



Beneath the Spires

Following Unexpected Directions

By Pastor Joanne

When I saw a couple of pumpkin vines growing next to the parsonage stoop early in the summer, it was no great surprise. Last fall, the squirrels had feasted on the pumpkins on my stoop and, of course, left behind a seed or two. This one rooted under the yew.

Then one recent morning as I returned with Bella from our walk, I spotted something bright orange nestled in the yew branches. On closer inspection I discovered a pumpkin blossom had climbed its way to the top of the shrub. It was a pop of orange yellow set against the deep green. It was quite an unexpected find on that misty morning. That discovery prompted me to take a moment to wonder about the persistence of that bloom. Climbing it's way higher and higher to find



the sunlight.

That got me thinking about all the unexpected things that happen in our lives. There are the unexpected things that we enjoy, like surprise birthday parties. But there are those other unexpected things that can really shake us up, like the death of a loved one or the robbery of your home. Life has a way of throwing us a curve ball when we least expect it.

Sometimes expectations are a good thing. They help parents set boundaries for their children. It's usually good to know what your boss or your significant other expects from you, too.

But sometimes what we expect only leads to trouble. We expect someone to behave in a certain way; we expect them to think, believe, and act as we do. We may expect a big raise and a constant pat on the back that just doesn't come. When life and people don't live up to our expectations, how do we respond? With sadness? Disappointment? Anger?

When the unexpected happens, we can either react in fear or respond in faith. The choice is ours.

For me, I never expected to go into ministry. And I never expected that a divorce would put me on that path, but I have found that God usually speaks most clearly in those unforeseen moments. There is a wonderful old Yiddish adage, "Mann tracht, un Gott lacht," which means, "man plans, and God laughs."

When my pastor on

Save the date:

Laity Sunday	10-20
Crop Walk	10-20
Consecration Sunday	10-27
All Saint's Day	11-3
Church Conference @ 3:30 p.m.	11-3
Worship Honoring Veterans/First Responders	11-10
Christmas Fair	12-7

Did you know?

- Our pumpkins come all the way from New Mexico each year. That's 2200+ miles in the back of a tractor-trailer! They are grown on the Navajo Indian Reservation in cooperation with the Navajo Nation. More than 700 Native Americans are employed during the harvest months of September and October. Pumpkin Patch Fundraisers actually began in North Carolina in 1974, but after Hurricane Hugo hit, the owners moved the operation to New Mexico.

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on Long Island first suggested that I consider going into the ministry some 15 years ago, I scoffed. But eventually I began to consider the question and to ask God for clarity. The answer to those prayers came one Sunday afternoon in a shopping trip to my local Marshalls store.

I had gone to the store to look for silverware. After sifting through several boxes on a top shelf, I settled on a set that resembled what I already had. When I got home I sat down at the dining room table to pull the spoons, forks and knives out of the box. It was then that I noticed the pattern name of the silverware. You know those names that manufacturers give silverware, like Bristol, Cambridge or Country French. I dropped the box as if it were on fire and got up from the table. I couldn't quite believe what I had read. With my heart pounding, I picked up the box again and read the pattern name aloud: *Seminary*. And then I began to laugh hysterically. God had answered my prayers with a box of silverware! To top it off, the silverware was made by Cuisinart and their motto was printed right above the pattern name, "Savor the good life."

While we might look for God to speak to us in extraordinary ways,

often times it is in the unexpected moments that we find some clarity – whether it's an errant pumpkin blossom or a box of silverware. Those unexpected moments can challenge us to look at our selves and our lives differently. They can bring healing where we thought there was none. They can send us in new directions that deepen our faith and trust in God.

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Through those unexpected moments I have come to trust in the words from Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV): "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

My prayer is that you too will come to expect the expected and be ready to grow and to say "yes" to God. And remember, God can even find you in Marshall's!



Pumpkin Patch October 3-31

We always need volunteers in the patch. Please sign up for a shift or two.

3-6 p.m., Wednesday-Friday
10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturdays & Columbus Day

UPCOMING EVENTS

Worship Service honoring those who serve community and country.

10:15 A.M., SUNDAY, November 10 We will give thanks for our first responders, veterans and their families.

Greening of the Church will take place Saturday, November 30.

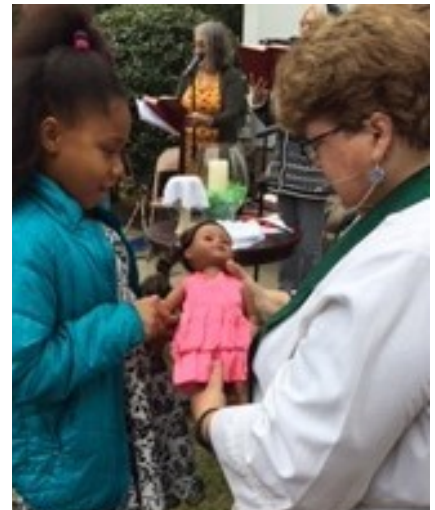
Christmas Fair Saturday, December 7
Gift baskets, decorations, jewelry, free kids' activities, lunch.

October Birthdays

3: Lisa Porter	10: Elisa Palmesi
7: Leila Armstrong	13: Lena Pitt (95th)
8: Kooki Laux	13: Lydia Donohue
10: Alex Fitzgerald	21: Leslie Hall



October 6, Blessing of the Animals



Blessing of the Animals was held Sunday, October 6 on the front lawn among the pumpkins.





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Find us on Facebook, too!

**[We pray. We love.
We serve.]**

Holy Smokes! New Fire Alarm System

We are excited to announce that a new fire alarm system has been installed and is up and running throughout the whole complex. That means for the very first time that the sanctuary is protected, too! We are grateful to Ross Porter, who took the lead on the project, and also to Bobbie McCann, Lisa Porter, Art Covey, Andre Ferrara, Joe Cacciola, Leanne Summers, Stu Beck, and Gaye Abrams, who have all helped move this project along in one way or another. Our contractor, Red Hawk, has done a good job in creating a system that protects all who enter our doors.



We also extend our deep gratitude to the anonymous donor who stepped up to help us pay for this much needed update. God certainly blessed this church and our continuing ministries by this generous gift.

So if you hear the fire alarm go off, you will need to exit the building as quickly and calmly as possible. And given the decibel level of the alarm, you will *want* to leave the building. The monitoring system automatically alerts the fire and police departments. The system includes both smoke and heat detectors, and signals any danger with horns and strobe lights.

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