



Wednesday Prayer

4th Sunday after Epiphany – A place of refuge

**In you, O Lord, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me.
Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.
For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.
From my birth I have leaned upon you, my protector since my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.**

Psalm 71:1-6

Just having returned from the ELCA Youth Extravaganza – four days of strong and bold leaders proclaiming Jesus' actions centered on those who were suffering, those who were vulnerable and persecuted, those faith-filled people willing to take risks to follow Jesus – I now read this Psalm within that context. The Extravaganza is an event to energize, equip, and renew ELCA youth leaders from across the country.

Where do our young people find refuge? Sadly, we know it is less in our churches these days and more in online spaces. But this event wasn't focused on how to get kids back to church. I found it more focused on how to engage with young people in the world. And where might that lead? Dr. Kara Powell of Fuller Youth Institute and Tenx10 shared that what this generation needs most is *"Trusted, Jesus-centered adults who accompany them."* That we need to help youth know they have a team of adults with them, that we share our faith through spiritual practices, learning and service together. How might our actions provide some refuge from all the injustices young people are seeing in our world?

Prairie Rose Seminole served as theologian for the event, sharing her spiritual wisdom and experience advocating for the ending of violence against Indigenous communities. *"The way forward is through kinship – we are all related."* And reflecting on Jesus' work, *"Jesus didn't only heal wounds; he also overturned tables in the temple. He showed us that true discipleship means both compassionate action and bold steps towards justice."* If we step into a bold, action-filled faith, might young people see how we are embodying hope? Might they join us...or, invite us to join with them?

God of refuge, thank you for opportunities to learn and to reflect on the ways you provide sanctuary and rest. And then to be called into action for the sake of our neighbors and for the young people yearning for us to accompany them. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.