



May 2013  
Volume 86 Number 5

### **From the Clergy Associate**

In the space of one week (April 7-14), I was constantly reminded of the gift that we, as individuals and as a church, have in being part of something larger. Each individual is part of the St. Elizabeth's family; and St. Elizabeth's is part of the Diocese of Newark, as well as the Ridgewood community; and one could keep extending these ever-widening circles.

On Sunday, April 7, St. Elizabeth's joined with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and other Christians in Ridgewood's 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Interfaith Holocaust Remembrance Service at West Side Presbyterian Church. Being able to join all of our voices, literally, in prayer, stories, and song, in this beautiful and poignant service always serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of our standing together; there is no one group which stands alone totally independent of others.

On Tuesday of that week, the members of the Interfaith Religious Leaders of Ridgewood gathered at St. Elizabeth's for our monthly meeting. We are truly blessed in Ridgewood to have such a wonderful group of leaders representing the various faith communities, leaders who listen respectfully and thoughtfully, and support each other and the people of the village and the state.

On Thursday of that week, the Women Gardeners of Ridgewood held a special event in our Parish Hall. This event drew many from the surrounding community. The gardeners deemed it a success, and it was nice to know that St. Elizabeth's was able to offer this space to a community group which includes members from our parish. Many who came were grateful that so much thought had been put into the plans for the renovation of our Parish Hall and gardens over the years—and that the parish was willing to open its doors to the larger community.

And St. Elizabeth's finished out that week by hosting a Diocesan Confirmation Retreat from Friday evening through Saturday afternoon. This was my third year here serving as one of the hosts and representatives of St. Elizabeth's, and it always amazes me how hosting 65–100+ Confirmands and chaperons from all over the Diocese for an 18-hour event can transform this space. Actually, this retreat not only transforms this space, but all of us who attend. I love seeing the teens from all the different churches interacting with each other and with the adult speakers

and leaders. Yes, to witness 13-16 year olds—male and female—talking about God, faith, heaven, hell, evil, and forgiveness is amazing. The Holy Spirit is truly stirring among all who are present.

What a gift and a responsibility to be part of something larger than ourselves... And I am grateful to all of those leaders and members of St. Elizabeth's over the years who put so much time, energy, thought, and love into creating the current buildings and grounds of St. Elizabeth's. It is a gift to be able to open these to the larger Church and community.

The Rev. Joan F. Conley  
*Clergy Associate*