

Ms. Linda Nelson
Faith Lutheran Church, Clay, AL

I am a wife, a mother of two adult children, and the grandmother of five. I am also a retired teacher, called out of retirement to homeschool grandchildren during this past covid year. I have been a member of Faith Lutheran in Clay, AL for the past 4 years, and prior to that a member of other ELCA Lutheran congregations in five other states over the course of my almost 70 years. At Faith, I have been part of the team that prepares and serves a meal once a month at a community kitchen in Birmingham. I have also, with other members of Faith, supported a variety of ministries that are ongoing in our congregation. These include an active ministry to the elementary school across the street from the church; an active pre-school in our building; partnering with other area churches in a food and clothing distribution ministry; and supporting ELCA ministries such as Lutheran disaster response and world hunger. Within the walls of our building I often serve our congregation as a teacher/leader/facilitator of adult Sunday School, a women's Bible study group, and a mid-week discussion group. Recently I participated in our Southeastern Synod's Unbinding Your Heart leadership training and serve as the facilitator of Faith's first group going through this study. At home, I am a papercrafter/rubber stamper making my own cards which I send out freely for birthdays, encouragement, sympathy, etc.

My favorite Bible verse is Hebrews 12:1 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...." There are three reasons for choosing this verse. First, it starts with the word therefore--always an indicator that because something has happened in the past, it should dictate how we move forward. Second, I love the image of being surrounded by a cloud of witnesses--that encourages me, that influences me, and that convicts me. (It also scares me a bit knowing I am part of that cloud for someone else!) And finally, the image of a race speaks to me because of my daughter who was a runner, but then couldn't run because of medical reasons, has, nevertheless, persevered and run the alternate race that was then placed before her--it is something I want to emulate!

I see God on a daily basis through nature, through encounters with strangers, through loving actions and words of the people I know, through the imaginations of my grandchildren--just to name a few. I also see God's abundance daily, especially in this past year when people have had to invent and embrace new ways of doing things, of being the church, of staying in touch, etc. One of the ways I have personally seen God's abundance is during the 23 Wild Women retreats at Lutheridge that I have attended. Abundance abounds in a gathering of 100+ women in study, in fellowship, and in worship. God is good!