

Golden Retriever Comforts the Congregation

Erika, the Golden Retriever expresses "a compassion that many people do not offer each other."

Pat E. Middleton

At the end of services this holiday season, Erika will enter St. Ignatius of Antioch Episcopal Church with Eckholm and approach the altar. She'll sit as he kneels and prays and, as she always does, stare at the crucifix as the acolytes attend to the candles. She'll exit with the procession and greet departing congregants by offering her paw. The children will hug her and whisper in her ear. Parishioners sometimes ask if one can pray to a dog, and Eckholm will answer, "Not really, but I do know this: God promised me that when we go to heaven, we'll be perfectly happy there. If you need your dog in order to be perfectly happy, then I know without a doubt your dog will be waiting there for you."