

October 12, 2023

*“They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.” - Jeremiah 17:8*

Dear Good Shepherd,

You have probably heard the familiar expression “can’t see the forest for the trees.” We most often use it to describe that occasion in which we lose sight of the big picture while focusing on the details. From my position, I often experience the blessing of being able to see the big picture of our congregation – the ministry we bring to our neighbors, the impact we have on our community, the ways in which week after week we come together to celebrate our faith and praise God. This is the forest.

And I get to wander amongst the trees. From the small shoot reaching out from its seed and finding the sunlight, to the mightiest tree, standing tall, showing strength, offering sheltering love to those who need it. You are those trees, each drawing strength from the Holy Eucharist and showering the world with the love and grace you have come to know here.

When I walk through a forest, I am aware of the tangle of roots, how one tree is connected to another. Trees use these networks, secretly talking to each other through their roots, passing information along. Adult trees share their sugars with young saplings; a dying tree can send its remaining resources back out to help the community. These networks, these roots of abundance, keep trees in place just as much as they free them to grow and share.

The theme of our annual pledge campaign this year is Rooted in God’s Abundance, and we are reminded that we are a mighty forest comprised of ancient trunks and sprightly saplings, each of us contributing our gifts to a world that needs us. It is in living rooted in God’s abundance and continuing to financially support our “forest” that we are able to continue the many missions and ministries of Good Shepherd.

We will kick off our celebration of God’s Abundance on October 22nd by worshiping as one large community at 9 AM, then moving over to Kirk Hall for our Ministry Fair, where we have the opportunity to learn about the many ways our congregation is active in our community and is living out God’s call for us.

It has been a difficult year for many as costs rise and the market fluctuates. We have felt the same here at Good Shepherd, and yet by being Rooted in God’s Abundance, we do not cease to bear fruit. As you hear the messages and stories of abundance this year, I encourage you to take note of how generosity spreads and widens our root structures of faith and action, and I invite you to consider the ways in which you are called to give your time, talent, and treasure.

In gratitude,

*Whitney Burton+*

The Rev. Whitney Burton

