



### About the Author

The Rev. Denny Allman and Norma, his wife of 64 years, live in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He continues to supply occasionally and celebrates a public service of healing weekly at their local church. His passion for gardening continues, although now it is confined to containers.

### About Vintage Voice

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# VINTAGE VOICE



## Retirement is a calling to do what you love

By the Rev. Denny Allman

I retired in 1998 at age 66 after 14 years of parish ministry. I was ready to spend my time being a gardener and supply priest. My last parish was in the inner city of a small Southern city. I had always hoped that I might retire back to the small farming community of my first cure, but a contemporary, both in age and date of ordination, was already there. He said that was where he was planning to retire. In any event, there were a lot of opportunities to be a supply priest. In fact, within two weeks of my retirement I was booked for every Sunday for the remainder of the year. We bought a house in the city of my last cure and were well settled in.

About six weeks after I retired, my friend and fellow priest who served in that place I'd wanted to retire died of a heart attack. The town was 90 miles from where we lived. I made arrangements to be the regular Sunday supply priest there beginning the first of the year. The church had a vicarage which they supplied with the basics. This was to become a second career. For the next six years my wife and I commuted to what we called "our weekend cottage" where I supplied on Sundays and my wife attended the weekly prayer group on Mondays. Then back home.

The novelty began to wear off in the fifth year of this arrangement. The sixth year I cut down to two Sundays a month at the "weekend place" and did two Sundays a month at the small African-American mission in the city where we lived. Christmas at the end of the sixth year was my last in the community that had nurtured and shaped me right out of seminary. They had loved and welcomed my wife and me for ten years.

I began to be the permanent Sunday supply priest at the small mission. It was a wonderful experience. They were dedicated Episcopalians and managed the affairs of the mission well. For the next ten years I was their priest and they were my congregation. They ran things and I did the sacerdotal things. It was great! I did not have a key, I never learned where the light switches were, and we had a great relationship. I think it is a good model for a small congregation.

Last year we moved to another state to be closer to one of our sons. We are attending a fine church which has a gifted preacher. For the first time in 30 years, I can sit with my family during the Eucharist. I still supply occasionally when our rector is out of town. Three or four times a year seems about right. I have a dear friend who calls me a “mass priest.” That is very true, because it is what I love to do. For me, doing priestly things is very rewarding; being in charge of a congregation is less so. I greatly recommend supply work to any retired clergy or other priest without a cure. St. Paul was very much on target when he invented the “tent maker model for clergy.” And, as another good friend told me when I retired, “It is only when you retire that you get to start doing the things you thought you were being called to do those long years ago.”



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