



## **St. Philip's Episcopal Church**

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Dear St. Philip's Family,

Grace and peace be with you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we approach the sacred season of Advent. It is with a heart full of mixed emotions that I write to you today. After much prayerful discernment, I have accepted a new calling in my ministry journey. I will be departing from our beloved St. Philip's Church to serve as the Canon for Mission in the Diocese of Maryland. As I embark on this new chapter, I want to take a moment to share my thoughts and express my profound gratitude to each and every one of you.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge the range of emotions that may arise within our community upon hearing this news. Change, especially when it involves a pastoral transition, can stir feelings of uncertainty, sadness, and even anxiety. Please know that such emotions are perfectly natural and valid. It is through acknowledging and embracing them that we can find solace and strength in our shared faith.

Reflecting upon the past 11 years as your pastor, I am overwhelmed with a deep sense of privilege and gratitude. St. Philip's Church has been more than a congregation to me; it has been a spiritual home where I have witnessed the transformative power of God's love in action. It was here that my two children were baptized, symbolizing the sacred covenant we share as a community. It was here that I stood before God and Katya, exchanging vows of love and commitment, with your unwavering support and blessing. And it was here that I found solace, friendship, and unwavering support during both joyful and challenging times.

The memories we have created together, the ministries we have undertaken, and the lives we have touched will forever hold a special place in my heart. It is through your dedication, faithfulness, and willingness to serve that we have achieved remarkable things as a congregation. Together, we have nurtured a spirit of compassion, love, and inclusivity that has touched countless lives within and beyond our church walls.

While change can be unsettling, I firmly believe that God has called me to embark on this new journey as Canon for Mission in the Diocese of Maryland. It is an opportunity to serve a wider community and expand my ministry in ways that will further the kingdom of God. I carry with me the lessons, experiences, and memories from my time at St. Philip's Church, and they will forever shape the path I tread.

My last Sunday with you will be on January 14, 2024, and in the weeks leading up to that day, we will have ample time to reflect, celebrate, and bid farewell. During this period, I encourage each of you to lean on one another for support, to engage in open and honest conversations, and to embrace the beauty of our shared journey.

As I prepare to embark on this new adventure, I ask for your prayers and blessings. Pray for the Diocese of Maryland and the ministry that lies ahead. Pray for St. Philip's Church as you enter a season of transition and seek a new shepherd to walk alongside you. And most importantly, let us all pray for the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we may remain steadfast in our commitment to love, serve, and proclaim the Gospel in our community and beyond.

May the peace of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds as we navigate this transition together. I will forever hold the memories and ministries at St. Philip's Church close to my heart, and I am grateful for the privilege of being your pastor.

The Rev. Randy K. Callender

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy Callender", followed by a small cross symbol.