

October 20, 2021

Dear Ones,

On St. Michael's Day, I reflected on the places where we have been seen and known. I shared about my experience of being under the fig tree, like Nathanael, when individuals on the 2009 Vestry called out the very best of me and invited me into ministry with you. I have been under the fig tree of St. Michael's for twelve years and have been seen and known. Now, I have been called out again and invited into another ministry. Bishop Diana Akiyama has asked me to be the Missioner for Thriving Congregations, and I have said "yes." I am excited that I will remain close and in ministry with you, but I am also deeply sad to feel the loss of what it has meant to be your priest.

Sunday, November 21, will be my last day as your Rector. It is a day that we will collect and bless our pledge cards as a sign that the good work of St. Michael's will continue in faith and hope of what we have done together, what you are doing now, and what remains to be done in the world around us. I will preach and preside at all the services that day. James+ and Beto+ will continue on as Associate Rectors, and an interim Rector will join them and the staff in leading you through a transition.

My work with the Bishop and the Diocese will officially begin on Wednesday, December 1st. My intention is to bring what I have learned from my experience with you and walk with other congregations and communities that are seeking a more vibrant expression of the work and ministry of Jesus. I will be working with churches in transition and supporting vestries and search committees. I will assist with the administration of the Diocese and collaborate with the Bishop and committees on the vision of this Diocese. I will also cheer on communities and equip them to discover innovative ways to express their faith, be in relationship with their neighborhoods, and use their buildings creatively. I am very excited about the reach of this work and feel like the very best parts of me that were seen 12 years ago, the qualities that you blessed and cultivated, are being seen and called on in a new way.

St. Michael's is an exceptional place, full of exceptional people. I have had many proud moments with you: declaring that we are a Sanctuary Church and consistently being a voice of justice in the public square; completing the work of being a Green Faith Certified church, with solar panels; our Easter Vigils followed by dance parties and fondue; Broadway Night hysterics; youth service projects in places like Brooklyn and San Francisco; and the quieter, uncaptured moments of extraordinary care and love – especially those moments.

We have weathered some rather wild times – unexpected circumstances, world events and tragedies, communal losses and traumas – but we have always done it together. When we have not known where else to go, we come here. We find each other and we breathe a collective breath. I had three goals in my time with you: to help you to take things less seriously, to paint and re-carpet over all the mauve, and to be quoted as often as Fr. John's saying "Never resist a generous impulse." I may have needed another 15 years with you to complete them all, but what is not marked in measurable outcomes (I can say that 80% of the mauve is gone) is known deep within. I am a better priest because of you. You found me three years into my ordained ministry and quite literally raised me up.

You, too, are ready for the next steps in your life together. You laugh more easily, you show your vulnerability more willingly, you collaborate and support outside organizations more quickly. I have always been proud and honored to be your priest. You are beloved. And I will miss this, I will miss you.

Faithfully,

Your Rector, Chris+