

## Re-visiting St. Martin's Vision

This week is an in-between space in our liturgical year. Easter is ending, and Jesus has ascended. His followers had had several weeks with him after the resurrection miracle, and surely they would have been unnerved by his leaving again. Think of the grief! What they didn't know—but we do—is that this is just an interim period, a waiting time. Jesus is gone, but the Holy Spirit is coming. Pentecost is this Sunday...the birthday of the Church, the day when we celebrate God's gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Something has ended, and something else has not yet begun. But God does not leave us comfortless.

In our parish story, St. Martin's has seen its share of endings and beginnings. About twelve years ago, our beloved longtime rector, the Rev. Pickett Miles, retired after nearly 30 years. Since that time, at least ten priests and deacons have come and gone. In other places, all that coming and going MIGHT have resulted in an instability, or insecurity in a parish, but not here.

When a parish is searching for a rector, part of the process is to prepare a parish profile, which is a product of extensive self-study, and many conversations in small groups around the church. A profile communicates the spirit of a parish to applicants, where the parish wants to go. I recently reread St. Martin's most recent profile, written during the search process that resulted in your call to me. Now that I have been with you a year, I looked back at the profile, and found that reading it again has given me a wonderful sense of affirmation for the path we are on together.

Here is what the parish profile says about who St. Martin's is and wants to be: *“Our conclusion: while we love our church, there's more we wish to do. Within our walls, we want to meet together more often in small groups and we want to build a stronger program of spiritual formation. Together we seek a deeper understanding of Scripture...We also want to look beyond ourselves. We want to reach out, to see connections with people from all walks of life. We wish for more – more action in the area of righting wrongs, more involvement with people who aren't exactly like us. We long to be more diverse. We long to interact. We want to understand and confront poverty, racism, and exclusion. We want to make St. Martin's even more open. We want to find a sustained mission to carry us forward into this new century. And we dare to imagine the true calling for every one of us, young and old. We want to do God's work in the world. We want to make a difference.”*

Someone recently asked me, “What is your vision, where are you leading St Martin's?” I want to turn that question around. The real question is: “Where is God leading all of us, together, in this parish family?” The path we are on began 55 years ago in the church on Jamestown Island. We always keep before us the vision on which this parish was founded: it was a vision of not being “church as usual.” It was a vision of living intentionally as a strong community. St. Martin's was founded on a strong commitment to diversity, to being intentionally welcoming, and a vision of reaching out beyond our walls. This is not my vision, not Lisa's vision. This is *our* vision. This is the vision that all your clergy have stepped into over the years—the legacy we have inherited.

We must always re-commit ourselves to waiting and watching for the movement of the Holy Spirit. Jesus's earthly life came to a close at his ascension...and when the Spirit came, WE became the body of Christ. We are always renewing our baptismal promises: To seek and serve Christ in all persons, and respect the dignity of every human being.

Where is God calling us? We can't know exactly, of course, but it will most certainly look something like the vision proclaimed in our parish profile. We are discerning this together. It is a privilege to be on this path with you. Yours in Christ, Cathy