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January 13, 2024

People of Hope:

I give thanks to God for you—for your financial generosity in 2023, for the ways you give of your time and energy, and most of all, for your presence as part of the Esperanza community!

Now, 2024 awaits with much possibility. I wish to say: 2024 will bring change, but I know that, as humans, we generally don't love change. I wish to celebrate the new ways God will move in this community, but for those who like what God is already doing, that can be sad. Yet it occurs to me that 2023 brought lots of change in the Esperanza community. We did things we hadn't done before: walking in the Kiwanis Easter Parade, participating in the Chamber of Commerce's 4th of July Bicycle Event, putting our Faith in Motion on Sunday mornings, hosting a Hope Talk, tending this property through the ministry of the Green Team, practicing centering prayer prior to the mid-week Lenten services, sending out Lay Communion Ministers to visit our homebound members, and creating and implementing policies that help us be more effective, among others. All of this was change, good change, welcome change. 2024 will bring change too—and I pray the Esperanza community embraces this change with a *spirit of adventure*.

In 2023, we prayed at every Sunday morning worship the Prayer of Discernment. I don't know if this community will continue with this practice throughout 2024, but for right now, here is this year's new Prayer of Discernment:

Spirit of God, **grant us the virtue of elasticity. Make us pliable and playful. Stir our minds with your sacred spoon to awaken the fermentation of ideas. Help us, your church, embrace a spirit of adventure as we move into your future.** Gift us with wide-open hearts and minds, eager to embrace your leading, wherever, however, and whoever that includes. **Amen.**

This community—YOU—give so much. With a *spirit of adventure*, let's see what God plans to give US this year!

With joy and gratitude,

Pastor Sarah



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America