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### **From the Clergy Associate**

When we held our parish retreat this past November in Mendham at St. Marguerite's Retreat House on the grounds of the Community of St. John Baptist (CSJB), a religious order for women in the Episcopal Church, Sister Suzanne Elizabeth was one of the CSJB Sisters who warmly welcomed us that weekend. She announced that she had been very much looking forward to our group's arrival. And then, with a twinkle in her eye and a smile, she explained that she had a special connection with St. Elizabeth's: she had been Confirmed at St. Elizabeth's many years ago. She had grown up on Phelps Road, and when she and her brothers were young, their parents had told them that they each needed to attend church. They each could choose for themselves *which* church, but they *had* to be members of *a* church... Interestingly, her brothers chose Upper Ridgewood Community, and she chose St. Elizabeth's. And Sister Suzanne Elizabeth said that over all of these years, she has been waiting for a group from St. Elizabeth's to come to St. Marguerite's—and here we were! It was a wonderful connection for us all.

As the members of our group were walking the beautiful labyrinth on the CSJB grounds late Sunday morning, inevitably there were times when individuals would come face-to-face in their walking meditation and would have to silently navigate around each other. And then there were the times when one person would pass another in the curves of the labyrinth's path. As I was walking the curving path of the labyrinth, I was struck by the thought of the number of people we encounter in our lives whom we might not see for years—perhaps they are on a long arc on the other side of the labyrinth—and then we connect again, perhaps only momentarily or perhaps for a longer period of time. Often the connection is in the unexpected turns, at unexpected times. And yet the path still leads to The Center; our paths ultimately rest in God, whether we are prepared or not. As we make our journeys, may our hearts be open to God's grace and the gifts of all the various connections we make along the way.

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