



# The South Church Weathervane

From the Minister's Desk

August 2010

Rev. Jennifer Brooks

## CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

When I was preparing to enter the ministry, these words of Marge Piercy seized my soul and haven't yet released their grip: "I want to be with people who submerge in the task...who stand in the line and haul in their places." The poet paints a picture of people who make the world better simply by digging in and getting their ordinary jobs done. "The work of the world is as common as mud," Piercy says. Like a botched clay pot, mud crumbles; but given attention and mastery, mud becomes art, "a Greek amphora for wine"—art *made to be used*.

Just like people. Too often the work of congregational volunteers seems merely to keep the coffeepot full and the meetings long. We can get bogged down in the tasks, our feet trapped in the mud of too many commitments and too little time. But congregational life is not supposed to be like that. Let's not allow it to be like that.

With attention and mastery, congregational life can be a source of inspiration, satisfaction, and personal growth. Yes, it's about "us," but it's more. Congregational life, well lived, offers an opportunity for "us" to make the world a more just and humane place. It encourages us to find and use our gifts to build the Beloved Community.

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*"'Gifts ministry' is about knowing, discovering and growing your life gifts through the invitation of congregational life." —Rev. Kenn Hurto*

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At the July 27 Board of Trustees meeting, a Board member said, "I love the people on this Board. This group of people is very important to me." Submerged in conversation and dissent, hope and worry, excitement and frustration—hauling in their places across the gamut of human emotion—our Trustees struggle together twice monthly to encourage one another, to equip one another, to build a Beloved Community in our little corner of the big wide world. These nine people value one another for the unique gifts each brings to the whole. One is quiet and wise. Another is quick and energetic. Another is persistent. Another is steady and far-sighted. Each sees the world slightly differently. Each cherishes the differences in perspective. Together they laugh, argue, plan, cheer, weep. Collectively they exhibit the unique gifts of being human. Individually they are willing to be authentic, open, truthful.

Another minister who channels Marge Piercy is Rev. Kenn Hurto, who teaches congregations about "gifts ministry." He wants us to "develop the person as a growing soul amidst a profoundly caring community of love." Congregations help people flower, he says, by encouraging them to discover their gifts; by offering them opportunities to use those gifts to build the Beloved Community within our congregation and in the larger world.

Let us be steadfast in discerning our gifts and placing them into service. We must pull together. *No one can do this work alone.*

### **"Gifts Ministry" Asks—**

- **What are unique gifts of being human?**
- **What are my unique gifts?**
- **How can I use them to build the "Beloved Community"?**
- **How can we equip one another to do just that?**
- **How do these gifts bring gladness and intersect with the world's great needs?**