



*Posted on January 22, 2022*

*Kathy, Region 9 member*

In November, I noticed a squirrel in our yard, attempting to build a nest in our catalpa tree. It seemed a little late; from what I had read, their nests should have been finished weeks earlier. The project wasn't going too well. The squirrel placed sticks on the branch, only to have them slide off. Whatever it carried up and tried to use ended up on the ground. The plucky little squirrel tried over and over again, but to no avail. The next time I looked out, the squirrel was just lying on the tree branch, and had seemingly given up. Was this squirrel young, inexperienced, or just lacking in skills? No way to know, but I felt sorry for it, and hoped it had another place to shelter in the coming winter. (And I said "little," but every squirrel we have seen lately has been incredibly fat, as if they have been bulking up for a really hard winter.)

A week or two later, we noticed a squirrel scrambling up the trunk of our blue spruce tree with a mouthful of sticks and leaves. Not knowing if this was the same one who had tried before, we watched with interest. Surprisingly, it was joined by another squirrel with a mouthful of leaves. Maybe they were preparing to start a family; I had read that they often bear their young in mid-winter.

But then, a third squirrel joined in the building activity, so obviously this was not going to be the newlywed suite. For weeks, we watched these determined little critters gathering sticks and leaves from around the yard – and none of it ended up on the ground. From Thanksgiving until way past Christmas, they worked together to build a sturdy nest that was high up in the branches, and not visible from the ground. When we had 60 mph winds, snow, and sleet, the nest sheltered them and helped them survive. Even now, they often carry up materials to reinforce their nest.

I truly began to understand more of what it means to be a CORAC squirrel. I like to think that one of those three is the one who didn't know how to build a nest alone and prepare for the challenges of the coming winter, and the others stepped up and shared their knowledge and skills, so they would be able to survive together. The squirrels in our yard may have been acting on instinct, but the CORAC "squirrels" have something deeper than instinct. We are created with hearts that are meant to love and serve God by loving and serving one another. God bestows on each of us unique gifts that are meant to be shared in order to strengthen our faith and encourage one another, and the ability to acquire skills that we may use to serve and help each other.

Like the squirrels in our yard, we, too, are preparing for a hard season. We are much more likely to survive if we work together and share our gifts and skills. Whatever the future holds, if God finds us caring for each other and helping each other to survive the challenges of this temporary home, we will arrive together in joy at the permanent one!