



THE LOWER YELLOWSTONE CLUSTER
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION AND EMMANUEL EPISCOPAL CHURCH
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MONTANA



December 8, 2019 – The Second Sunday of Advent

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Five years ago, on December 6 and 7, 2014 I first came to the churches in Miles City and Forsyth at the invitation of the then bishop, Franklin Brookhart. He had invited me to consider journeying with these communities and exploring a new form of ministry. He told me that my job was simple - “love them.” That is what I have strived to do since I began my time with you on Palm Sunday in 2015. Now, it is with a heavy heart that I must tell you that I have been called to serve as the rector of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Billings.

I do this with both joy and sadness in my heart. Joy about what the future holds, but also sadness about what I leave behind. The people of Ascension and Emmanuel hold a very special place in my heart. Over the past four and a half years I have officiated over ten funerals and also celebrated good news with others. Both communities have been through much in these years, but I believe you have grown stronger and healthier. Since you know me you know that I do not think this is because of me, but it is a demonstration of the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit which is alive and moving here. You have helped to shape and form me as a priest, and I cherish each of you deeply.

My last Sunday in Miles City and Forsyth will be on December 29 as we celebrate the First Sunday of Christmas. I hope to move to Billings around January 6 and my first service there will be on Saturday, January 11. Please know that I will keep all of you in my prayers now and always. And I ask for your prayers as well as I transition into this new role. Also, please know that the Diocese of Montana is still committed to these communities and our brand-new bishop, The Right Reverend Marty Stebbins, will be visiting you soon to spend time with you and worship with you.

Lovingly yours in Christ,

Father Stephen

P.S. Don’t forget we will celebrate the birth of our Savior on Tuesday, December 24 in Miles City with music at 4:30 pm and worship at 5 pm, and in Forsyth at 7 pm.