



October 2015
Volume 88 Number 8

From the Clergy Associate

Access Ridgewood – Friends to Friends Worship Service
Sunday, October 18, 7:00 pm
First Reformed Church, 303 Prospect Street, Ridgewood

The Interfaith Religious Leaders of Ridgewood host a number of special ecumenical worship services for the community throughout the year: services for Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Holocaust Memorial, and the culmination of the Access Ridgewood events. I always find each of these services to be incredibly rich and meaningful. The service of the Friends to Friends congregation at the First Reformed Church in Ridgewood is one that I always find particularly joyful and Spirit-filled. (Even my daughter Elena went with me last year because I would always come home from that service each year just beaming—and Elena found last year’s service to be truly Spirit-filled, too.)

Friends to Friends is a “community of Christians with a focus on the inclusivity of people, primarily people with developmental and physical disabilities” (from the Friends to Friends Community Church Mission Statement). The three days of events for Access Ridgewood celebrate the special gifts and abilities of all people, especially those who are physically and developmentally disabled. And the Friends to Friends congregation has graciously welcomed the entire community to their regular Sunday evening worship service as a beautiful conclusion to the weekend’s special events. Many of the members of the congregation are enthusiastically welcoming to all of us who come to join them in worship, and their warmth and enthusiasm is quite contagious. I personally love being able to join others in singing songs of praise to God—singing “with abandon,” unfettered by my usual self-consciousness of singing off-key. But it is the love for each other, and thanksgiving, praise, and glory given so freely to God by those gathered that especially moves me, fills me, and challenges me in my own spiritual life.

In a lecture in which theologian Jurgen Moltmann addressed a combined conference of “handicapped” and “non-handicapped,” he noted that “the service of love is in fact inseparable from community. For community comes into being where, in the name of Jesus, people, with all of

their different aptitudes and weaknesses, begin to live with one another and to be available for one another... Charitable help and fellowship are therefore only two sides of one and the same thing: the healing community. And the healing community is needed by our world...so that we may all learn again to love the life which we have received together and for one another, out of the love of God.” *(The Power of the Powerless, 1983, p. 154.)*

I hope that you can join us this year on Sunday, October 18, at 7:00 pm, as we gather in praise and thanksgiving to God for all of our many different gifts.

The Rev. Joan F. Conley
Clergy Associate