

Church of the Good Shepherd
214 Main St., PO Box 412, Nashua, NH 03061
603-882-5352
www.cgsnashua.com

January 17, 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is time...

Deciding when to retire has been a difficult struggle – as I have always loved and thoroughly enjoyed my ministry - and I especially love the people that make up this wonderful community we call CGS. I have always had fun as I have tried to live into Christ's promise "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

But after years of wrestling with this retirement issue, I finally decided to follow the advice that I give to everyone else – make the best decision you can at any one point in time and then work hard to make the best of it.

And so, it is time...

...Time to retire from a career and a church I love very deeply. I have officially given my notice to the Vestry. While my official retirement date will be June 30th, my last Sunday as Rector of CGS will be on Pentecost Sunday, June 4th of this year.

This will not be an easy thing for me to do. You all may miss me, but I am just one puzzle piece of this CGS community. I will be missing the entire puzzle – a wonderful and great church community that has been my spiritual home from which I have had the privilege of leading and serving Christ and you for over 31 years.

It has become popular in our culture to talk about legacies. When people begin or end a career it is often asked – what legacy will you leave? There are many things that I hope might be remembered about me, but the most important legacy I hope to leave is that people will say about me, "When he retired, no one left the church."

Our faith is an incarnational faith – meaning that God reveals God's grace and self through a *human being*, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. God continues to work in the world through human beings as Christ passed on that mission to us. Therefore I have never apologized for the fact that my personality, character, and skills as a person, priest and pastor have played some role in attracting people to church and influencing their faith. I have always had two goals for my relationship with each and every person I meet: 1) Help your relationship with God *grow* through Jesus Christ, and in the process discover that our God is down to earth and real; and 2) Help you discover that the church community can be important, meaningful and fun!

However, if I have been the *only* reason why you come to church, and when I leave, you leave - then I will consider my ministry to you a *failure*. I can only hope that however long you have been at CGS that you have discovered the incredible value of this CGS church community to help you question, learn, celebrate, be inspired, serve others, and find support and comfort as you deal with life's challenges and difficulties. So if you do care about honoring me and helping me leave a meaningful legacy – continue to attend and take advantage of this exceptional CGS church community after I retire.

2.

For those of you who might be apprehensive about CGS's future – don't be. To begin with, CGS will continue to be led for the next couple of years by the outstanding, excellent person and priest that you have come to trust, respect and love - Pastor Alanna. I am so very grateful for our collegiality working together for the past six years, and particularly for her commitment from the very beginning of her ministry here to serve at CGS through my retirement and the upcoming Interim period.

In addition I would ask you to take a personal field trip – to the lounge in the CGS Parish Hall. On the far wall you will see pictures of an historical, long line of ten exceptional priests that have preceded me as Rectors in CGS's amazing 145-year history – and note that there was one who was Rector for even more years than I have been your Rector!

I have tremendous confidence and faith in the excellent lay leaders of this community to continue to choose outstanding clergy to lead this community in its future. Yes, things will not be exactly the same. But they can continue to be great if you support your future clergy as you supported me. Putting your time, talent and resources together you can make sure CGS continues its journey of faithful, vital ministry to Jesus Christ in the greater Nashua community.

When I first arrived at CGS I took the time to meet the members of the congregation in small groups (we called them neighborhoods in those days). Those meetings were extremely helpful in communicating to the people my visions, changes and plans for the parish - and far more importantly – in getting to know as many people as I could personally, and by name.

I feel it is fitting to conclude my ministry in a similar fashion. And so over the next five months I will be setting up dates and times and sending invitations to each of you to attend a small group gathering with others you live near. It will be an opportunity for me to share my plans for my retirement and to say a personal thank you so that, together, we can celebrate - not me, but this great CGS community. Watch for more information in the next Newsletter.

Lou Gehrig, NY Yankee and baseball Hall of Fame member, made famous the line “I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth”. In similar fashion, I too feel so very fortunate to be truly blessed with 42 wonderful, meaningful years of ministry, and to receive as much if not more than I have tried to give from the thousands of people that I have shared this ministry with.

So let this be the first of many “thank you's” that I will say to you in the coming months.

We will remain united in Christ.

Odie

