharing this part of the journey toward God with all of you and I can't wait to get started.

As we begin this new year you are in my thoughts and prayers, and I ask that you begin praying now that our time together may be fruitful, joyful, and all done in God's time and will. In great hopes and high expectations, I remain,

Yours in Christ's peace,
Joe+

