



February 4, 2026

Dear David,

It has long been my practice to invite faculty members, as they discern their futures, to formalize any verbal commitment to retirement in a written letter to the Seminary. In that same spirit, I should do likewise.

It has been my joy and privilege to serve as Dean and President of Virginia Theological Seminary - and, more recently, as President of The General Theological Seminary - for some eighteen years. I now write to confirm that I will retire on June 30, 2028.

It has been an extraordinary season. The secret is to surround oneself with gifted and talented people who can realize the mission of Virginia Theological Seminary. Together, we have sought to make VTS better known, create significant philanthropic capacity, be careful stewards of the endowment, attract and cultivate a strong faculty, build strong connections with our alumni, recruit and retain a more diverse student body, support our staff, and make the campus beautiful. Along the way, we lived through a chapel fire and the construction of a new chapel, and all the major buildings were renovated during the Bicentennial Campaign as we marked that historic moment. Then perhaps the two most defining moments were the work of reparations, as we recognized our deeply flawed past, and the affiliation with a sister seminary - namely, The General Theological Seminary - which I am proud to lead. We are now in a position where we offer excellence both in a residential mode and in a hybrid mode.

Working at VTS and GTS has been an extraordinary honor. The Seminary's strength rests upon the faithful stewardship of a dedicated Board over many decades. Its governance culture is notably healthy - willing to make hard decisions, offering wise counsel to leadership, and maintaining a clear distinction between policy and implementation. I am profoundly grateful to all who have served in this volunteer capacity; their care and integrity have been vital to the Seminary's flourishing.

I remain deeply aware that my own work has been built upon the legacy of my predecessor, the Very Rev. Martha Horne. Her courageous leadership kept VTS firmly at the heart of The Episcopal Church through a renewed commitment to inclusion. She set in motion many trajectories - multicultural ministries, a research-active faculty, and the continued recruitment of gifted and talented students - upon which I have had the privilege to build.

I have been blessed throughout my tenure with an extraordinary senior team - men and women of talent, wisdom, and dedication who understand complexity and deliver with competence and grace. To each, I am profoundly grateful.

The faculty and staff of VTS and GTS are exceptional. I regularly hear from students and alumni about moments that changed their lives: sometimes a member of the facilities team who quietly made something possible; sometimes a lecture that resolved a deep question of faith. These stories remind me daily of the Seminary's living impact.

I want to acknowledge our friends and supporters - those who believe deeply in theological education and have given so generously - who are integral to our mission. Alongside our alumni, they have been the hidden strength behind every capital campaign and every success. But my greatest pleasure resides in the quality of our students, who navigate their time on the holy hill and then graduate to make a difference in countless human lives and bring to those lives the love of Christ. Our students and alumni are the fruit of this community. Leading a congregation in today's world is no easy task, yet I am continually inspired by their faithful, creative, and courageous ministries in countless contexts.

Any letter would be incomplete without expressing my gratitude to my wife, Lesley. She has shared every moment of my ministry at the Seminary and has fully embraced my conviction that the Deanery should be a home for the entire community to enjoy. The work and ministry here have been made immeasurably easier with Lesley by my side. Our son, Luke, is proud to be a "kid of the campus," and this place has been a wonderful home for the three of us.

As I write this letter, I do so with a deep and abiding sense of gratitude. I have loved - and will continue to love - this vocation through to my retirement. Thank you to everyone who has shared in this remarkable journey.

Yours in Christ,

Ian