

Dear People of Grace,

I have been filled with an ongoing and buoyant sense of joy since the vestry called me to be your rector two days ago. I owe huge thanks to the profile and search committees as well as to the vestry for the prayerful, deeply faithful way they guided the process – and to the prayers of you all which I am sure sustained them.

It may not surprise you to hear that I've never encountered a community quite like Grace. I told the search committee that just knowing you exist fills me with gratitude – and it is true! Your visible and genuine love of being together, your knowledge of your need for God and for all your neighbors, and your understanding that the church is not made up of buildings but of people joined in the Spirit and guided by Love all inspire my deepest respect. I cannot tell you how much I look forward to meeting each one of you -- you have much to teach me.

I will be spending the next couple of months wrapping up my current work with the Neighbor to Neighbor network, preparing to move out to Gt. Barrington from Boston, and spending quality time with my family. Please know how deeply you are all in my prayers. Thank you, again, for the power and grace of your community, and for all the ways you are making God's love manifest in the world. May God keep and sustain you all!

In humility and wonder,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tina". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name below.

The Rev. Cristina Rathbone