

**Brett Hooper**

**7 August 2020**

### **Wisdom from the Living Woods**

Anne and I have always been very appreciative of the community feel of St. Peter's in the Woods. I imagine that's why we've stayed. But there are a couple of occasions that stand out as very memorable.

On May 18 2016, Anne and I celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with a Renewal of Vows ceremony that Reverend (at that time) DeDe Duncan-Probe officiated. We had family from Utah and Virginia join us, which made the ceremony extra special. The choir would be the next special item to the Hooper family. Anne has always had a beautiful voice and had participated in music ministry in past years. I encouraged her to get involved once more, and she suggested that music was something we could do together. We were graciously accepted into the St. Peter's in the Woods choir, one of the best choirs in Northern Virginia. We have been blessed by the friendships we have developed, and of course, the music is excellent!

We have long wanted to be more involved at St. Peter's, but with kid's activities that were often out of town on Sundays (good old travel soccer), we felt we couldn't fully commit. Now that the kids are out of the house, we wanted to do more. With an invitation to serve on the Vestry, we jumped in with both feet. As your Junior Warden I have been blessed with a great deal of help from the previous Junior Warden, Steve Wharton, as well as Janel Schulte, Walter Purdy and a cast of characters who make up the Building and Grounds Committee. Then there is the newly created Creation Care team. These two groups have been busy this COVID-19 Spring and Summer season.

It is likely that you are unaware of all the great work the Creation Care team has performed. Outdoors at SPW, the team supports our VA Natives Garden (thanks especially to Mary Wharton!). They've encouraged the new Giving Garden, which Chris Camillo has taken lead, with help from Linda Bilotti and a team that waters and weeds (including our youth!). Teams led by Mary and Stacey Remick-Simkins go out on our property to identify natural bird and plant species, and Sue Swaitek helps keep an eye on the blue birds. Tim Vaughan has set up a beehive behind the church and spent time sharing his knowledge about these vital pollinators with the group.

Indoors, Creation Care has performed an energy audit, identifying deficiencies of appliances, lighting and weather-stripping. This Energy Audit led to a report delivered to the Vestry with the recommendation to submit a grant application to the Northern Virginia Storm Water Conservation District. The grant which we submitted in May, with tremendous leadership from Debbie and Bill Swietlik, was approved and will pay 50% of SPW expenses toward upgrading/updating appliances, lighting and weather-stripping to help reduce the carbon footprint of SPW. We have already replaced all the lighting upstairs with more efficient (and bright!) LED bulbs. A special thanks to those folks who

helped replace more than 100 overhead bulbs in just one and a half hours! All this to live into SPW's desire to be good stewards of God's creation that he has entrusted us with.

It is SPW's great gift of community that enables this congregation to do so much. I think you would agree with me that we see it time and time again. Many hands working for a common cause make light work for each of us, but have such reach and impact. As we look forward to the Building Love Campaign, I can only imagine the wonders this congregation will be capable of in our new building.