



Thursday, November 5, 2015

*Dear Friends,*

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

I have been blessed in so many ways – especially in the many places I have been privileged to serve. Everywhere I have found incredibly faithful people – living out their faith to the best of their ability. Theologies may differ; contexts may differ; passions may differ; ... but the desire to live faithfully as Jesus Christ has called us to do, remains the common thread – and for me, the common hope.

I can truly say that I have fallen in love everywhere I have been privileged to serve.

That’s what makes this announcement so difficult:

I have sent a letter to the president of the Council of Bishops requesting retirement this coming summer.

It seems incredible to me that I could even be thinking of retiring, but in truth, this year it will be 42 years since my ordination as a deacon. That figure surprises even me. So perhaps I ought not to be so surprised that the time for my retirement has come.

As many of you know, bishops are assigned for four years at a time, and we may retire every four years as well. Which means, if I don’t retire in 2016, it will be 2020 before I have the opportunity again. So, that was certainly a factor in this decision.

But the main reason I am choosing to retire now, is physical.

When I was assigned to Michigan, I shared with several groups – including members of the North Central Jurisdiction Episcopacy Committee – that I didn’t know if I would serve for 4 or 8 years. That decision was based primarily on my husband Brad’s health and my mobility. I am so grateful that Brad’s health has been good. But particularly this past year I have become more and more concerned with my ability to get around and to simply do those things this position requires.

As you know, I am a polio survivor having contracted it as an infant – in 1952. God has blessed me with plenty of energy, so throughout my life, polio has not slowed me down much ... until recently. The past three years I have struggled more and more with the continued decreasing mobility and increasing pain of Post Polio, until it has become clear to me that if I want to enjoy my retirement years with Brad with a degree of mobility, I need to stop, take care of myself, and step away from the physical challenges and stresses of the episcopacy.

Friends, I will miss seeing this new conference come into its final form, but I am truly excited about where we are heading here in Michigan, and I will continue to work hard these next nine months to ensure that we are well on our way to creating this “new thing”. We have incredibly gifted and committed leaders that share the vision of what we can become, and I am confident they will guide us well into that new future.

I’m not saying ‘goodbye’ now – we still have many months of creative, joy-filled, exciting and sometimes hard work before us – but I am asking for your prayers:

- \* For Brad and me, as we begin this transition to a new chapter in our lives;
- \* For those who are working hard to create this “new thing” in Michigan;
- \* And for all of you – who continue to live faithfully as followers of Christ.

Please know I will continue to be in prayer for you and for this new conference we are creating together.

*Blessings and peace to you all,*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah L. Kiesey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the last letter.

Bishop Deborah Lieder Kiesey  
Michigan Area