

19 August 2019

Dear people of God called to be the Chapel of the Good Shepherd:

I am delighted to write to you today as the newly appointed Chaplain to the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. As many of you know, after I moved to West Lafayette in the fall of 2005, I served as the associate priest alongside Peter Bunder for two years. I very much enjoyed my time at Good Shepherd and look forward to returning to be with you all.

To give you a little of my background, I was born and raised in Burlington, Vermont. Growing up, I really had two playgrounds: The Episcopal Church and the University of Vermont. My mother is ordained as a deacon, and I spent a good portion of my non-school time at church: not just at services but as a member of the choir (starting at age 5) and the youth group and as a participant in a wide variety of outreach and other activities. My father is a professor (now retired), and I also spent a great deal of my early life in and around the Math Department, sometimes in his office, sometimes visiting his classes, sometimes attending Math Department picnics and softball games. I feel fully at home in both the church and academia.

My love of academia deepened during my time at Bryn Mawr College, just outside Philadelphia, where I majored in Mathematics with a Minor in Peace and Conflict Studies. In college I made myself at home in the local Episcopal church by joining the choir, but I was aware that the church offered little specifically for college students (even though there were several local colleges within walking distance). A senior student who also sang in the choir welcomed me warmly, and at her urging the church began trying to reach out to students. We weren't a large group of students, but it was tremendously important to us that the church cared for us and offered us support outside the walls of the college. It was partly in conversations with the choir members at that church that I began to explore the possibility of attending seminary. It was clear to me even then that a supportive church community is incredibly important during the years of formative discernment that mark college and beyond. That's why, when I was studying a few years later at Princeton Theological Seminary (a Presbyterian seminary) and exploring opportunities for Field Education (i.e. an internship) I sought out the Episcopal Church at Princeton University (ECP) and was delighted to spend a year with their campus ministry, learning from their new campus minister.

After seminary, I returned to Vermont, where I worked for the Council on Aging and served as a hospice volunteer, in addition to my church involvement. I left Vermont (somewhat reluctantly) when I married Greg Buzzard in 2004. We spent our first year of married life in Ithaca, New York before moving to West Lafayette. With special funding from the Diocese of Indianapolis, I served as the Associate Priest at both Chapel of the Good Shepherd and St. John's in Lafayette from January 2006 through December 2007. When diocesan funding ended, I remained at St. John's, with a variety of responsibilities leading to my most recent position as Associate Rector. One of my most cherished contributions at St. John's was coordinating the Godly Play program, a curriculum that shares the formative stories of the church with children and invites them to respond through their own work with the materials used to tell the stories.

In 2008 I enrolled at Christian Theological Seminary to study Psychotherapy and Faith, with the possibility of becoming licensed as a therapist and combining a small practice with my part-time position

in the church. I earned my Doctor of Ministry in 2012, and while I have chosen not to pursue licensure, my studies inform all aspects of my ministry.

In addition to my work at St. John's, I've been active in the wider church and the local community. I served as Young Adult Coordinator for the diocese for 2 years and have served on several diocesan committees. I also thoroughly enjoy my work as support staff for the Episcopal Church General Convention, held once every 3 years. I'm currently taking part in a leadership development program for Episcopal Clergy and look forward to sharing my work on that with all of you. I've also served on the board of the Montessori School of Greater Lafayette, am a member of the Interfaith Leaders of Greater Lafayette, and have taken part in a wide range of local events, including the Hunger Hike, OUTFest, and the Cover Indiana Bike Tour. Despite my continuing love of Vermont, I have found my place in the heartland over the last 14 years living in Indiana.

I've never found it easy to say goodbye. As I wrote to the people of St. John's, I put down deep roots and cherish the relationships I build. That was true when I left Vermont, when I left Bryn Mawr, and is true again now as I leave St. John's. Each has left me richer, and each remains a part of my soul. But coming to the Chapel of the Good Shepherd is in many ways a homecoming. Not only did I start my career as a priest here, but my mother attended Good Shepherd when she was a student at Purdue in the 60s. In fact, my parents were married at Good Shepherd, so my roots here go way back. I'm eager to deepen those roots, deepen the roots of Good Shepherd at Purdue and in the community, and for us to share together the life-giving, liberating love of Jesus Christ with the wider world.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hilary Cooke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hilary