

### “SAFE BEYOND THE BOUNDS”

*Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. - Isaiah 43:16-18*



As Christians, we believe that God guides us in the journey of our lives. Our stories are made up of our past experiences, our present reality, and our future hopes.

How we view the future has as much impact on the present as does the past. Despair can make us feel as if we are trapped in a corner, with our faces against the wall. In contrast, a sense of hope can give us courage to press on into the unknown.

Two years ago, we moved into what was then our new worship space at Prairie-St. John's convent chapel, as well as our offices at the Irv Rusted Small Business Development Center. With that move, St. Mark's Lutheran Church began a journey that does not end where we are today.

The prophet Isaiah knew what that meant. Isaiah urges the people of Israel not to just remember the story of their exodus from Egypt. Isaiah tells the people that God is about to do a “new thing.” The prophet Isaiah aims to create an imaginative space in the minds of the people, so that their conception of the past can transform their understanding of the present as well as their future.

In a seemingly hopeless situation, the prophet calls on the people not to lose heart, but to look with anticipation for the signs of God's approaching redemption. To look for a new thing coming. The end of their 70-year exile in Babylonia, and a return to their homeland.

Today, like the people of Israel, we are still a wandering people of faith. As you may know, Prairie St. John's has decided to build a new hospital on the site of our chapel—with construction probably starting later this year. So, we have begun the search for a new place to worship on Sundays. (We plan to keep our office at the current location.)

During this season of Lent, we follow in the steps of Jesus—even if they lead us to the cross. We move forward each day with the promise that Christ will always prepare a place for us—wherever we may go. We follow Jesus—believing that God will bring a new resurrection to the life of our St. Mark's community.

God's grace has sustained us in the past. God's faithfulness gives us the strength to face a new future. Wendell Berry once wrote a poem that reads:

...In the trust of old love, cultivation shows  
a dark and graceful wilderness  
at its heart. Wild  
in that wilderness, we roam  
the distance of our faith;  
safe beyond the bounds  
of what we know. O love,  
open. Show me  
my country. Take me home.<sup>1</sup>

“Safe beyond the bounds of what we know” is a wonderful description of our faith journey. In times of change and uncertainty, Isaiah 43 offers us the promise of God's continued presence. May that promise give us the courage to fervently pray the words used in the morning and evening prayer services of the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*:

“O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Christ our Lord. Amen.” **-Pastor Joe**

<sup>1</sup> Wendell Barry, “A Homecoming,” in *Country of Marriage* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973).