



Dear Sisters and Brothers of St. James',



It is with very mixed emotions that I write this letter to my friends at St. James'. I have just celebrated my eightieth birthday. Although I am still able to do many things, it is harder to do all the things required of me as deacon at St. James'. It is time to step aside. My last Sunday at St. James' will be July 6.

What a long strange trip it's been. In June 1992 I took a call from a headhunter (executive recruiter). Five months later I ended up working for Welch Allyn - a company that I had heard of - in a town that I had never heard of. My youngest, Emily, would soon enter seventh grade. And now, Jane, her daughter is finishing seventh grade. I knew this was a good place when dear Eleanore Abrams showed up at the house with fresh baked bread on moving day. I should mention that this was the day after the largest blizzard in CNY in decades.

Looking back to attending St. Martin's in Ohio, I remember reading parts of the Examination in the Ordination Rite for Deacons. It wasn't until about 2003 that I met a deacon in the flesh, though. The Holy Spirit moves in surprising ways - sometimes she gives one a push or even a kick in the backside. That nudge began, perhaps, in the pews at St. Martin's.

Perhaps a word about deacons is appropriate here. The husband of one of the nurses on the last medical mission to El Salvador asked me, "So explain deacons to me. Do deacons get promoted to priest if they do a good job and do priests get promoted to bishop if they do a good job?" Note that he wasn't a church attender. He probably knew only Bishop Skip, me, and his wife's Rector as examples of clergy.

Words from the Examination in the Ordination Rite make it clear. For deacons, "... a special ministry of servanthood directly under your bishop... to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.... You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.... assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments..."

The Holy Spirit moves in mysterious ways. In 1997, I led the first youth pilgrimage from our diocese to the people of the





Diocese of El Salvador. I was terrified. And I kept doing it for more than twenty years. In 2014, in preparation for the diaconate, Bishop Skip told me that I had to complete Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Upstate Hospital. I was terrified. And I'm still doing it eleven years later.

In preaching I have sought to "interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world." Perhaps I've ruffled a few feathers. Bishop Skip told me that I had to do an internship at St. Paul's in downtown Syracuse. I wasn't quite sure what to do with my twelve hours a week there, so I

walked the streets downtown. I took to that congregation the information that there were about two dozen low-income people living at the YMCA - only two doors away. A ministry began that continues nine years later.

So, I will no longer be at the lectern or at the altar. But I'm not gone. Mother Pilar has asked me to continue Dive Deeper, which has participants from other parishes and even other dioceses. I'll continue to be active in the diocese, and I won't be disappearing from the pews at St. James'.

If you ever want to go to El Salvador, let me know! I'm continuing to serve as a chaplain at Upstate, but really don't want to see you there!

I will quote from a well-known tune:

*Sometimes the light's all shinin' on me  
Other times I can barely see  
Lately it occurs to me  
What a long, strange trip it's been*

With love and blessings,

Deacon of St. James' Episcopal Church  
Skaneateles