

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. —Philippians 1:3-6

August 2, 2017

Dear People of God at St. Mark's,

When I arrived at St. Mark's some 6 ½ years ago, I had little idea of who you were. During the intervening years, I have come to love you as my church family and as my companions in the faith. In mid-2011, when I was called as your priest-in-charge, and again in 2014, as your (continuing) rector, I have spoken with confidence of God's calling me to this place.

This does not mean that all of our time together was easy. You and I are human, after all. At times, I became frustrated or discouraged with you, and I suspect the feelings were mutual! Again and again, as we worshiped and learned and grew together in the faith, as we laughed and shed tears together, as we gave of ourselves in service to our Lord, this assurance remained.

Now, however, our time together and my tenure as your Rector has come to an end. My wife, The Rev. Heather Hill, and I have been called to serve in the Diocese of Hawai'i. *Yes, you read that right... Hawai'i.* Heather will be the rector of St. Clement's Episcopal Church in Honolulu, and I will be appointed vicar to one of two parishes nearby. We are excited and terrified all at the same time, for this new set of calls. Until very recently, we had *never* considered somewhere so different and distant from our Midwestern backgrounds. You who have visited the islands know just how far that distance really is!

Our motivation, timing, and willingness to be considered for these calls has almost exclusively to do with our family situation. As you know, my one-way commute of 52 miles has had strong bearing on my involvement in the day-to-day duties of both husband and father. Also, we believe it is in the best interests of our children, Elijah and Kailani, to make a transition before they start kindergarten. Though we must have determined a hundred times that we could not possibly move so far away from everything and everyone familiar, the calling remained strong. In fact, as we thought about potentially accepting these calls, our hesitations (though not our fears, necessarily) slowly faded and joy replaced them. In short, this is a good move for us and the timing is right for our family.

To you, this news likely comes as a surprise. I am confident, however, that this household of God can live up to its own calling. I strongly believe that I leave St Mark's in a better place than when I arrived. After mixed responses and emotions have waned, you will return to the heart of what it means to be a Christian community. The church, after all, is not one or two or 200 individuals, but the broken and redeemed body of Christ in our world.

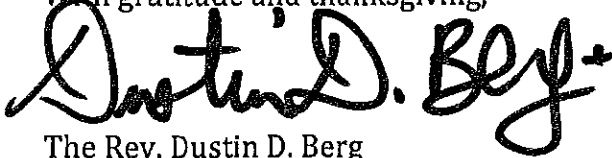
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Our Mission: To unite all people with God and each other in Christ through worship, fellowship, education, and service.

My final Sunday with you will be Sunday, September 3, 2017. I will then be concluding any remaining work in the office on Wednesday, September 6. As always, please feel free to contact me between now and September 6 with any questions or concerns you may have. Also, please be assured of my prayers for you all, as you will remain in my heart and mind well beyond my taking leave of this place.

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

With gratitude and thanksgiving,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dustin D. Berg" with a small cross symbol at the end of the name.

The Rev. Dustin D. Berg
Rector