



**EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA**

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Assisting Bishop's Message

FAMILIAR GROUND, NEW ROLE: A Greeting to Friends New and Old

I was touched and honored by the Standing Committee's invitation to serve three days a week as Assistant Bishop of Pennsylvania, *pro tempore*, until one able to serve longer could be found. I accepted, but it was not easy. My plate was at least half full with things I enjoy doing, and the joys of retirement are not lightly relinquished. I reflected, consulted, and said my prayers. I decided to say yes for up to six months, because I love this Diocese and its people, it is in trouble, and it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

My chief responsibilities will be pastoral care of the clergy of the Diocese and supervision of the staff at Church House. It will be good to converse with clergy in meetings in our eleven deaneries, the Diocesan Coalition on Mission and Ministry, retired clergy gatherings, and as individuals. I will be there to help in whatever ways I can. In staff meetings and one-on-one I will work with the staff in their service to the Diocese. There will be few other tasks which require a bishop, but I will need your help in resisting "mission creep" and my own tendency to over-function.

My days at Church House will generally be Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays...but take warning: a long-planned trip, mostly to New Zealand, will interfere right away: I will be away Feb. 17-March 13. The Standing Committee will continue its present functions all that time. So a beginning now, more after mid-March.

There is one other thing you ought to know. In the sensitive situation in which this Diocese finds itself presently, I will not engage in conversation about the merits or demerits of my previous episcopacy not that of my successor. My focus in this present ministry will be on the present and the future, not the past.

There are a great many strong parishes doing effective ministry here. I know there are crying needs at every level, as well. But there also are talented, faithful people throughout, who want this Diocese to thrive, to move forward, to shine with the light of Christ. Many of you I know. Many more are new to me. I look forward to working with all of you in this new ministry on familiar ground.

Allen Bartlett