

" I THINK I CAN, I THINK I CAN"

by Nancy Cramer

"The little train tooted as it went round the bend and over the mountain." It was my favorite story as a child, and I knew it so well that when my weary Father tried to skip a few lines, I, a small child, reminded him of his lapse. This refrain has stayed with me all my life. It has dominated my personality, directed my decisions, encouraged me in times of difficulty, and promised me in periods of deepest grief that things will turn out OK. I will survive. I would persevere, despite what befalls me.

As usual, before writing, I looked up the word. "Persevere" can imply harsh and strict conditions. It also means accuracy and restraint in intellectual processes. That by experiencing or going through the severe times that life is presenting us, we will achieve an answer or solution we can live with. With this little story, I am positing the dilemma that lies ahead for the congregation of All Saints Lutheran Church. As time progresses, the Council and Pastor Bill will be describing the processes and demands we are confronted with in working our way to an answer. When we find the answer, we will experience feelings of pride, exhaustion, and most likely, some relief. Our problem, to be specific, is "What will be the future of our church?" There are several possible answers:

- 1) To grow by gaining new members
- 2) To gain new members with young children so we can have a Sunday School
- 3) To join another congregation and declare ASLC to be dissolved or
- 4) To dissolve our church and allow our congregants to choose other churches to attend.

My own personal life, as probably many of yours, contained the usual problems about stretching the pay check until the next one comes. I raised four children, getting them to baseball, flute, piano and football practices. Meals had to be prepared and dishes washed. But when I think back the happenings of my life, there were more serious episodes than these to reflect on. I think of the night my son died in a car accident at age 17. I try to forget the loss, and remember instead that many students have been assisted by the scholarship we set up in his name. Or, I ask, can it be that nearly five decades have passed since my first husband and I parted ways, and two decades since my second husband passed, leaving me the ownership of his fire extinguisher company?

No, it has not been these happenings solely that affected my life. It has also been the opportunities that emerged. Now, I have the time and challenge of writing. Scarcely a day goes by when I do not open my computer, put my fingers on the keyboard, and surprise myself at the results.

In a more impersonal manner, for many of you members of All Saints, you were presented with the same problem we are faced with. You survived the dissolution of your former beloved church, Abiding Savior, and came to All Saints. Others may have similar stories. I hope your years here have created many good memories for you. But we congregants are not alone. To assist us, we have the care and wisdom of Pastor Bill; the leadership of our Council President, Pam Meek, and the other council members; and the many of you who regularly contribute your time and talents in many ways unknown to the rest of us. We are grateful for these known and unknown helpers. I, myself, feel confident that the final decision will be a wise one, and one that all of us can agree is the best for All Saints.

At the young age of four, I knew the story of "The Little Train That Could" well, and decades later it still stays with me. This little red train made it up the big tall mountain, huffing and puffing, discouraged, slowing down, and not sure if it could make it. But the train persevered, and all of us of us together will persevere. We will find that the mountain has been overcome, and the train station is in our sight.