

**St. Anne's Episcopal Church
Trexlerstown, Pennsylvania
1966-2011**

**From Grange Hall to Growth Mode
An Informal, Anecdotal History**

**by
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and the
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2011 Update**

The Story of St. Anne's From Grange Hall to Growth Mode 1966-2011

Introduction

How does a handful of dedicated Episcopalians, meeting in a Grange Hall, become a thriving congregation of more than 500 souls in 45 years? The Rev. Kilmer Sites, a member of St. Anne's during his retirement years in the 1990's and 2000's summarized his views of successful church growth. Kilmer, who was Rector of an Episcopal church in Vestal, New York for thirty years, served as a catalyst for building up that congregation from a handful to several hundred communicants. He attributes the success of that church to capable, dedicated, and energetic clergy and laity working together to build the congregation, the construction of an IBM plant not far from the church, and God's divine providence. Much the same can be said about the dramatic growth of St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Trexlertown. Good, dedicated clergy and lay people working together, the planting of Air Products and other industries as well as the construction of shopping malls and residential developments in the Trexlertown area, and, most importantly, God's grace have played their parts in stimulating the dynamic growth of St. Anne's during its first four-and-a-half decades.

In the Beginning (1966-1967)

St. Anne's began with a prayer. On Christmas Day in 1944, Jim Bausman, a young man serving in the United States Navy during World War II, was stationed on a cargo ship sailing up the Scheldt River in The Netherlands when the ship was strafed by a German plane and then torpedoed by a German, two-man midget submarine. In the dangerous, confused aftermath of these attacks, Jim prayed to God and, among other things, promised that if he survived and the opportunity arose, he would work to found a Christian church in thanksgiving for God's blessings on him.

Jim survived. And when he returned home from the Service in 1946, he was confirmed in The Episcopal Church of the Mediator in Allentown where he remained active from the late 1940's through the mid 1960's. In 1965, Jim and his family moved to Ancient Oaks, an area west of Allentown in which The Rt. Rev. Frederick Warnecke, then Bishop of Bethlehem, foresaw growth and development and wanted to plant a new Episcopal church. Early in 1966, Bishop Warnecke asked several Episcopal families who lived in the Trexlertown area, including the Bausmans, to consider forming a new mission. Jim, remembering his wartime prayer and promise made more than twenty years earlier, got in touch with the Trexlertown Grange, which

agreed to allow a small group of Episcopalians to use their Grange Hall on Sunday mornings for services. He checked out the facility, found it adequate, and with diocesan help, made arrangements to hold regular Sunday services there.

An organizational meeting was convened on September 19, 1966, and the first service was held in the Grange Hall on September 25, 1966, led by The Very Rev. John Watters, Dean of Leonard Hall in Bethlehem and Secretary of the Diocese. Bishop Warnecke named the new mission St. Anne's. During the next seven months, Dean Watters, a capable, caring, kindly, and frugal pastor, provided good clerical leadership to the tiny, struggling congregation. Most parishioners were people who had been members of The Church of the Mediator; however, other members of The Mediator who lived in the Trexlertown area were reluctant to join St. Anne's, largely because it didn't have a building of its own.

The Grange Hall became a bustling center of activity every Sunday morning during these formative years of St. Anne's. All members of the Mission recognized at first hand that the word, "participation," applied to them. The altar was moved on wheels to the center of the Hall by members of the congregation who acted as "honorary sextons" every Sunday. The "sextons" also brought out folding chairs, prayer books, hymnals, and kneeling pads which had been sewn and assembled by the Waldo Reeder family. Deborah Schlauch was the congregation's faithful pianist. Pat Bausman made the first altar hangings and served as a one-woman Altar Guild. Like many small missions, St. Anne's used beautiful second-hand brass altar fixtures which were polished brightly and much cherished.

Bob and Joan Fry were cradle Episcopalians who moved from Bucks County to Orefield in 1966. After doing some church shopping, they joined The Church of the Mediator. However, after they moved closer to Trexlertown, The Rev. David Birney, Rector at Mediator, suggested that they try attending St. Anne's to see how they liked it. The Frys attended the Easter Service at St. Anne's in 1967 and subsequently became very active members. Bob was ordained a Deacon and served at St. Anne's for twenty years; Joan became especially active in the Altar Guild. Their move from the large, historic Trinity Church Oxford Episcopal Church, north of Philadelphia, to the newly formed St. Anne's meeting in the Trexlertown Grange Hall, serving 15-30 communicants, was a dramatic leap of faith which may have caused Bob's Anglican ancestors to turn over in their English graves, but the Frys managed the change well and stayed.

St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Trexlertown was now planted and ready to grow and go. However, the next several years proved challenging.

The Pioneer Years (1967-1973)

From 1967 to the mid 1970's, St. Anne's was served for relatively brief periods of time by three clergymen: The Rev. Vernon "Tip" Searfoss, The Rev. David Thomas, and The Rev. Richard Cohoon.

