



November 2014
Volume 87 Number 9

From the Clergy Associate

Dear Friends,

O God, our help in ages past... A few times this fall in funeral and memorial services, we have sung “O God, our help in ages past.” I am always moved by the strength and conviction with which this old, solid hymn is sung by everyone, and how it seems to ground us all. Each one of us can recall at least one time in which it seemed that it was purely by the grace of God that we were able to negotiate through a painful or difficult situation—an addiction, a death of a relationship or a loved one, or some other great loss or trial.

This fall our lectionary lessons have taken us through the story of the Israelites and their deliverance from slavery in Egypt and their wandering in the wilderness for 40 years on their journey to the promised land. And a significant dynamic of this “wilderness time” is God’s ongoing effort in the establishment of a new relationship with the Israelites. The Israelites face significant challenges in the wilderness: lack of food and water, lack of trust in each other and their leadership at times. They must learn to trust God to provide for them and guide them. And God does. And so the stories of God’s help (and challenge) for God’s people are passed down from generation to generation; and we add our own stories to this collection; our stories of how God has provided for us through our times of wilderness and wandering.

... Our hope for years to come It is in coming together and sharing our stories of God’s grace and the blessings that we have received, that we are reminded of God’s promise to be with us, now and forever. After 40 years of leading God’s people in the wilderness, Moses was led by God up to a spot overlooking the Promised Land beyond the River Jordan. And God told Moses that he could look upon the Promised Land, but not enter it; and Moses died at that spot, never to set foot in the land.

How often we, too, pour our heart and soul, our time and energy into a special project or cause, realizing that we may never see the finished product. And yet, because it is something that we truly believe in, we do it anyway. We see what we are doing as an investment, as a gift enhancing the lives of those we love as well as those whom we may never know. Perhaps we do this out of hopes of

creating better opportunities for the future generations. Perhaps we do this just because it seems like the right thing to do... But we do not see it as a “sacrifice” or as diminishment of our quality of life, but as an enhancement—not only of our own lives, but of others. I am grateful for all those parishioners—past and present—who contributed their time, talent, and treasure in enriching St. Elizabeth’s various ministries and outreach, and in creating our beautiful spaces for worship, fellowship, learning, and service. And I think of all the various ways this space is used and appreciated by parishioners and members of the larger community.

Our shelter from the stormy blast... St. Elizabeth’s has served as a shelter for the larger community during hurricanes and power outages, providing opportunities for warming up and recharging our souls and our electronics. But I hope that we also offer shelter and sacred space not just defined by walls, but a sacred space in which each person may feel safe—whether that be in our worship, our fellowship, our choirs, or our church school. Safe to explore questions about one’s faith and relationship with God. Safe to ask for help. Safe to rest for a bit and recharge in order to return to one’s daily life renewed.

.... And our eternal home May St. Elizabeth’s continue to serve as a community in which God may be experienced as help, hope, shelter, and our eternal home.

The Rev. Joan F. Conley
Clergy Associate