

## The Rev'd Canon Matthew Stockard

I have a favorite poem which has echoed in my head since the first time I read it — for about 30 years now.

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### Faith

I want to write about faith,  
about the way the moon rises  
over cold snow, night after night,

faithful even as it fades from fullness,  
slowly becoming that last curving and impossible  
sliver of light before the final darkness.

But I have no faith myself  
I refuse it even the smallest entry.

Let this then, my small poem,  
like a new moon, slender and barely open,  
be the first prayer that opens me to faith.

-David Whyte

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I love the honesty here — no one of us could absolutely claim a full command of faith — each new moment brings us again to beginner work. Our lives are filled with so many moments of blessing, challenge and transition that we find ourselves experiencing those “first prayer” edges of faith over and over again.

Those moments are upheld because of our connections in Christ and with one another. Last Friday marked such a moment for me, as members of our Executive Council, led by the omnitalented Judy Whichard, hosted so many people gathered at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Greenville to share lunch and stories and thanks for our time together as we marked the end of my time of service as Canon to the Ordinary of the Diocese of East Carolina and the beginning of a new retirement. I will long treasure the gift of a compilation of your words of love and encouragement in a lovely Peanuts kiting story remixed by that skilled artist and spirit Lisa Richey using greetings from all over. Your love is a wondrous boost and support for me as I enter into this next “first prayer” and I thank you for that love's many manifestations with all my heart! May such blessings ever grow for us all!