

REFLECTIONS ON GAIL'S MINISTRY

Our beloved Rector, Gail Greenwell, is bound for a new ministry in Mission, Kansas. I am acquainted with St. Michaels and All Angels Church through youth activities and hearing about their many successful ministries, having had my Christian and Episcopal formation in the Diocese of Kansas in the 1970s and 80s. I know that Gail is headed to a place dear to my heart, a place much like Epiphany.

Our reactions to this news are as individual as we are. We should honor that as we all process this experience in our own way. I felt a deep sense of loss upon reading Gail's letter. I have bonded with Gail as my rector, as a fellow women's retreat participant, and in working with her on various ministries that she inspired me to join. There is no question that I will miss her, wish she was staying longer, and wonder if I will feel the same about anyone else.

Then I thought—I felt that same way about each rector that preceded Gail. I've seen this search process happen twice at Epiphany, and have seen my father go through this in his ministry. Of course this is going to be sad, and the search process is a lot of work, and another parish will now have the leadership and gifts of Gail. I have a perspective to share about this.

It is an honor to us here at Epiphany when our leadership is viewed so positively by others. It reflects on our good works in outreach, education, worship, etc., everything that a church is about! As much as I'm going to miss Gail leading our weekly worship, her excellent preaching, and all the wonderful programs and touches she gives to life at Epiphany, it makes me proud that representatives from another wonderful church could so clearly see her positive impact, enough so to unanimously elect her.

In an interesting twist, things have come full circle since I've been at Epiphany. When we came in 1988, we prayed for seminarian Dean Wolfe in the prayers of the people. I didn't know him, but others told me about how special he was. This man is now the Rt. Rev. Dean Wolfe, Bishop of Kansas, who will be welcoming Gail. He knows how special both Gail and we here at Epiphany are. — *Dede Lehmkuhl*

Gail's ministry at Epiphany has touched us on many levels. The lesson that I will carry forward with me from her time here is her abiding conviction that faith necessarily leads to action. Liturgy and what we do together as a community are important, but not ends in themselves. Our liturgy and sense of community find their purpose when they nourish us to go forth into our world to act in accordance with our beliefs. When faith is so nurtured, action naturally follows.

— *Nina Brooks*

As much as we will miss Gail, we need to remember the words of the immortal Dr. Seuss, who (as we know) was right about everything: "Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened." And again, with help from the wise old doctor, let us wish Gail 'Godspeed!' and celebrate her new ministry:

*Today is your day.
You're off to Great Places!
You're off and away!
You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself
Any direction you choose.
You're on your own. And you know what you know.
And YOU are the [gal] who'll decide where to go.*

*You'll be on your way up!
You'll be seeing great sights!
You'll join the high fliers
Who soar to high heights.*

*You won't lag behind, because you'll have the speed.
You'll pass the whole gang and you'll soon take the lead.
Wherever you fly, you'll be best of the best.
Wherever you go, you will top all the rest.*

*Today is your day.
Your mountain is waiting.
So....get on your way!¹*

Seriously, though, as Helen Keller once said, “When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.” Our time of opening the Epiphany door and finding Gail waiting there to share our everyday joys, tears and challenges, is coming to a close, but I ask all of you not to focus so much on the closing of that door, but the opening of the door to not only Gail’s future, but ours as well. And in God’s unfolding journey for Epiphany, He is daring us to go into dreams on a path unknown, but confident in the knowledge and certainty of His everlasting love for us. — *Nancy Winningham*

¹ Dr. Seuss. (1990). *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* New York: Random House.