

# Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

## *Moving Through This Crossroad*

By Ken Woodley

Here we are again.

A congregation without a priest.

Here we are again.

Being, with Jesus, our own shepherds.

Shepherds for each other.

For the church we share.

And all of its ongoing ministries.

Despite the COVID Sunday Service hiatus.

Despite everything.

It's useful to understand that the pandemic surrounding us can add to any sense of loss at this moment and exaggerate our feelings of "aleness." COVID does amplify negative and desperate feelings. It just does.

Remembering that we may not gather again for a service until Easter actually helps us find spiritual and emotional traction. We've got time to line up pinch-hitting priests, through the diocese, for when we do worship together again. It's not like we're scrambling to find clergy for this coming Sunday.

Meanwhile, we continue to owe a huge debt of gratitude to the late Rev. Mike Ferguson for our ability to respond effectively, once again, to our pastor-less condition.

With his retirement approaching, Mike spent more than a year carefully and prayerfully preparing us to carry on—without a priest if necessary—equipping us to function with, and attract, the part-time priest that a small rural Episcopal church will necessarily find in its future.

This fact is most important: our church family is strong. We can and will do this. With or without an ordained priest in our short or long-term future.

Jesus tells us: do not let your hearts be troubled because God will send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit to be with us, to guide us, to bring Christ's words alive in our hearts and in our lives.

Jesus told his disciples not to be afraid when they are left alone without his physical presence because the Holy Spirit will be with them.

For most of us, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is like a gentle nudge at just the right moment. Nothing spectacular. Simple and to the point. We get a feeling we should do something.

That is what Father John Boucher felt nearly seven years ago when he came to us, and what he felt as 2020 came to its end and decided to leave us for a ministry closer to his home.

We will let the blessing of his presence feed us and give thanks for our years together, wishing him Godspeed—and us, too—in the weeks and months and years ahead.

With the Holy Spirit we make something special with our lives, and our life together on this block in the town of Appomattox.

We can, and we have.

And we shall.

The leaves have fallen all around us. The world outside can feel empty and bare, which doesn't make this moment in our journey together any easier, either. But spring will come. Summer will follow.

God has put our feet on a straight path and will do wonders for his children, satisfying the thirsty and filling the hungry with good things. Blooms await us.

We shall carry on as ministers to each other and to the community we serve, moving forward without troubled hearts even at this sudden crossroads moment between vicars-in-charge, journeying on this cross-of-Christ road, remembering the promise Jesus gave his disciples—gave his disciples then and gives his disciples now:

“I am going away,” he said before his death and resurrection, “and I am coming to you.”

On that, we can depend.