

*Precious Pilgrims,*

F A A# C D E F  
Enlarge the place of your tent

F E D G B C  
Stretch your tent curtains wide,

D E F C  
Do not hold back,

D E F C  
Lengthen your cords,

D E F C  
Strengthen your stakes

F A# A A# C A# C D F F E F  
For you will spread out to the right and to the left.

F F A# C D C A# A G F  
Your descendants will dispossess nations,

F A# C D C A# A# A# G F  
And settle in their desolate cities.

F F A# A A# C A# C D  
All your sons will be taught by the Lord,

F D C D F F E F  
And great will be your children's peace.

*That's Isaiah 54:2, 3 and 13. This tune which I wrote has been playing in my brain most of the year for this scripture has been Episcopal Church Women's theme not only here in the dioceses, but also nationally. Each time the state board has met, we've taken this precious gem of a scripture out and looked at another one of its facets. And as so often is the case with scripture, we have only just begun to scratch the surface. Its little glimmers of light keep shooting forth with new meaning and new insights. I've grown very*

*fond of this little scripture and I thank the dear Lord for its gleaned shinings thus far.*

*Today, as I write to you, Pilgrim, I'm afraid you'll be getting a different perspective all together. I'm afraid it's going to be one that's a little darker, heavier, broken, for that's my state of mind and body right now. Reason being is that it's 5 A.M. in jolly old England in October and that means it's dark and if you're staying in an Anglican Poor Clares Convent Guest House -- that also means it's cold. I've got on flannel pj's, socks and two sweaters. For me, it's hard to be positive in such circumstances and I'd love to go jump back in bed and pull the covers up and try starting this day over in a couple of hours -- but no. I must write. I must write to you, Pilgrim, under these circumstances, for they seem more appropriate. I've even got a candle burning and that also seems quite fitting.*

*For you see, for the last ten days I've been on a bus tour of Northern England and Scotland led by the Episcopal Bishop of Pittsburg. It was a whirlwind of a tour, as most are, and my mind became quickly saturated. I need some more mega-bites! Help! One day seeped into the next. One city became confused with another. "Have I been there? Are we going there or am I already here? Help!" Names like Cuthbert and Aidan and John of Beverley and the Venerable Bede rang out as we traced these early English Christian saints' amazing footsteps.*

*The image which lingers and jams my circuits and causes me to write is one of brokenness. Everywhere we looked on this trip, over hill and dale, in towns and cities, connected to the castles and*

*stuck out on islands, there was the inevitable ruins of an abbey. Henry VIII's name was usually given as the culprit. I'd previously read of the rampant ruin and rubble, but goodness gracious, when you actually see, experience, touch those remains it was a bit daunting. It was like touching the skeleton of an old dinosaur. You had to pause and to think and to pray and to try and envision what this past world was like. That's why the lit candle. Can you imagine writing with only this means of exterior illumination as so many of these early saints did? Thank the dear Lord for His interior illumination.*

*I couldn't help but be reminded of what the Lord commanded St. Francis to do. "Re-build my church." And that's what that saint tried to do, first literally with bricks and mortar and then by example and prayer as so many saints do. And then as we were riding along on the bus, I heard of the more recent rubble and ruin -- this time not caused by Henry VIII, but rather an earthquake. The Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi was hit and two brothers were killed. Damage was extensive. Yesterday, St. Francis' Feast Day, I heard the celebration at Assisi was held as usual, but this time outside, for the walls of the buildings are not secure and more might fall. That service reminded me of one that we held at my church on the day of its fire in early 1980's. And likewise, the interior was in ruins and unsafe so we gathered and praised and prayed on the side lawn. "Rebuild my church" are the words that seem to be heard as the church bells are peeling the time right now. Those words seem to fit quite well with our "Enlarge the tent" theme.*

*Sometimes I guess to enlarge you have to pull down and that can be a scary place. I repeat, sometimes, I guess, to enlarge you have to pull down and that can be a scary place, Pilgrim. I know that for a fact, up close and personally, for this year has been one of the rebuilding of our home after our fire. "Lucy, you're holding on a little too tightly, dearie. Let's pull it down and rebuild and this time, let's hold on a little more lightly" has been my interior talk and has been my experience. Have you also had some "pulling down -- building back up" life experiences, Pilgrim? I bet you have. We all have, sooner or later, and they can be some of life's greatest stretches and growth opportunities.*

*So where do we go from here? It's 6:30 a.m. and still dark in merry ole England, but the good news is that the candle is still burning just as the light of the Holy Spirit continued and continues His blazing fire. For me, I've found while in the "pulling down" stage and even into the "building up" one, what's needed is trust -- trust -- childlike trust -- in our Lord God and His providence. All is well and all is well, Pilgrim. Our Lord died and rose and all is well.*

*With love in Christ*

*I am your sister,*

*Lucy*

*P.S. The day's light is coming forth. Yea! The birds have begun their songs. I remember our tour guide Harriet's exclamation as we rounded a curve. She said, "Can you see where the light is shining on the horizon? That is Lindesfarn, the Holy Island."*

*My precious Pilgrim, it is my prayer that each one of us individually becomes a Lindesfarn, a Holy Island, where the Son -- S-O-N, our Lord Jesus Christ shines brightly. Oh, and then He can use us as the "tent stretchers," "the re-builders," and it seems to all be based on love, His love. And may all be to His glory. Peace.*

*Now, let's sing that song again.*

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Lengthen your cords,

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For you will spread out to the right and to the left.

F F A# C D C A# A G F  
Your descendants will dispossess nations,

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And settle in their desolate cities.

F F A# A A# C A# C D  
All your sons will be taught by the Lord,

F D C D F F E F  
And great will be your children's peace.

*Peace, Pilgrim. God bless.*