

A Letter from the Rector

July 19, 2017

When I was serving as a hospital chaplain in Indiana, I met a gentleman who was a long-term patient in the hospital. He had been there for months before I first met him and he had come to know all of the regular chaplains, including their various quirks, eccentricities, and styles of pastoral care. As I set foot in his doorway he was already assessing me (I came to discover this only later).

This man's physical ailments were not anything I could remedy and I was at a loss as to how I could best serve him. As we sat together, I could only sit with him and focus on being present as he told stories, joked around, had moments of sadness and grief, and shared his life with me. In the end, he was not looking for me to try to fix him or treat him like a patient, he just wanted someone to sit down with him and being in relationship with him as a fellow human being. A few visits later he shared with me that he saw two types of chaplains: those who only saw a "patient" who needed to be fixed and those who only saw a "human being" worthy of being in relationship. To truly be pastoral is not to diminish someone as a problem or a set of symptoms but rather it is to genuinely dwell with each other as human beings.

All this is to say that I am excited for the people of St. Stephen's. We have a really wonderful church here and are already ahead of the curve on practicing a ministry of presence to those around us. I am honored to be a part of a parish that prioritizes relationships and community. I am touched that time and time again I hear our parishioners express a desire to be present to others out in their lives. We don't just try to fix people and send them on their way. We get that it is sometimes hard work to look past the labels to see the human being on the other side, but we strive to do so because our fellow human beings are worth it. Our amazing deacon, the Rev. Pat Ritchie, our Angels On Assignment team, our Lay Eucharistic Visitors, and so many others do such good pastoral care because they understand the importance of being present. I encourage you all to continue to help support them, learn more about the important ministries they serve, and keep them all in your prayers.

Our Lord and Savior, when he chose to dwell here on earth with us as a human being, offered us the ultimate example of choosing to be present. We will always all have our various quirks, eccentricities, and styles of pastoral care, but here at St. Stephen's we are blessed in striving to follow Christ's example. God bless you all, God bless the relationships we build together, and God bless our ministry of presence to our fellow human beings.

Faithfully,

Steven