



ST. ANNE'S EYE

Proclaiming the Stories of God's Love

at St. Anne's Episcopal Church,
Trexlerstown, Pennsylvania

INFORM INVOLVE INSPIRE

February 2018

When church doesn't end at 11:30

By Stacy Answini

Three and a half years ago, I was patting myself on the back for successfully integrating Sunday morning worship into our family routine, with the kids in Sunday School and me at the 10:30 service weekly. The kids rarely complained about having to get dressed and leave their lazy morning activities, and I felt good about my weekly reminder to be a better person, reconnecting with God after the stress of another week. The services ended, I made polite conversation with one or two people, and left to restart the chaos of life as a working wife and mother of two.

Flash forward to a year ago when I was asked to consider becoming a member of the vestry. I was not raised Episcopal,



did not know or understand all of the church history or customs, hardly knew any of the parishioners by name... and oh yeah, full time working mother, wife, daughter, dog and home owner! When would I have time? I prayed and started paying closer attention to those around me who were already more actively involved in the church. I am the kind of person who takes responsibility very seriously, so if I volunteered myself, I was truly devoting my brain, time, and any talents I could muster up toward fulfilling the commitment to the best of my abilities. In the end I chose to believe that maybe this was God calling me, challenging me, to be more.

As a member of the vestry I was assigned a parish team for which to be a liaison, and consequently joined the Outreach Team. While I was a faithful Sunday worshiper, I had absolutely no idea of all the wonderful things going on in the church behind the scenes. The past year has provided me with a completely new understanding of our community on many levels, from financial responsibilities and the managing of the concrete church property, to the time and research that goes into choosing music ministry, to the talents that so many members have in their spiritual (and literal) tool belts, just waiting to

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Staying grounded in God's love

The sixth chapter of John's Gospel is familiar to us all. It is the Bread of Life discourse. It is the basis for our belief in the Presence of Jesus in Holy Communion. It is very endearing and comforting to hear how Jesus chooses to remain close to us. He continues to feed and nourish us and our community. Furthermore, when we celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday, it is the time for the Family of God to gather as one and share this great gift.

However, if you read the rest of the chapter, after Jesus' instruction on the Eucharist, he loses many of his followers. They say that Jesus' teaching is "too hard." Were they confused at Jesus' new teaching or were they scared of the closeness the teaching embodied? Were they afraid of the invitation to a closer relationship with God and each other?

Their problem was not a lack of intelligence but a lack of faith and patience. Had they stayed, they would have had many questions answered and would come to know the intimacy and love that God desires in his family. They lost out!

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ST. ANNE'S CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

- 13th – Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
- 14th – Ash Wednesday
- 18th – First Sunday of Lent
Family Service
- 19th – Vestry Meeting
- 24th – Blood Drive
- 25th – Second Sunday of Lent
Lenten Adult Forum

MARCH

- 4th – Third Sunday of Lent
Lenten Adult Forum
Fellowship Team Meeting
- 11th – Fourth Sunday of Lent
Outreach Team Meeting
- 18th – Fifth Sunday of Lent
Family Service
- 19th – Vestry Meeting
- 25th – Palm Sunday
- 29th – Maundy Thursday
- 30th – Good Friday
- 31st – Great Easter Vigil

APRIL

- 1st – Easter Sunday
Children's Egg Hunt



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Just before Jesus gave the Bread of Life discourse, he fed the 5,000 and walked on water. These acts of power set the stage and foundation for the people to understand the significance of the teaching on the Eucharist. The power of God is focused on keeping the bonds of love between all of us strong. The core of faith is love and unity. Those who left for lack of faith were focused on other concerns, not what God was showing them. Otherwise, they would have stayed. Instead, they had a meal and a show. When things got challenging, they left.

This is exactly the place we find ourselves now. Many Christians were raised to expect a meal and a show. Fine surroundings, fine music, good feelings, and off we go. What do we expect from our church and our sisters and brothers? Good feelings? Stirring rhetoric? Affirmation? Yes!

These are good and valid expectations, as long as they are rooted in the reality that they are not what is at the core of what it means to live as a family of God. Some times we gather in less than perfect conditions. Sometimes the sermon does not inspire. The music does not soothe our hearts. Sometimes the person next to us is not chipper. Sometimes neither are we. What is important is that God is there and so is the rest of the family – our sisters and brothers.

The reason we gather is to celebrate the love of God and the love we have for each other. That intention and attitude, and that alone, will make our worship experience fulfilling. All other things just enhance this reality.

The disciples who remained realized this fact. When Jesus asked them if they were going to leave too, they responded: "Where else would we go, you have the words of everlasting life."

If we seek to live as Christians and find fulfillment, we need to be committed to our family. We gather together as one family with God in and among us, binding us together in love.

That means at all times and in all conditions. The disciples learned this lesson and sought to pass it along to all of the fledgling Christian communities. This was the fertile seedbed and was the foundation of the growth of Christianity.

Today, our challenge is to recommit ourselves to the fundamental principle that we gather, are nourished, and find fulfillment in living as an imperfect gathering; called to love and support each other with no exceptions. Otherwise, even the best sermons, angelic music, and exquisite surrounds will fail to satisfy our needs and longings. This is the meaning and nature of our eucharistic gatherings each Sunday. And it is only to just such celebrations that others will be attracted and wish to stay.

