

**Wisdom from the Woods – Barbara Harris**  
**August 5, 2020**

I miss hugs.

I remember our last in-person church service before COVID-19 changed everything. We were encouraged to pass the peace with elbow bumps. I brazenly hugged a few of my closest friends... and that's the last time I hugged anyone outside my immediate family in almost 5 months.

My idea of "community" has changed a lot in these past 5 months. I'm a textbook extrovert – I NEED to have my "people" around me. So in many ways, this has been a big challenge. But I know that keeping my family, friends and neighbors safe is an act of love, and keeping physical distance doesn't have to mean being absent from each other's lives.

During our Building Love campaign, I spoke about how here at St. Peter's in the Woods, we have a fortunate knack (with LOADS of help from God) of stepping out in faith, taking what little we have and creating something incredible; of making the impossible possible.

I remember when we made the decision to work to become a full parish. In order to do this, we had to have three years without any financial assistance from the Diocese. We had NO idea how we'd survive without that assistance, but through careful financial stewardship, we succeeded, and I'll never forget our joyful procession as a full parish into the Convention. A few years ago, when planning our Military Ministries angel tree, we were discussing how many families to "adopt." The organization had asked us to take a few more families, but we didn't think we could. We decided to go ahead anyway – and once again, the people of St. Peter's came through in spectacular fashion. We had enough gifts for all the families, with enough money left over to provide additional gift cards as well.

Over the past several months, we have once again been called upon to make the impossible possible. We have been asked to really think and pray about the question, "what is church?" Is it the building? Is it the programming, the services, the people? Or is it our ongoing commitment to live out Christ's commandment to love the Lord our God with our heart, soul and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves? To seek and serve Christ in every living person? To be Christ's hands and feet in this desperately hurting world?

Just a few days ago, we fearlessly demonstrated our "loaves and fishes" can-do attitude. Rev. Susan received a call from the county health department about a family in quarantine, who needed groceries for two weeks. In fewer than 24 hours, parishioners responded with generosity, providing everything this family would need to get through two weeks in isolation.

We have also been able to seamlessly transfer to online worship, thanks to the incredible talent, dedication, and patience of our Director of Music and Online Ministries, Chad Steffey. Chad stepped out boldly in faith, creating and sustaining an online platform for worship and fellowship. Producing the weekly service each week is a herculean task which Chad handles with so much patience and grace. We are now even able to have virtual

service events like our upcoming virtual Serving with the Saints. Despite our physical distance, we are still able to connect in many richly meaningful ways.

These are just a few examples, but they demonstrate the “can do” attitude of our special church community. We embody the notion that nothing is impossible when we rely on God. It’s incredible what we can accomplish when we focus on the mission of the church – no matter where we are. During this scary and sobering time, this is a very comforting and inspiring thought indeed.