Sunday, December 13, 2020

To the people of the Church of Ascension, Port Perry.

Dear Friends in Christ:

Greetings to you on this Third Sunday of Advent, as we continue to make our way to Bethlehem to celebrate the birth of our Lord. This season of Advent gives us time to reflect, to prepare and to make room in our lives for a deeper walk of faith. I am grateful for the witness and faithfulness that you live into each day in Port Perry.

As many of you know Father Philip Gearing has been on a short leave of absence from his ministry among you. I am please to let you know that he is now able to return to active ministry effective today. During this absence, I have had time to consider the pressing needs, in other parts of the diocese, for clergy leadership and how Fr. Phil could help meet some of these emerging demands. At the same time, my desire is to continue to support him in his curacy and formation in leadership. To this end, I have determined that he will resume his curacy not here, but at the parish of St. James, Orillia.

I appreciate that this may come as an unexpected announcement and may be a sad disappointment for many of you. I know that Father Philip feels deeply blessed about his time at Ascension and has learned a great deal about Parish ministry. Father Philip has shared his fondness for the people of this Christian community. While he is eager to take on the new opportunities in ministry that await him at St. James, he does wish to share that at no point was it his desire to leave the Church of the Ascension.

We are working on an opportunity for you to say good bye to Father Philip and Canon Ruthanne will provide more details when they are confirmed, so please stay tuned.

Thank you for the wonderful start you have given Philip in his ordained ministry. But it is our collective view, after prayerful reflection, that this move is in the best interests of all. Please join me in wishing Father Phil much happiness in his new parish.

Please know that I am keeping all of you at Ascension, Port Perry, Canon Ruthanne and the rest of the ministry leadership team in my personal prayers in this Season of Hope and Peace, Joy and Love as we anticipate the coming of the Christ-child to reveal the fullness of God’s glory.

Yours in Christ,

The Right Reverend Andrew Asbil

Bishop of Toronto