



Dear friends in Christ,

As Christians, one of the realities of our life together is that our parish clergy come and go. These changes can stir up emotions of joy and sadness, gratitude and anxiety, loss and hope. This is especially true when we've developed deep relationships and become accustomed to certain patterns of pastoral care, worship, and leadership. However, these clergy transitions are healthy reminders that, as Episcopalians, we believe that St. Stephen's is not the clergy's parish but rather it is the people's parish.

It is in this context that I announce the resignation of our Deacon, the Rev. Pat Ritchie, who has served the community faithfully for almost ten years and has discerned God's call to the next chapter in her ministry. Pat's final Sunday at St. Stephen's will be July 29. She has been a tremendous blessing to this community and I invite you to join us in celebrating Pat's ministry with a reception after the 10 am service.

Please read the attached letter from Deacon Pat:



Greetings St. Stephen's Parishioners,

This past year has brought so many changes for me personally. After 9 ½ years serving among you at St. Stephen's it is time for me to move on. As I told Father Steven, Maurice and I are in a new season of life. Our caregiving years ended in November with the death of my dad and Maurice retired in January giving us a new freedom that we are enjoying! We recently bought a beach house and plan to spend a lot of time there.

I plan to do some chillin' and reading and writing and listening to where the Spirit will direct my future Christian service. I am not retiring from being a deacon but rather re-directing.

It has been a great joy to serve God with you for these years. I give thanks for your complete faithfulness and your amazing goodness. You truly reflect the love of Jesus in your life together. You have delighted me in the way you would get on board with some of my far-flung ideas like a Beatles Eucharist or Laundry Love. You have inspired me by going to Honduras and building La Iglesia de la Epiphania and becoming friends with the community of El Zarzal and then trying something new in Costa Rica. I have burst with pride when you have jumped up to help when I brought a need before you. I could always count on you to give your time, your talent and your treasures.

As Carol Burnett would say, "I am so glad we spent this time together." Maurice and I are not disappearing, we will be around and we want to stay in touch with you. And now, let me just say, "Go in Peace, to Love and Serve the Lord." Go out into this broken world, y'all, and tell them that St. Stephen's sent you but you come in the name of Jesus and His Love.

With admiration and love,
Deacon Pat

Please join me in thanking Pat for sharing her gifts with us. Over the coming months I will be working with our vestry, staff, and parish leadership to determine how we will proceed through this time of transition. In the near term we will, with Pat's help, arrange for a shifting of responsibilities among ministry leaders in order to provide for the ongoing programs and needs of the parish. I am, of course, at your disposal if you have any questions.

In the midst of transition, we will continue to trust that God is always guiding, forming, and equipping us to join in God's mission for our world. Leadership changes do not delay the continuing work to which we are called: to *Love God, Share Jesus, and Rejoice in the Spirit* together.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steven".

The Rev. Steven M Balke, Jr.

Rector, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Beaumont TX