

The Reverend Dennis S. Tierney, Ph.D.
1391 Alvarado Road
Berkeley, California 94705

Trinity Sunday June 3, 2007

Dearest People of Saint Barnabas:

In Saint Paul's "Letter to the Romans," he opens his epistle with a rather flowery introduction to this church he did not found and one that he does not know well. He refers to them all as "God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints" and notes that their faith is proclaimed throughout all the world. He goes on to say that, "I remember you always in my prayers, asking that by God's will I may somehow at last succeed in coming to you. For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you – or rather that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." (Rom. 1: 9-12). I confess that I have often thought Paul was being more than a bit unctuous, laying it on a bit thick with the church in Rome to curry favor and gain support for his real desire to go to Spain to preach and convert.

As Grace and I await the official beginning our ministry among you, I find I understand Paul's eagerness to be with the church in Rome better than before as I, too, long to be with you all so that we might be "mutually encouraged by each other's faith." I am not certain that your faith is proclaimed throughout the world, but I do know that many people speak most highly of you and the Gospel work you have been doing for over sixty years. And I believe that all who witness to the Good News of God in Christ are saints in this post-Christian world in which we live. Grace and I are deeply grateful for the trust reposed in us by the wardens and vestry and profoundly delighted to be called to you. Unlike Paul, I have no ambitions for ministry elsewhere and intend to remain with you all for the foreseeable future.

Our plan is for me to begin our ministry with you on August 15th, so that I may join with vestry in its retreat activities and to help plan the program year 2007 - 2008. Grace will move to Bainbridge Island once our home in Berkeley is sold, though I am certain she will be visiting regularly in the interim as we search for a home on the island.

The beginning of any new venture is a time of great hope, some anxiety, and personal and corporate joy. All of my senses tell me that the Holy Spirit has guided all of us to this happy outcome and that the time is ripe for new growth in Christ. I know that Saint Barnabas has known more than its fair share of difficulty, loss, and grief over the past years. I, too, have been a bit disappointed and occasionally even frustrated in living into my own ordained ministry. But all that is past us now and the future beckons us to step forward in faith, drawing strength from each other and sharing our gifts openly and joyously. While I cannot know what lies ahead for Saint Barnabas, I can say that I come to you in joy and delight and that I offer all my gifts, my talents, and my time. We will, I know, laugh more than we cry, rejoice more than we grieve, and learn more than we can possibly teach.

Paul concludes his “Letter to the Romans” in classic Pauline fashion and I borrow some of his language in the close of this first of many pastoral letters I hope to write to you all.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 15:13)

With all the joy in our hearts, Grace and I send our very best wishes to you all on this Trinity Sunday. Like Paul, we pray “that by God’s will we will come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. The God of peace be with all of you. Amen.” (Rom.15: 32-33)

In Christ,

The Reverend Dennis S. Tierney, Ph.D.
Rector-elect
Saint Barnabas Episcopal Church
Bainbridge Island, Washington