



*Beloved of God,*

*The most important words to say in Church are "thank you" and "I appreciate you." Say it often, and mean it, and today, I want to say it to you.*

*Thank you for the many gifts that you share with our family, our church. I am sure you have heard the expression "can't see the forest for the trees" before. We use it most often to describe a time or season in which we lose sight of the big picture because we were focusing on the details. Being your Vicar, I've been able to experience the blessing of seeing the big picture of our congregation, our family – the ministry we bring to our neighbors, the impact we have on our community, the ways we come together to celebrate our faith and to praise our God.*

*This is the forest. And I get to wander amongst the trees. From the small shoot reaching out from its seed and finding the sunlight, to the mightiest tree, standing tall, showing strength, offering sheltering love to those who need it. You are those trees, each drawing strength from our meal and showering the world with the love and grace you have come to know here. I am blessed in that here in our congregation, I can see both the forest and the trees!*

*For those who know, I love to hike. So, when I walk through a forest, looking down so I don't trip, I am keenly aware of the tangle of roots, how one tree is connected to another. Trees use these networks, secretly talking to each other through their roots, passing information along. Adult trees share their sugars with young saplings, a dying tree can send its remaining resources back out to help the community. These networks,*

*these roots of abundance, keep trees in place just as much as they free them to grow and share.*

*The theme of our annual pledge campaign this year is Rooted in Abundance, and we are reminded that we are a mighty forest comprised of ancient trunks and sprightly saplings, each of us contributing our gifts to a world that needs us. As you hear the messages and stories of abundance this year, take note of how generosity spreads and widens our root structures of faith and action.*

*And as you pray about your own giving, pledging, and participating, listen to how and where God is nudging you, or even challenging you. How is God showing up for you in your prayer time and in your life as a vital member of this parish family?*

*On December 17th, we will have a Gratitude Sunday where we will place our pledge cards in an Offering Plate and pray over them as they remind us that we are Rooted in Abundance.*

*May God richly bless you this season.*

*Sandy+*