

When Judy asked me to give this reflection and I saw the theme, Rooted in Love, it felt pretty easy because the theme really resonates with me.

The Psalms often compare us to animals in search of water. In the 23<sup>rd</sup>, we are the sheep who drink from calm waters. In the 42<sup>nd</sup>, we are the deer longing for God as the deer longs for the stream. But in the 1<sup>st</sup> Psalm, something is different. We are not the animals passing from stream to stream. We are like a tree, fixed in the riverside. Our roots run deep and wide, nourished by the waters of God's mercy and love, and the collective ecosystem.

This beautiful metaphor speaks to me deeply. When I read it, my first thought is: "This is exactly how I think of my beloved church. Like a very strong, firmly rooted tree that sits at the edge of a river and in an ecosystem that nourishes it."

This church community, the people in it and the beautiful building itself, has been nourishing me for more than 20 years. This community has supported me through the joy of marriage and the pain of divorce, the fear of a life-threatening illness and the challenge of raising two sons in the age of technology. Whatever life has dished out, this church has been here to witness and support.

The building itself: standing on top of the hill, always here when we need it – a place to pray, a place worship, a place to gather with friends, a place to celebrate, meditate, sing, listen, learn and self-reflect.

And the people: scattered throughout the community during the week, but gathered together every Sunday, rain or shine. Summer or winter. No matter what.

How many things can we truly rely on to *always be there no matter what*? There are no "snow days" for church - even a world-wide pandemic did not stop us from meeting one another on Sundays.

It's hard to talk about money in such a spiritual place, at least for me. In the Psalm metaphor, we think of the water as God's mercy and the nutrients as Christ's love. And yes, those things are critical to our spiritual life. And yet, the plain truth is that we also need to support our church in concrete ways – with money, yes. And with time and energy and talent. *We are the ecosystem* that feeds the tree; which in turn nourishes us.

So as we go through this season of stewardship, I ask each of you to reflect deeply on what this church means to you and to give as much as you feel you can, to help it stay strong.

And then, maybe, give just a little more.

Thank you