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From the Clergy Assistant

Opportunities

Recently I was speaking with some of the sponsors for this year's Confirmands, and as I reflected on last year's Confirmation program, one of the things that struck me was the relationships I saw develop between some of the Confirmands and their sponsors. It was great for me to witness some of them working together at Parish Work/Fun Day, or walking and talking together along the CROP Walk through town, or to hear about them going on a day hike together. What valuable opportunities for 8th graders to spend quality experiential time exploring their faith journeys with adults other than their parents, and what wonderful opportunities for these adults to be able to share a bit of their journeys and to serve as bridges between these youth and the larger church community. These relationships can add so much not only to "a program," but to the development of the individuals and of the Church.

But the Confirmation program at St. Elizabeth's does not hold *all* the opportunities for developing connections and relationships. Just look over the Time & Talent form. When I was growing up, my family spent **a lot** of time in church, in church worship services and catechism classes. But that was about the extent of "involvement opportunities" offered in our parish. It wasn't until I was an adult and had a young family of my own that I found vibrant parishes that offered a wealth of ministries in which to serve, a wealth of opportunities to serve as active members of the Body of Christ in this world. It is also in our interactions with others, whether it be serving at St. Paul's Shelter, or the Altar Guild, or the Book Group, or Parish Work/Fun Day, or the choirs, that we are able to make connections with others whom we might not come in contact with in our daily lives. Some of my dearest relationships were made over years of serving with other parishioners in a soup kitchen or a worship committee. And during various difficult periods in my life, those relationships were rocks for me.

St. Elizabeth's offers a great deal of opportunities for "continuing in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers" as well as "serving Christ in all persons" (BCP, p. 304-305). And I have found a wonderful "by-product" of participating in these

opportunities, such as informal Bible study with the Needlecraft group or working on the mission trip has been getting to know others and feeling a bit more connected to this Body of Christ.

The Rev. Joan Conley