From the St. Anne's nurses: About High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is a common and dangerous condition. Having high blood pressure means the pressure of the blood in your blood vessels is higher than it should be. About 1 of 3 U.S. adults—or about 75 million people—have high blood pressure. Only about half (54%) of these people have their high blood pressure under control.

High blood pressure is called the “silent killer” because it often has no warning signs or symptoms, and many people do not know they have it. That’s why it is important to check your blood pressure regularly.

Women are about as likely as men to develop high blood pressure during their lifetimes. However, for people younger than 45 years old, the condition affects more men than women. For people 65 years old or older, high blood pressure affects more women than men.²

Blacks develop high blood pressure more often, and at an earlier age, than whites and Hispanics do. More black women than men have high blood pressure. More than 360,000



American deaths in 2013 included high blood pressure as a primary or contributing cause. That is almost 1,000 deaths each day.

High blood pressure increases your risk for dangerous health conditions:

- First heart attack: About 7 of every 10 people having their first heart attack have high blood pressure.²

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jump in to support the whole of our church family. The amount of people it takes to run a smooth Sunday is astounding and humbling. I can never again sit in the pews without considering: who opened all the doors this morning and turned on the heat in preparation for everyone else to arrive? Who grew the beautiful flowers on the alter and arranged them just right during the week for us to enjoy on Sunday? Who came early to brew the coffee that warms me and gives me something to do with my hands when feeling awkward during conversation after the service? Who has to stay and count the offering afterward and knows where to deposit the money? Who is staying until everyone else has left to make sure that the building is safe and secure, to again welcome us together next week? And most importantly, I wonder if I can be of help in some way today?

My involvement in the Outreach Team began as part of vestry, but has grown into a wonderful new avenue

in my life. Changing the bulletin board periodically gives me a chance to be creative and artistic, which I had given up making time for in my home life as the kids grew and needed more of my attention. Day break meals allow me feel God’s love for an entire weekend! On Saturday I pick up a box cake or break off cookies to bake with my daughter, an easy way to spend quality time together while simultaneously encouraging her to consider the world outside of herself. Then on Sunday we bring the goodies into church and feel a part of the group devoted to this cause, discussing all the treats and plans for the meal the next day. Finally, on Monday, although work keeps me from hands-on involvement, I try to take a moment in the morning to think of the lovely individuals who are enjoying the meal and sweets. I pray they feel all of the love and warmth that comes along with the nourishment, and that I am able to remember just how blessed I truly am in the midst of another stressful day.

The list of how my life has been touched for the better just flows on from there. Blood drives where I have met wonderful volunteers separate from our church; listening to the other Outreach Team members speak passionately about new or treasured opportunities to touch the lives of people in our neighborhood and across the world, inspiring me to be more aware of the plights of those outside my little bubble of daily life; getting to know the generosity of our congregation first hand as we collect everything from garbage bags full of bottle caps or coats, to Christmas cards for people we have never met, to hundreds of dollars in hurricane relief funds. I have trouble putting the expansion of my heart into words when considering the compassion shown by our congregation.

I sincerely wish to encourage other Sunday morning pew sitters, comfortable watching from the sidelines like I was, to reflect on what God may be challenging them to do, to be

more. I was scared that I was too busy, too ignorant, too lacking, to be the one needed by my spiritual family. Well, a year later, I can confidently say that I was wrong. I found the time somehow, learned immensely, and came up with several ways to be a valued part of the whole just by being me. Everyone has enveloped me in warmth and support, accepting my limitations when they arose. You do not have to commit to every team, or every week to find your ‘more’. God loves us as we are, but he also gets to see just how strong, talented, and giving we truly are when doubts and reservations are stripped away. Wouldn’t it be awesome if we could see ourselves in the same light? Church no longer ends at 11:30 for me when the service concludes, but expands into quality time with my family, volunteering time and energy to share God’s love with others, providing better perspective on my life and guiding my decisions in faith. I am so thankful for my St. Anne’s family, and for the chance to be a better version of me. Thank you all.

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- **First stroke: About 8 of every 10 people having their first stroke have high blood pressure.**
- **Chronic (long lasting) heart failure: About 7 of every 10 people with chronic heart failure have high blood pressure.**
- **Kidney disease is also a major risk factor for high blood pressure.**
- **A blood pressure less than 120/80 mmHg is normal. A blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or more is too high. People with levels from 120/80 mmHg to 139/89 mmHg have a condition called prehypertension, which means they are at high risk for high blood pressure.**

Controlling High Blood Pressure

Keeping your blood pressure levels in a healthy range usually involves taking medications, reducing sodium in the diet, getting daily physical activity, and quitting smoking. (Information from : www.cdc.gov)

- **Talk to your Health Care Provider and become educated on your blood pressure, and how to keep your blood pressure within normal limits.**
- **We hope to see you all at the next Blood Pressure Sunday this spring.**

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SERVICES

Sundays: 8 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. The Holy Eucharist and
Sermon
10 a.m. Church School
September – May