

## **Bishop's Cross Nomination – Fall 2018**

*Awarded October 23, 2020*

Dr. Theresa H. Elofson is one of the most unassuming powerhouses of a person one can ever met. Always energetic, ready to teach and learn, the woman whom we simply know as Terry has served our country and the world as an educator and expert in the field of Early Childhood Education and Child Development for over fifty years. Whether in her numerous roles as an educator, administrator, or consultant in the public and private sectors, including private and public schools and universities, NGO's, city, state, and federal governments, and faith-based agencies, Terry's life has been the definition of service organizing people for good from Laos to the White House.

And yet, though her CV as a Ph.D. chronicles a rich career, Terry has been the glue of faith at St. Matthew for over 34 years ushering the parish through three major transition periods. Seventeen years ago, amidst chaos in the parish with the unplanned retirement of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Rector due to health issues and mounting financial pressure from an enormous mortgage, Terry as a Vestry person and later Senior Warden, provided solid leadership despite desperate attitudes and chauvinistic behavior. Some of these behaviors eventually conspired to cut short her tenure as Senior Warden, but not before she provided some of the essential groundwork that eventually led to the parish calling its first woman as Rector.

Eight years later, following the unhappy departure of the 4<sup>th</sup> Rector, Terry was once again called to the Vestry, this time as Junior Warden. During this period she provided much of the background healing and guidance that allowed the parish to weather great losses in membership, financial resources, and hope. Terry's unrelenting work ethic and positivity ensured that the parish would survive and eventually laid the path toward calling the current Rector. Since reclaiming her role as Senior Warden in 2015, Terry has overseen and personally willed by God's Grace the rebirth of St. Matthew with the growth of families and programs, the establishment of a successful capital campaign, which has since paid for a new roof and has nearly eliminated the strangling mortgage [*eliminated All Saints' Day, 2018*], and reclaimed hope for the parish and neighborhood alike. Additionally, St. Matthew is more diverse, much younger, less patriarchal, and more joyful than ever. In the summarizing words of one of our Vestry members: "Terry embodies what is means to be a servant of Jesus Christ." We couldn't agree more.