

# JANUARY NEWSLETTER

## *St. Matthew's Episcopal Church*

### CLIMBING TO NEW HEIGHTS

REV. ROB MEROLA, RECTOR

Dearly Beloved,

When I was on Sabbatical 2 years ago, I went in search of a vision for the next 10 years. And so, one morning when we were in Green River, Wyoming, I took my journal and climbed high into the surrounding buttes, following the ridgeline through the tall rock spires to the highest pinnacle of all.

I had been told there were lots of rattlesnakes up in this area. I'll admit that though the purpose of this excursion was to gain clarity in seeing where God was leading me, I secretly harbored a hope that it might also produce one of these beautiful creatures as well.

It did not. I settled into a crag, wrapped my coat around me, and watched the sunrise. And then I took out my journal and began to write:

"It [God's vision] is to help individuals change into the people God calls us to be. Not to change laws, or society, or anybody else. To change ourselves. And as we live in greater harmony with God because of these changes, to create an oasis of well-being and thriving. This oasis would be so attractive that people would be drawn to it and enter the change process themselves. Ultimately, this is how we change the world."

As our journey went on, the vision became more robust as another word came into focus. We were visiting the Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge, a stunningly beautiful place where we saw monarchs and hummingbirds and I didn't feel so far from home. Linda asked, "Do you know what a wildlife refuge is?" I had never given it much thought. "Is it more than just land for animals?" I asked.

"Yes," she said as she was reading about the history of the place. "They were created with a specific purpose: 'to create environments that mitigate the damage done by human development.'"

And so, alongside the idea of an oasis came the idea of creating a refuge as well. It's the idea of the church being a place that provides solace, shelter, and sanctuary from all the stress and strains of our fast-paced, noisy, and stressful world. As our environment is increasingly defined by artificial technologies that end up being hostile to humanity because we have not yet evolved to interact with them in a healthy fashion, the church becomes an island of sanity amid all the surrounding chaos. So much is possible if we consciously and wisely choose how best to step forward as the people of God who remember what is truly important.

In 2023, I saw this vision gain meat and bones with a power I have not seen in a long, long time. God is at work at St. Matt's in mighty and inspiring ways. If you are a part of it, you know what I'm talking about. If you are not, all I can say is that you are really missing out.

But it's not too late. We will continue to pursue this vision in 2024, climbing to new heights. We'd love for you to join us. Believe me, you'll be glad you did.

With much love and affection,  
Rob+



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