

# CHRIST and ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

The Reverend L. Kathleen Liles  
Rector

May 5, 2022

My dear people of Christ & Saint Stephen's and Friends, Greetings.

Many years ago there was an adorable little boy named Logan who lived in the duplex upstairs from the church office. I wrote about him back then. At two years old much of his energy involved the task of assembling a vocabulary. He said *fish* as he pointed at the colorful shapes on his tee-shirt and one day I heard him say *upstairs* for the first time, always before it had been merely *up*. Logan called my assistant Paul Olsson *Papa Paul*, but addressed me simply as *Liles*. I am thinking of Logan today because by far his favorite word was *Goodbye*. He would say *Goodbye!* as he climbed the stairs outside my study. I peeked out my door and said *Goodbye, Goodbye*, opening and closing my hand palms forward as adults do when trying to communicate with two year olds in a pleasant manner. *Goodbye, Goodbye!* he repeated after me. And so it went as he disappeared upward.

Logan's *goodbye* is on my mind today, for I am writing to begin the process of saying *goodbye* to you.

With my upcoming September birthday I reach mandatory retirement age. My last Sunday will be October 2, two days after concluding my 24<sup>th</sup> year as your rector. I would have preferred to serve another year with the hope that we could get back to something like 'normal' following the changes brought by the Covid pandemic. But the church in its wisdom knows that setting a mandatory date helps clergy who have stayed long enough to pack their bags and let someone new come aboard. Such is the wisdom of the church.

I am not gone yet. We have five more months together and I hope to make the most of it. Yet it seemed time to let you know that this change is coming soon. The parish is in good shape for your next rector and the diocese will take you through a process of discernment where you can discuss, as a community, where you want to go next and the gifts the next rector will need to lead you there. An interim priest will make sure worship, study, and pastoral care continues.

There will be more to say as my retirement day approaches, but now we begin the process of looking forward to the next chapter of this extraordinary community we all love.

I have said many times that a vital parish is one that always continues to move forward into a future of change. Discipleship requires that we grow, and growing by its nature requires adjustment, embracing the not-yet-known. And although *Goodbye* can seem a melancholy word, its uncertain qualities remind us to trust in our loving and gracious God who walks with us in the in-between times, taking us to new places for his sake. I was often reminded of that enduring promise by one of Logan's favorite phrases – *It's okay. It's okay.*

Faithfully,

