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**Refuge**

My mother used to invite everyone into the house;

“Strays,” my Dad called them:

People stuck on the road out front;

Exchange students with nowhere to go for the holidays;

Friends of friends of friends, who shared our address;

And old, lonely people who just needed a break from the retirement home.

We learned about the world that way.

We learned to share:

That we could always squeeze in one more chair at the table,

And pour one more bowl of soup.

The failure of fear

is that rules and walls intended to keep others out

end up preventing us from welcoming

all that we might become.

Without refuge,

there is no healing, no growth,

and love becomes limited and legalistic.

Without a welcoming table,

there is no grace.

Our parents would be shocked

to see we’ve forgotten our table manners.

***Rev. Jack Amick, April 21, 2021***