

## Wisdom from the Woods

by Leslie Martin

Fall is my favorite season. It speaks of the brilliant colors of the leaves dappled with the sun in its waning glow, the crisp cool air, the loamy smell; the last of the homegrown fresh harvests before life shuts down and readies for the rest winter provides. For me, it is the comfort of being surrounded by a familiar old friend.

But this year, the Spring has brought more than the cycle of new life. Perhaps it's the lack of traffic and the cacophony of everyday life, or less pollution fogging the window to the world; but the tree buds bursting into leaves seemed a brighter green, the flowers taking their turns bursting into bright colored blooms, the birds singing – all announce the heralding of rebirth from the winter hibernation. But more than that, this year it vibrates with the feeling of hope. It's a phoenix from the pandemic, still strongly within our midst, but hope springs eternal, they say, and I'm holding to that hope with all that I have.

Being a part of EFM has been a life rope for me to that hope. As a community, the group offers love and support through our shared stories of trials and celebrations. Individually, the same support is offered through words and thoughts of comfort. And prayer. We can't forget the prayer, as it raises us up to the Lord in our shared community. We have learned the importance of prayer as a community, and as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said in *Life Together*, "The body of Christ is praying; and I as an individual recognize that my prayer is only a fraction of the whole prayer of the church. I learn to join the body of Christ in its prayer. That lifts me above my personal concerns and allows me to pray selflessly." Prayer in the community helps me to let go of my own prayerful desires and pray for us all: individually, as the community of St. Peter's in the Woods and globally. We pray for God's desire for us and we pray for the day we can all embrace each other in the flesh once again.

I lost two close acquaintances recently, two weeks apart. One loss was expected due to a long and horrible illness and the other was totally unexpected, and while not yet confirmed, appears to be covid-related. The second had taken over the job the first had left when she was no longer able to work. Both were huge champions of the downtrodden, oppressed, and misrepresented. Both were recognized for their unending passion for helping those who needed help the most. Both were losses to the human community yet both are now home and being rewarded for their great deeds here on earth. My individual prayer reels with grief but the community prayer lifts them up to the Lord.

The cycle of life has hit me hard with these losses, and today I sat on the front porch in my great grandfather's rocking chair alone with my thoughts of loss. But I was soon distracted with the chirping bird bringing food to the babies in the birdhouse hanging from the same front porch and then noticed the inordinate number of fuchsia-colored blooming perennials in front of the porch. And I am able to thank the Lord for having time with these extraordinary people and embrace the hope for health and life offered by this very exquisite and unique Spring God has given us.