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Dear Friends,

In the Episcopal Church, the Chief Pastor of every congregation in a diocese is the Bishop. All of the clergy in a diocese are in some ways his (or her) deputy. We understand bishops to be the heirs of the Apostles—those who were called by Jesus to continue his ministry and who, in turn, pass on the gift given to them to others to pursue that same work. Bishops are a symbol of our unity, and our direct connection in the Church back to the first followers whom Jesus chose and called.

In the place normally occupied by my letter to you all, this month I would like to reproduce the letter Bishop Beckwith sent to St. Elizabeth's on the occasion of my 20th anniversary of beginning my work here as your Rector. I am grateful for his letter for many reasons, but perhaps most because of the way he highlights the mutuality of the relationship between a rector and a congregation.

When I came to St. Elizabeth's in 1993, I entered a congregation which was remarkably strong and healthy, certainly in financial terms, but, much more importantly, in terms of the respect and care people showed to one another, the openness, honesty, and personal graciousness with which all matters were addressed, a profound spirit of cooperation among a large number of gifted lay leaders, and a willing spirit throughout the congregation to do what is necessary to be the congregation we intend to be.

My predecessor, Richard Andersen, and his, Alec Rodger, each helped to define and nurture that parish culture. Between the three of us, we account for 67 of the 90 years of our parish history. Generations of lay leaders have similarly shaped our way of being a community of Christians in the Anglican tradition. I have been blessed greatly by your generosity of both spirit and of substance. And, with God's blessing, I look forward to our continued partnership as we seek both to experience and show forth the gracious love and power of God.

And now the Bishop's letter.

The Rev. Canon John G. Hartnett

Rector

January 20, 2013

The Rev. Canon John G. Hartnett

By Hand to St. Elizabeth's Church in Ridgewood

Dear John and the People of St. Elizabeth's,

I join with all of you in giving thanks for twenty years of extraordinary ministry that you have shared together as Rector and congregation. The joining together of John's many gifts – and the giftedness of the congregation, has generated more gifts – and more manifestations of God's glory. His devotion to Christ and to the people of St. Elizabeth's has been, and continues to be, a cause for great celebration. I join with you in that celebration. But I also want to celebrate the devotion and faith of all of you – and your willingness to deepen and broaden your faith – and your sense of community. This is a milestone for all of you.

In keeping with John's penchant and gift for reading to others – which has earned him a well-deserved reputation, I invite you to have John sit down and have some poetry read to him – poetry by T.S. Eliot – who was also from St. Louis, and who was also a bit of an Anglophile – and was also a deeply committed Anglican. This is taken from *The Four Quartets*:

“If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.

Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.”

Thank you for your devotion and service – and faith and heart.

Peace,

Mark M. Beckwith

The Rev. Canon John G. Hartnett
Rector