



May 2011  
Volume 84 Number 5

## From the Clergy Assistant

*Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?*

From The Baptismal Covenant, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 305

“Wow... How great would that be? To be able to create a school the way you wanted it to be?” That was the comment from Art Broadbent as we stood outside the daycare room of St. Philip’s Academy in Newark. The onsite daycare that the academy offers for the young children of its teachers and staff is quite a perk these days for working parents. Buffy McKay, a board member of St. Philip’s Academy, had offered to take any interested St. Elizabeth’s parishioners down to the school for a guided tour, so on Thursday, April 7, seven of us traveled down together. Although I had heard a great deal about St. Philip’s Academy, I had never actually visited the school. It was amazing.... And it was wonderful to have the historical perspective of June Bové, who had visited the very first site of St. Philip’s back when it first began in the late 1980’s.

As Tom Hooper and Charity Steinruck took our small group on a tour of the school, we were struck by the focus of the students, the respect shown by everyone for each other, and the brightness of the halls and classrooms—how colorful, creative, clean, and well lit it all was. And the students whom we encountered, regardless of age, were bright as well.

I was especially mindful of the hopefulness of spring as we walked through their rooftop gardens—plots offering a myriad of educational opportunities and projects—as well as herbs and vegetables for their cafeteria. And I was also mindful of the emotions that can be stirred up in spring—the anticipation of receiving acceptance or rejection letters from schools, of gearing up for end-of-the-school-year dances or proms, of preparing for the end of the academic year. And these students at St. Philip’s are in the thick of all that... As a Kindergarten through Grade 8 school, 60% of their graduates go on to attend boarding schools, 30% go on to attend day schools, and 92% of their graduates go on to graduate from college. And there are a number of other impressive statistics available in their printed materials and website.

As impressive as their numbers and statistics are, however, for me, it is the daily formation of these young people at St. Philip's that is invaluable. To witness the interactions among the students or between the students and staff reminded me again of the importance of helping youth in building respectful relationships in safe, nurturing, yet challenging, environments. I think of my positive experience of the St. Paul's Epiphany Pageant, after-school program, and youth choir in Paterson. What valuable opportunities St. Philip's and St. Paul's offer youth who might otherwise fall through the cracks in their communities. And what valuable opportunities St. Philip's and St. Paul's offer us at St. Elizabeth's that we can be involved in such life-giving programs—not only through the funds raised by our Outreach Auction (tremendously helpful and appreciated!), but also through volunteer opportunities. Wonderful opportunities to live out what it means to respect the dignity of every human being. Wonderful opportunities to help our young people learn to live that out as well.

The Rev. Joan Conley