On June 1, 1967, The Rev. Vernon "Tip" Searfoss was installed as St. Anne's first Vicar and worked diligently for the next two years to build up the congregation. He followed a high church liturgical tradition, replete with the smell of incense, and, impressively, conducted services and delivered his sermons from memory. The Diocese, using money from its Congregational Development Fund, bought a vicarage in Ancient Oaks for St. Anne's, which included an office from which Vernon made his missionary calls. Vernon taught the congregation much about the history and tradition of the Episcopal Church, including the symbolic meaning of priestly robes and church altar hangings. When he left on March 1, 1969 to accept a call from the The Church of the Good Shepherd in Scranton, St. Anne's had gradually grown to about 35 members.

The Rev. David Thomas was called to be St. Anne's second Vicar and began his ministry on September 1, 1969. Jim Bausman describes David as having his own unique and sincere style. On Good Friday he led the congregation through the byways of Ancient Oaks as the group portrayed the Stations of the Cross. However, David's unique style did not appeal to some of St. Anne's members, and the congregation declined in size and spirit. Partly because of David's inexperience, partly because the Episcopal Church was starting to experiment with Prayer Book revision and dissatisfied parishioners could attend nearby St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Whitehall and be assured that they would be using services from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, the congregation dwindled in number to the point where only 15-20 people attended St. Anne's on a typical Sunday. It was a frustrating, disheartening time for the handful of parishioners that stayed at St. Anne's.

On September 15, 1971, David Thomas left, and after a four-month interim, The Rev. Richard Cohoon was installed as St. Anne's third Vicar beginning, auspiciously, on January 1, 1972. Dick worked hard to build up the congregation and was a competent, even-tempered minister and an excellent preacher. Parishioners at St. Anne's liked him. He organized and guided many study groups which met in various homes, and he gave the congregation a clear, balanced view of the many changes that were occurring in the Episcopal Church at the time. After a long search, he introduced Family, a parish religious education program published by Paulist Press, as the Sunday School curriculum guide. It was well-received and easy to administer.

Families Come and Stay

Under Father Cohoon's competent leadership, St. Anne's started to renew itself. A number of new people came to St. Anne's and joined the church, and some of the established members increased their involvement.

Katherine Anderson, a superb cook, hosted many vestry meetings, always starting with a delicious meal which she prepared. Bob Fry and others on vestries during this period remember these meals fondly. Joan Fry, trained in Altar Guild practice by Diana Cohoon, Dick's wife, wryly remembers being startled by real church mice occasionally getting into the altar linens stored in an old bureau in the Grange Hall where she and other Altar Guild members, in the late 1960's and early 1970's, set up and dismantled the altar every Sunday. Bob and Connie Archer, who started at The Mediator and were drawn to the child friendly atmosphere at St. Anne's and by Dick Cohoon's appealing ministry, donated a cross to St. Anne's with a little mouse carved into it, memorializing the Altar Guild's adventures in the Grange Hall. Forrest and Jean Blakesley, Rod and Joan McCormick, and Elfie and George Maniatty and their children also became active members of St. Anne's during the early 1970's. Everyone belonged, and all felt themselves to be an integral part of the parish family. Most of the active people at St. Anne's renewed themselves spiritually through the Cursillo movement, an effective program of religious renewal for practicing Christians, thus strengthening and deepening the Christ centered character of life at St. Anne's.

St. Anne's grew slowly in numbers and spirit in the early 1970's. Energetic, talented, committed people, future leaders of the congregation, had joined the church, but there were still not many members. St. Anne's was still, clearly, a small, family-sized parish of about 30 individuals and families with attendance at Sunday services about 40—its growth deterred, primarily, by not having a building of its own.

In 1973, Jim Stevens, a realtor in the Trexlertown area, told Dick Cohoon about a well-situated, six-and-a-half acre lot of commercial real estate owned by a financially successful scrap dealer in Trexlertown who had recently died. His widow, Mabel Adams, was willing to sell the property to St. Anne's at a reasonable price. Dick tried to see Mabel, did not find her at home, went back, this time found her at home, and talked with her. He secured an option to buy the land and with money from the Diocesan Congregational Development Fund, negotiated the purchase of the property. It seemed to be God's will that St. Anne's be replanted where it now stands.

