



Last Sunday was our last together as interim rector and people. Thank you for every expression of the bonds of affection we've experienced—verbal thank you's, hugs, notes, invitations to meals, visits to the office, and gifts. Your gifts of the framed picture and the Emmy Award plaque surprised and delighted me. They will be on prominent display in my new sunroom on the Virginia mountainside. Leaving you is the toughest part of this interim journey.

By the way, if you're curious about that mountain, you can find it on the web—High Peak Mountain, nicknamed Tobacco Row Mountain because Ambrose Rucker, a slave-owning Episcopalian farmed tobacco on that mountain with his slaves. My road bears his name. <https://www.mountainzone.com/mountains/virginia/amherst-va/summits/high-peak-27/> (This apple orchard perches on the north face of the mountain, about 2.5 miles from my home on the south face. You can see the mountain in the background. <https://morrisorchard.com/>)

It always surprises and mystifies me how the bonds of affection grow during an interim and endure over the years. It's almost like the time together, in our case, almost seventeen months, intensifies to a longer soul time. We get twice or three times as much living done in that period as the calendar time.

Serving as a clergy person is not a "job." You did not "hire" me. This service happens in answer to a divine call, it is service to God and the people. Your vestry's call lined up with their and my sense of God's call. You made my ministry possible by receiving me and continuing to relate openly to me and my leadership. I will carry you in my heart and continue to be grateful for you and your impact on my life. I'm a better person for having been among you.

In this, my last missive, I want to share two brief statements from the late Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury. He gave lectures to those preparing for ordination published as *The Christian Priest Today*. That little book had a profound impact on me early in my Episcopal journey and continues to do so. The first concerns the prayer life of the priest, the second, their pastoral ministry. "We are called near to Jesus and with Jesus and in Jesus, *to be with God with the people on our heart.*" (p. 14). "He (Christ) is with us not only to inspire us but to enable us to be sharing in his own ministry. Our caring for the people is our sharing in the present work of Jesus the Shepherd." (p. 105).

God's peace,

Handwritten signature of David W. Perkins.

David W. Perkins, Interim Rector