



February 13, 2017

Dear Beloved in Christ,

At the General Convention in 2006, my friend and colleague, Duncan Gray, bishop of Mississippi, noted that we are all interim bishops. We form a bridge between those who have gone before us and those who will follow. Over the last twelve years, it has been the privilege of a lifetime to serve as your bishop. During a recent visit to Virginia Theological Seminary, I began to discern a call to a different ministry. It was a call not without conflict. As many of you know, Terri and I recently purchased and renovated a house in Point Loma, thinking that we would retire here. Yet over time, I realized this was an authentic call that I need to answer. On February 8, on nomination of the dean and president, I was elected to the faculty of Virginia Theological Seminary to serve as associate dean of students. This new ministry will allow me to honor our shared passion for teaching and formation that has been at the core of our work together.

Over these years, we have done good and holy work. Because of you, we have become a healthy constellation of congregations and ministries. We have formed the School for Ministry. We have worked and advocated for a more just society. We have been the servant church in ways too numerous to mention. We have put together a fantastic diocesan staff and leadership team on the standing committee, executive council and various committees. We are an awesome community.

As I reflect on our life together, I am so aware of how you have been there for me. I came to you as a priest with more to learn and new ways to grow. You formed me into a bishop. You have given me strength when weak. You have given me faith when in doubt. You have given me hope when I despaired. Simply, together we have been that most holy thing, the Body of Christ for a world hungering for good news.

I know that transitions raise questions about the future. Please know that diocesan leadership is already forming a process and timeline for succession. I remain your bishop through the end of June. I promise to be fully engaged with our work and take the appropriate time for a good farewell. I ask that you support the work of the diocesan leadership in transition. Remember, you have done this work faithfully in the past under much more difficult circumstances. All shall be well. The enclosed letter from the president of the standing committee provides you a bit of an overview of the process for electing the fifth bishop of the Diocese of San Diego.

In the days ahead, there will be abundant opportunities for us to share with each other words that need to be spoken. I suspect there will be plenty of tears and laughter—maybe both at once! At this moment, I want to underscore how grateful I am for the incredible joy it has been to be your bishop. You are now very much a part of me. I have been formed for the ministry before me by you. I hope that I honor you as I participate in the formation of church leadership at Virginia Theological Seminary.

San Diego, and this diocese, will always be my home. Terri and I head east knowing what we leave behind: deep friendships, great memories, and the best diocese in the Episcopal Church! You will always, always be in my daily prayers.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. James R. Mathes
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego