



## Wednesday Prayer

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Places of Transformation

**“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. And I will give you the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”**

**Matthew 16:18-19**

Some 25 years ago, I was serving a congregation that decided to engage in a companion relationship with a congregation in the Pare Diocese of Tanzania. A recently retired couple in our congregation, Pat and Denny Rehder, went to the Pare Mountains to spend three months with the people there. They got to know them and their culture and engaged in dialog with congregational and diocesan leaders to lay the groundwork for how our two congregations might grow in faith and discipleship together. One email update was about participating in building a new place of worship in this land without cranes and bulldozers. They told of standing on the side of a mountain, shoulder to shoulder with their Tanzanian brothers and sisters, to relay mud bricks up the side of the mountain to make the walls of this new sacred place. I remember Pat's closing comment, “During the past year as Denny and I prepared for retirement, we prayed for God to use us to build up the church. I never imagined that God would take our prayer so literally!”

Jesus saw in Peter what God saw in the Rehders, a strength and confidence of faith as well as an openness for transformation. Jesus blessed this disciple by renaming him “the rock” who will be solid enough to be a dwelling place for God, as well as a place that has the openness to others who are seeking God. God saw the same in Pat and Denny, people who had strong, solid faith, and who were also willing to go to the other side of the world to be transformed by people who live out their faith in a very different way, and to grow the church in a new way.

So this week, I wonder about the ways my faith is solid and strong, and how I can be used as a sanctuary for others, especially those vulnerable to or entrapped by sex trafficking? How can I create more open space for transformation? What do I need to let go of to allow this to happen? May we recognize the holy in our midst, and the willingness to create a space for renewal of God's church as we seek to join as companions in discipleship with those who are vulnerable to or who have been harmed by the dangers of sex trafficking.

**Loving God, as you blessed Peter with the power of the keys, bless us with new eyes to recognize the holy, what we need to hang onto, and what we need to let go of to strengthen and grow your church. Amen.**

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