



St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
Greensboro, North Carolina
The Reverend Randall J. Keeney, Vicar

The Vestry & Congregation of St. Barnabas
1300 Jefferson Road
Greensboro, NC 27410

January 11, 2024

Dear Friends,

In one of my favorite meditation books, Tales of a Magic Monastery by Theophane the Monk, a blind beggar sat outside the monastery during the Christmas season. When Theophane approached the beggar, prepared to give him money, the blind man asked, "Who will lead me into the heart of God?" After a bit of talking, they decided. "Together, we will go into the heart of God."

I arrived at St. Barnabas about 17 years ago. I was recovering from a divorce and all the chaos that comes with that. I had worked outside the church for 2 years, because I was a bit of a spiritual and emotional mess. You all welcomed me and Wanda into this community. You loved us, and invited us along your journey. For that, I will be eternally grateful. I can sincerely tell you that it has been a joy to be with you for all these years. That is why this letter is so difficult for me to write.

This evening at our monthly vestry meeting, I announced my intention to retire. While the generic thought of being retired seems pleasant enough, the thought of leaving you folks makes me very sad. This Easter, March 31, 2024, will be my last Sunday as your vicar and pastor. It will not be my last day as our friend.

We have been through a lot together. We have celebrated births, baptized new Christians, confirmed and received more Episcopalians, loved one another through illness and surgery, and laid some of our brothers and sisters to rest. We have given shelter to immigrants and their families; we

have cared for God's creation with gardens and burial grounds; we have raised our voices together in protest to injustice; we have fed the hungry; we have welcomed and given dignity to the homeless; and we cared for each other through a global pandemic. We have stayed true to our consciences and followed where we believe God has called us. All of this will forever make my heart glad.

On the other hand, leaving as your pastor is extremely difficult. You and St. Barnabas have been our home. You have helped put me back together after 5 surgeries, 3 arrests, and more than a few brouhahas with a variety of political and social gate keepers. Most dear to me and Wanda, you are our friends. And as I said earlier, that will not end.

Over the next weeks and months, you and your Vestry will need to begin planning for the next chapter in the life of St. Barnabas' Church. I won't deny that "there be meetings" in these waters. You will be asked to participate in and lead in the planning for the future. The person God intends for St. Barnabas is out there. So, let the search begin. I have full confidence that St. Barnabas' best days are ahead.

Our bishop, Samuel Rodman, and the staff of the diocese will be with you during this time. Bishop Sam's first step with St. Barnabas in this process will happen on January 21, 2024, during his visit with us.

Please, never doubt my love and care for each of you. Also, please know that our ministry together has been and will always be one of my greatest joys. You may or may not want to be held responsible for this, but you have helped mold me. Together, we have stood beside the gate. Together, we walked along the journey into the heart of God. I can't thank you enough for being our companions along the way.

May God's Peace be with you all,

The Rev. Randall J. Keeney, Vicar