

## Grace-St. Luke's Episcopal Church

### "GSL Reading Together" Formation Offering

Reflections on Two Books for August: *Wonder* by [R. J. Palacio](#) and *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* by [Dalai Lama XIV](#) and Archbishop [Desmond Tutu](#) with [Douglas Carlton Abrams](#)

*The Book of Joy* reflected on by Anne Ayres

Do we have to wait till this is all over to feel joyful again? Lord, I hope not! That could be a while. Meanwhile life is still happening. So I picked up this book hoping that the Dalai Lama and the Archbishop would have some wisdom to share about how to spark some joy in my life. And I'm grateful I did. Because here's what I got out of it: Joy is an inside job. And it doesn't come about when you go after it. It happens on the side – as a byproduct. You might ask, a byproduct of what? Of some intentional practices. Thankfully, they don't involve meditating for three hours a day, but they do involve becoming conscious of what we are doing with our minds. Here are their eight pillars of joy: **Perspective** – Being mindful that we make choices all the time about how we think about what's going on. **Humility** – Reminding ourselves that our vulnerabilities are essential for us to connect with others. **Humor** – Allowing our wholehearted laughter to warm and soften our hearts. **Acceptance** – Continually reminding ourselves that "all manner of things shall be well." **Forgiveness** – Freeing ourselves from the prison of the past. **Gratitude** – Not ignoring what is negative in life, but choosing to appreciate the positive as well. **Compassion** – "The bigger and warmer our heart, the stronger our sense of aliveness and resilience." **Generosity** – Remembering that we are not alone. We are all interconnected. When you suffer, I suffer. When you flourish, I flourish. Jesus called it, loving your neighbor as you love yourself.

*Wonder* reflected on by The Rev. Ollie V. Rencher

I believe every human being is a wonder because each is created in the image of God (*imago Dei*). This brilliant, engaging and inspiring fiction is a perfect illustration of why I believe what I do about human beings. The school's yearend assembly included the awarding of a medal to honor students who have been notable or exemplary in certain areas throughout the school year. Typically, it was for one's volunteerism or service to the school. In that particular year, more emphasis was given to the nature of one's kindness, power of one's friendship, test of one's character, and strength of one's courage. Before announcing the recipient, the school principal said, "Courage. Kindness. Friendship. Character. These are the qualities that define human beings, and propel us, on occasion, to greatness. And this is what the Henry Ward Beecher medal is about: recognizing greatness. Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right using of strength...He is the greatest whose strength carries the most hearts." August "Auggie" Pullman got the award. Auggie was born with a significant facial distinction requiring multiple surgeries to improve his circumstance, so much that he unable to attend mainstream school until the fifth grade. Despite the terror he felt about going to school at the insistence of his parents, he did it courageously and received unimaginable reward. Later, he thanked his mother for making him go to school. She thanked him for being a gift to them (mother, father, sister, everyone), especially for being himself. Amazed and humbled by his sheer existence, she whispered in his ear, "You really are a wonder, Auggie. You are a wonder." With God as our refuge and strength, may we always pray for courage and trust that Jesus is our companion.