

*The hardest thing about the road not taken is that you never know where it might have led.*

— Lisa Wingate, *A Month of Summer*

November 17, 2014

Dear Friend of St. Francis,

This is not an easy letter to write, but I need to let you know that Mike and I have decided to move our family to Raleigh, North Carolina, and I will leave my position as your Rector at the end of January.

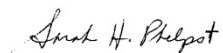
There are many reasons for our decision, all of which are family-related. The lower cost of living in North Carolina will enable me to work part-time for a season and to spend more time at home with Sam while he is small. It also means that as Mike's work to digitally preserve ancient biblical manuscripts expands, I will have some time to assist him, and Sam and I may get to travel with him more often. In addition, the lower cost of housing in North Carolina has enabled us to buy a home where we can eventually live together with Mike's mom, Lois, who will benefit from our close proximity in the years ahead. Mike also has a beloved cousin living in Raleigh who has three young children, and we are eager to raise Sam in the warmth of a close extended family.

This past August I began my eighth year at St. Francis, and in December I begin my sixth year as your rector. Given that the average tenure of a rector in the Episcopal Church is currently 4-7 years, I guess my departure is right on schedule. Yet in many ways it feels premature, and it grieves me to leave you so soon. You are a truly loving and generous parish, and you have been incredibly gracious to me and my family through some of the most challenging times of our lives. Not only that, but you have the most gifted leadership of any parish I have served. The staff team we have put together over these last several years is truly wonderful, and they are all a joy to work with. I have learned so much from all of you, and despite many oversights and "first-time rector" mistakes on my part, you have been very gracious to me, and it seems God has blessed us to grow during these years together – both spiritually and in the vitality of our ministries.

As I quoted above, "The hardest thing about the road not taken is that you never know where it might have led." Despite my own sadness about leaving St. Francis, I have every confidence in you and in the work of the Holy Spirit to guide and equip you for your next steps. Your Vestry will work closely with our bishops and the Transition Ministries Office of our diocese to arrange for both interim leadership and, eventually, the selection of a new rector; and I trust they will keep you informed and appropriately involved in this process along the way.

Mike and I (and Sam) are profoundly grateful to have shared this season of our lives with you. As we celebrate our last Advent and Christmas at St. Francis, I am sure many moments will be tinged with both joy and sadness, but I encourage you to embrace the unknown future not with anxiety, but with hope, because if there is anything we can trust, it is that Christ, our *Emmanu-el* (God with us), is with us every step of the way.

This comes with Love,



Mo. Sarah+