

From This Corner

Sanctuary

Larry R. Baird

Part of my morning ritual when I am at the house in Jamestown is to have a time of worship in what has become my sanctuary. My sanctuary is at the back of the house where the property drops off dramatically into a wooded area. A deck extends out into the area in such a way that it almost feels as though I am “in the trees.” When it is warm or at least comfortable, I am on the deck. When it is not, I sit by the sliding glass door in a comfortable swivel rocking chair. The spot is as close to perfect as I can imagine. It could only be improved if there were a trout stream running through the woods. On the other hand, that would just lead to temptation. Maybe this really is the perfect spot. My sanctuary brings instant serenity into my life. I often thank God for whoever had a part in the choice of the house and location. It has become a “space for grace” in my life as I suspect it has for previous superintendents.

This fall has been harried largely due to situations beyond my control. I have always been susceptible to a kind of creeping anxiety that comes during such times. During these periods I become less productive and prone to dwell on the classical theological concept known as “the depravity of humankind.” I also, ironically, at the same time fight the urge to skip my sanctuary time to get to the office earlier and get to work. I confess that I have done a few times recently.

This morning, however, I got myself to the sanctuary. There I sat with my cup of fine coffee and my main worship guide The Divine Hours: A Manual for Prayer put together by Phyllis Tickle, and published by Doubleday. It is a modern version of the traditional daily offices, and puts prayers, psalms, readings and refrains all in one book for every day of the year. As I read the Call to Prayer, “Search for the Lord and his strength, continually seek his face,” a leaf gently fell on the book, and serenity returned. The concluding prayer completed the worship, “Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought me in safety to this new day: Preserve me with your mighty power, that I may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all I do direct me to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.”

May you also find sanctuary from the rigors of your work, visit it daily, and find the serenity that prepares you to be the Lord’s instrument.