

Reflecting Forward

In the mid-nineties, Wendy and I, along with our children Katie, Tim, and Abbey, moved to Abington from Richboro in Bucks County. Wendy and I met (as teens) at St. Paul's Elkins Park; our family churchgoing started at St. Luke's in Newtown. After settling in Abington, we visited St. John's Huntingdon Valley, St. Anne's Abington, and a place called St. Peter's Glenside.

Wendy recently reminded me that Ruth Kirk came to our house soon after our first visit to St. Peter's. When Ruth asked if she could come and visit, my first thought was, *Oh, no! I just want to quietly choose a church. I didn't need a priest coming to my house wanting to chat, selling St. Peter's, and asking if we had any questions. This was going to be uncomfortable. Not looking forward to it.* Our conversation began to reveal a community that was wonderful, welcoming, and a good place for a family to be. Ruth listened to our needs and suggested how St. Peter's might be a place for the Hartungs; it started sounding like St. Peter's was really worth a try. However, at the end Ruth said, "well you have told me all about your vision and shared with me the things you need. Please think about this, what will you have to offer St. Peter's?" Wow, that was a provocative eye-opening question. I had no answer. It turned out that visit opened many eyes and doors for Wendy, Katie, Tim, Abbey, and me. We found a home.

Have you ever been in between two mirrors that are facing each other? If two mirrors face each other, light bounces off the mirrors' surfaces repeatedly forming a new image with each reflection. The reflection from one mirror is reflected by the other mirror back to the first mirror, and then back again to the second mirror. This gives the impression of an infinite series of the same image being reflected over and over again.

I recall my first experience of this phenomenon of this was when I was, I don't know 8 or 9, sitting in the second chair, getting my haircut, in Sam's Barber Shop in Roslyn. With my back to one mirror and facing another, I saw a series of smaller images...a sequence of images seemingly approaching a dot...a progression of images approaching infinity...it was as if I was sneaking a glimpse into the future.

Today is the intersection of the past and the tomorrow. My reflection about our St. Peter's experience can be brought into focus by examining the last 12 weeks. Love, hope, comfort, friendship, a volunteering spirit, peace. All of these we have shared in the last 12 weeks. These are the feelings; these are the qualities I could not quite identify in 1995 when we first visited St. Peter's and Ruth opened her heart and, by proxy, opened **your** hearts to Wendy and me. These are the qualities and feelings that my family has lived into throughout the intervening years. Its only after you choose (or are moved by the Holy Spirit) that you say ah-ha that's why...that's why Wendy and I brought our family to this sacred place.

I need to share some here-and-present glimpses of that very spirit that binds us as the family of St. Peter's.

Laura: the miracle of God brought you here to pastor us, to comfort us, to be our sister through many anxious times.

Linda: you have guided us through some of the rougher moments in our history during the last three months. Your caring manner has kept us together and your confidence that our listening to the Holy Spirit will pay off has soothed us...and it has.

Wendy: you are always so patient with and supportive of me. During endless meetings (that I often guess will only last an hour not only to emerge two and a half hours later); patient and supportive during my low times. You are my strength, my confidant...I couldn't do the things I do without you.

Comfort, caring, patience, support, strength; these are gifts of Laura, Linda, Wendy, and all of us...gifts shared; gifts freely given. It's what we share with those who are welcomed into this sacred place called St. Peter's.

And we now welcome Barb. Tomorrow, we welcome her to our family with all our caring, support, strength, and patience. I know we will embrace her with our whole heart.

Reflections don't always have to be about the past. Let us not be frozen in the act of looking backwards. We are on the verge new and spectacular moments. Let us rejoice in the Holy Spirit who brought us, keeps us, and points us forward.

We are...St. Peter's!

Amen

R.W. Hartung

20 March 2022