

‘How Firm a Foundation’

A Reflection on Stewardship from Valerie Purcell

When I look back over the years of our membership with St. Mary of the Hills, I can recollect many times when the church and congregation have been a strong foundation for me and my family. This strong foundation has remained steadfast through the years in good times and in bad, in fair weather, and in some horrible storms. St. Mary’s has offered hope, reassurance, and peace.

On our first visit to a St. Mary’s service, we were greeted with open arms. We felt the most welcome we have ever felt in any church. The move to Blowing Rock was stressful. The hardwood floors that were to be redone before our move-in date had not even been started. We had set up our bedroom in our living room. The rest of the furniture in boxes was crammed into the basement. Our daughters had to sleep in sleeping bags or mattresses on the floor. As you can imagine, coming to church helped us get away from all the chaos at home. We did get settled in finally. The church even involved us with the Sunday services, allowing us to be chalice bearers. Neither of us have ever been this involved with previous churches. What an honor it has been to serve in this way.

St. Mary’s was there with much needed support during the passing of my father in 2014 and then in 2016 my mother. With us both being busy working in our professions, getting out and meeting people was quite difficult. Being part of the Foyer Groups has helped us get to know more people in the church, and it has been so much fun. I miss these gatherings dearly these days with the pandemic.

As I have mentioned before, one of our greatest joys has been to be able to have our daughter Rebecca’s wedding in June of this year, due to the large number of St. Mary’s parishioners who helped. This wedding has been the high point of our lives the past several years. It was also a blessing that no one did get sick attending this special event.

My husband Peter came down with COVID-19 last week, and I have never seen him this sick in all my life. This has been one of the lowest points in my life. He had to be hospitalized in the ICU on Saturday night. We have received such great support through the firm foundation of St. Mary’s, with good wishes, daily prayers, phone calls, texts, and emails. I’m happy to report that he came home from the hospital last night and is resting well at home. I think he’s over the worst of it. He did not have any fever or chills this morning for the first time in nine days. I cannot express enough my gratitude for the firm foundation of St. Mary of the Hills, which has worked through the congregation to strengthen our faith, give us hope, restore our peace of mind, and comfort us, especially in these uncertain times. We are truly blessed and grateful for all we have received. Thank you all for making St. Mary’s an enduring and endearing presence in the community to help us and so many others.