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From the Clergy Associate

Something to hold on to....

This past summer, I spent the week before my first chemotherapy treatment with my family at the beach. At the end of the week, my sister Jane came to me with two small white stones in her hand and told me to choose one; so I did. Then she closed her hand over the other. These would be our “chemo stones” she informed me. We would each have our chemo stones with us while I was receiving each of my chemo treatments. And so it has been. However, I must admit that there have also been many other days when I have placed my “chemo stone” in my pocket so that I could feel it and know that it was there; that my sister was with me. And I am very grateful for the other very special gifts that others have given me “to hold on to” over these months. There are times in our lives, times when we feel we are in uncharted waters, in wilderness; and in such times, we just feel as if we need something to hold on to...

During Advent we hear a great deal about wilderness and the call to prepare a way for God through that desert. In John Hartnett’s opening letter in this edition of *The Tower*, he very thoughtfully writes about this. Through all of the potential demands and clamoring from so many different sources in the weeks of Advent, what is it that we each will hold on to that will keep us grounded in this time of preparation, anticipation, and hope? Perhaps it is saying the prayers and lighting the candles of an Advent wreath in the middle of your kitchen table. Or a line or phrase from a favorite carol or canticle, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my savior...” Or simply carrying in your pocket a small white stone or a little glass ladybug that someone has given you to remind you that you are not alone; others are with you—**God** is with you. God is with us, *Emmanuel*, in whatever wilderness we might find ourselves.

In great gratitude,
The Rev. Joan F. Conley
Clergy Associate