

Dear Friends,

This month my letter is primarily a reference to other articles in this issue.

First, I commend to you The Rev. Cathy Quinn's introduction of herself on page 13. With the consent of the Vestry and Bishop Beckwith, I invited Cathy to join the staff of St. Elizabeth's on a part-time (14 hours per week) basis to focus on ministry with young families. Most Sundays she will be in the 10:00 am Chapel service working with Lois Chapman, Catherine Hostetler, and our splendid team of lay leaders in that service for children from pre-K through second grade. Cathy will be available for conversation following that service with any parents who might like to know more about St. Elizabeth's, how they can nurture the spiritual growth of their children, or any other topic under the wide umbrella of raising children and nurturing family life in a healthy, balanced, and Christian way.

Cathy will also share in leading the Church School Eucharist (Grades 3-8) and be available in Coffee Hour for conversation with parents. As the year unfolds, I hope she might host some informal conversations about parenting in the Chapel during Coffee Hour. Visiting young families, and especially young mothers, during the week is part of Cathy's ministry, and please feel free to call her at the office or email her ([cquinn@stesridgewood.org](mailto:cquinn@stesridgewood.org)). Once a month, Cathy will worship at Mt. Carmel Roman Catholic Church with her husband Peter and their three daughters. Peter grew up in Ridgewood, and he and his family are active and life-long members of Mt. Carmel.

Cooperation and deep mutual respect between different traditions and congregations is a hallmark of the religious life of Ridgewood (see Rabbi David Fine's article on p. 37), and I am especially glad that we are able to support Cathy and her family in modeling in practice what we affirm in principle.

Since the 1970s tensions in the Middle East have dominated our news. The Olympic Massacre in Munich, The Six Day War, the Civil War in Lebanon and subsequent battles there, the fall of the Shah of Iran and the subsequent hostage crisis (and failed desert rescue attempt), the two wars with Iraq and continued violence throughout the world with roots in tensions in the Middle East. And, for the last ten years, in our own region our lives have been immeasurably changed since 9/11/2001. Who would not take the chance to bring peace a little closer there, and a little closer here, the more so if we could do it in a way which exemplifies the highest elements of the Christian tradition and the human spirit?

You can demonstrate, and demonstrate for, peace by signing up for our semi-annual interfaith blood drive at Temple Israel on Sunday, March 6 right after church. Twice a year, members of Temple Israel, St. Elizabeth's, and the Muslim Society of Ridgewood sign up, and line up, together to give blood not just to support those who are in need of it, but also to make the symbolic point that we mean to be partners in healing, in supporting those in need, and in sharing our own life with those whose lives are at risk.

The journey from spilling blood to sharing it is a noble one, but for it to be real, it requires us to come forward, not just to affirm the principle, but to make the gift. How can giving blood in Ridgewood bring peace closer in the Middle East? I think God takes what we offer and does things better than we can even imagine. Who knows who might be giving blood next to you who never thought a Christian would come to a synagogue and donate next to a Muslim on one side and a Jew on the other? There are people who need this blood; there is a world which needs this sign; and we are people who need to step forward and help make a difference. Please sign up for giving blood this year. See the article on p. 27.

A number of parishioners have asked me about a class or more structured way to explore the Christian faith, the Episcopal Church, or membership at St. Elizabeth's. These classes might be in preparation for a formal commitment through Confirmation or Reception for adults, or just opportunities to go, and grow, deeper in our faith. In March I will offer two different classes, one on Saturday mornings beginning on March 19 (see the article on p. 28), the other within the context of the Monday night Lenten Dinners beginning on March 14 (see the article on p. 33).

Both classes have a common theme—how to see in our regular liturgies resources to strengthen our daily lives. The Saturday morning class will look especially at the themes associated with the seasons of the Church year; the Monday night conversations will focus on the collects for each of the weeks in Lent, a different part of the Eucharist liturgy each week, and a verse from a hymn we will have sung the day before.

St. Elizabeth's offers a wide range of opportunities, formal and informal, in worship and in conversation, for people of all ages, on Sundays and during the week, in our building and in our larger community, to learn about, to receive, and, in turn, to offer, the blessings of God. One of the delightful paradoxes of our faith is that the distinction between giving and receiving is often significantly blurred so that the two acts become very nearly the same. I invite you to enter into that life and that perspective on all of life especially as we prepare to begin the holy season of Lent on Ash Wednesday, March 9. And for more about that, see the article on p. 31.

The Rev. Canon John G. Hartnett  
Rector