

***“Lord I am not worthy...” St. Matthew 8:8***  
***“So now it was not you who sent me here, but God...” Genesis 45:8***

Dear fellow sojourners in the faith, greetings and peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

I write to you in this instance, for the last time as your rector and pastor. I have served with you for just under eight years (2012-2020). It has been an interesting and an enjoyable journey for me. This year marks the end of 42 years of full-time ordained ministry, 14 of which I have spent in the Episcopal Church in the USA. It has been a learning experience throughout.

During my time at St Cyprians, I have met and been befriended by some really wonderful persons, who have provided prayerful support in this ministry. Without that support, I am sure I would never have survived.

One of the things that I have learnt in over four decades of ministry, is that no priest or pastor can do ministry alone. I am therefore indebted to those who have served with me these eight years. I have been privileged to serve with three wardens who have shared this ministry. They have made life much easier than it would otherwise have been. They normally went above and beyond to make sure that everything was done decently and in order for the proper functioning of the church.

Serving with vestry members and officers is always a challenging proposition. We managed to get through the years without too many crises. For that I want to express sincere thanks. Working with the organizations within the Body of Christ was a joy. They did their best to support my ministry. The Altar Guild, who put up with my little quirks, the ushers who did their best to maintain order, the altar servers who kept me on the right track, the musicians who provided that element of worship, that I most enjoyed, all combined to make my in-church experience go smoothly and painlessly.

Throughout this brief letter I have studiously avoided mentioning names, because I am sure that I will forget someone. I have been very fortunate in that I have had persons behind the scenes, on whom I could depend for advice, guidance, editing duties and general help as I faced some of the complexities of parish ministry. They know who they are and the contribution they have made to any success that I might have had in my ministry. To them I want to say a profound thank you.

I quoted two passages at the beginning of this letter. These passages have been guiding principles throughout these forty plus years of ministry. The initial passage was one I adopted way back in the late 1970s as I began my ordained ministry. I have never felt worthy of the calling that I accepted to be a priest, but I pressed on and always did the best I could and left the rest to God. Over the years I have been humbled by the love and the care that has been extended to me by those to whom I ministered.

Never in all the years of ministry, did I ever envisage that I would work anywhere else except in the church in the Province of the West Indies. My accepted feeling was that the pennies of the poor in the church had paid for my training and I had to stay and work for them because of that investment. But one should never say never. I have learnt that over the years. The second passage I adopted as I reflected on the beginning of my sojourn in ECUSA. I do not know if you know the context of the Genesis passage, but it was the encounter between Joseph and his brothers in Egypt, when he revealed himself to them, after years of being separated. I am convinced that God had a significant part to play in that move. I am so grateful to God for the part he has had in my life.

As I come to the end of this part of my life journey, I want to state what might be quite obvious. My leaving the parish represents the end of our pastoral relationship. A new pastor will eventually be in your midst and it will be his/her role to provide that pastoral care that was previously my responsibility. In these Covid19 times, saying farewell will not be an easy exercise, but I hope that we can reflect on the ministry we have shared together in Christ's name in this church. My thanks to you all as a parish, as well as the officers and members of the vestry for calling and sharing this journey with me. I have been blessed to have been allowed to serve with you.

I wish you God's continued blessing and the guidance of God's Holy Spirit as you go forward serving God in this place. May you all prosper in serving God who makes God's self manifest as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Your pastor and friend

Monrelle+