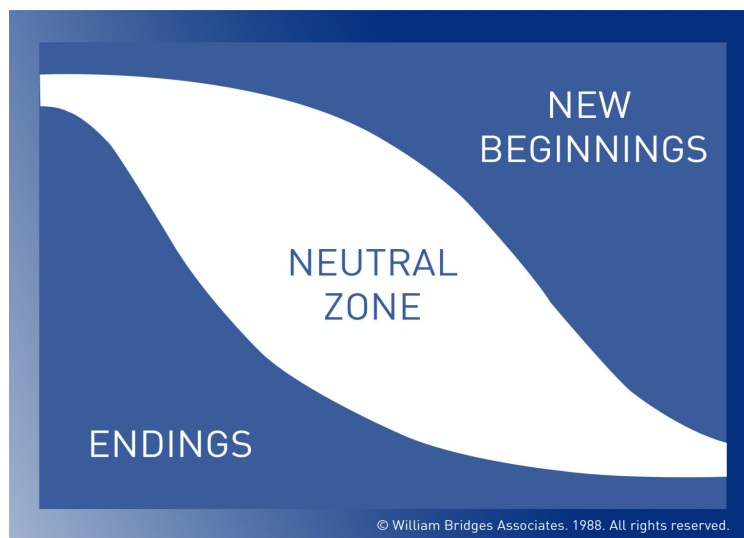


What is the difference between change and transition? I have found one helpful answer in the work of William Bridges. He has written several books on this topic, but I still prefer the first one, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (Addison-Wesley, 1980). The revised 40<sup>th</sup>. anniversary edition was released in 2019. He illustrates the difference in this way. If you moved to a new place, the geographical shift would be the change; the stresses and difficulties and excitement would be the transition, or your responses to the change.

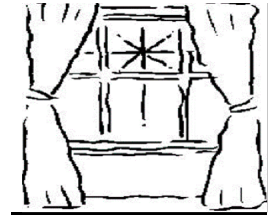
Every transition, according to Bridges begins with an ending. The change means something new, but the transition begins with separating from the old. Even a “good” change, like the birth of a first child, begins with the ending of the childless phase of life. Before the new beginning can happen, Bridges says there is a middle phase, what he calls the neutral zone. In that middle phase, the old reality has passed away but the new has not yet emerged or become obvious. The ending disconnects us from the previous reality and the neutral zone is what Bridges calls a “fallow time,” a time when old patterns and habits give way to new possibilities.

This image from the Bridges website illustrates this.



It's easy to see why Bridges' work has become so helpful to clergy and churches experiencing the interim between permanent clergy. We're together in that neutral zone now as an interim rector and people. The new reality of your future will arise out of this time, but the new beginning does not coincide exactly with the calling of a new rector.

The new reality of Christ Church's future does not depend on new clergy being called. Your story is larger than the individual clergy who have come and gone over the years. Rather, that new beginning starts during this neutral-zone time as a new vision, new energy, and new excitement arising out of the work of the interim



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period. The foundations for the future mission of Christ Church will be laid now, and the new rector will continue the directions you have set during this time.

During this interim time, we would be out of touch with reality if we didn't feel more anxious than we did when Fr. Dave was here. But, we trust God to keep our anxieties at a minimum and remind ourselves that God's abundant love is out in front of us leading us into the future.

(Oh, yeah, check out Bridges' web site for free articles, etc. Bridges died in 2013, but his wife, Susan, continues the work. His insights have value for our personal and vocational lives as well as for the life of the church. <http://www.wmbridges.com>)

Peace,

*David W. Perbini*

Fr. David  
Interim Rector