In 1974, St. Anne's became part of a cluster of three churches, forming The Associated Parishes of Allentown, the other two churches being The Church of the Mediator and St. Elizabeth's, both in Allentown. Heading the clergy team that ministered to the three churches was The Rev. A. Malcolm MacMillan, the hard working, capable Rector at The Mediator, the large church at the center of the cluster. Although Dick Cohoon was Vicar of St. Anne's, he also had responsibilities at The Mediator. Dick was doing an effective job of ministering to the people at St. Anne's but strongly desired to reduce his parochial commitment to half-time so

that he could spend the other half of his time as a pastoral counselor. Since a half-time priest did not fit very well into the structure of The Associated Parishes ministry, Dick performed a generous spirited act: he agreed to leave gracefully. To underline that he was not being dismissed or forced out of his position, Dick with Father Mac visited every individual and family in the congregation to explain what was happening and to assure them that he was leaving because he felt called to another type of ministry. A new chapter in the history of St. Anne's was about to begin.

The Associated Parishes of Allentown and St. Anne's Move to Independence (1974-1980)

In 1973, The Rev. A. Malcolm MacMillan had been Rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Sharon, Pennsylvania for 18 years. St. John's was a parish of 2,000 members located near Erie, Pennsylvania. Father Mac had been a successful rector and, at age 50, expected to stay at St. John's for the remainder of his ministry, even though he thought it might be best for both St. John's and him if he moved on to a new position.

In 1974, the idea of setting up cluster parishes was popular and an idea to which The Rt. Rev. Lloyd E. Gressle, then Bishop of Bethlehem, and The Rev. Charles Wilson, Bishop Gressle's Diocesan Planning Officer, subscribed. They believed that people worked most effectively in teams and that the best style of church leadership was one of democratic shared leadership between clergy and laity. Charles Wilson convinced Bishop Gressle that a cooperative cluster relationship between St. Anne's, St. Elizabeth's, a small church in South Allentown that had been founded in the early 20th century but had not grown, and The Church of the Mediator, a stable parish of about 800 communicants, might work beneficially for all three parishes. When Father Mac was asked to apply for the leadership position in this cluster ministry, he did so, was called, and leaped at the opportunity to take on this new challenge.

Then in 1975, St. Anne's and The Associated Parishes experienced a stroke of good fortune. Dick Cohoon was in the process of moving into full-time pastoral counseling. St. Anne's, with diocesan funds, had purchased land and was hoping to build a church. The Associated Parishes cluster was searching for a priest who had a strong background in Christian Education and who was experienced with a church building program. The Rev. Ronald C. Molrine, a good friend of Father Mac's in the Diocese of Erie with excellent credentials and considerable experience in Christian Education, had just finished presiding over the building of a substantial church complex in suburban Erie and was interested in making a move. Ron asked to be considered for the position, seemed ideally suited for it, and, in due time, was called to serve on the staff of The Associated Parishes as the Priest in Charge of Christian Education at all three parishes with special responsibilities for church building at St. Anne's.

For about four years, the team ministry worked well, but as St. Anne's started to grow significantly, Ron's workload at St. Anne's increased significantly. The congregations at St. Anne's and St. Elizabeth's wanted their own priests. With three separate congregations functioning almost independently, it became apparent that the three parishes should go their own ways. Sadly and somewhat reluctantly, Father Mac agreed that The Associated Parishes should be disbanded peacefully, which was done in 1980. Father Mac retained a deep fondness for St. Anne's, a church that The Mediator had been instrumental in founding and that he, Charles Wilson, The Associated Parishes, the people at St. Anne's, and Ron Molrine, with God's grace, helped to transform into a lively, active Episcopal church.

St. Anne's Adolescent Growth Spurt (1975-1980)

The Rev. Ronald C. Molrine served at St. Anne's faithfully and effectively for 21 years, from 1975-1996, and was a catalyst for its transformation from a small mission church of about 40 people to a substantial, thriving, independent parish of about 400 souls. He was officially appointed Vicar of St. Anne's in 1977 and Rector in 1984.

Ron had done a remarkably similar job of church building at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Fairview, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Erie. Under his leadership, from 1964-1975, St. Stephen's had grown from a small mission church of about 65 people to a substantial, thriving, independent parish of about 400 souls. When teased about leaving his position as Rector of a thriving parish in Fairview to accept a call as Associate Rector in Allentown with special responsibilities at St. Anne's, Ron teased back that he was moving from shepherding a congregation that owned five acres of land to leading a congregation that owned six-and-a-half acres, actually a promotion.

And six-and-a-half acres of empty land was about what St. Anne's owned. Since most Episcopal priests at this time preferred a housing allowance, the vicarage in Ancient Oaks had been sold after Dick Cohoon left. Since 1973, a Building Committee had been meeting which, in consultation with the congregation, was trying to decide what kind of structure they wanted for St. Anne's Church. In early deliberations, the Committee leaned towards having a prefabricated church constructed, which seemed financially feasible. But as George Maniatty, Chair of the Building Committee in 1974 recalls, most of the prefabricated buildings looked like Shell service stations. Finally, Hayner-Hoyt, an architectural firm in Syracuse, was recommended. Its architects developed a plan for a building to be constructed on the Trexlertown site that excited the Committee and fit its budget. The plan was approved, and St. Anne's first sanctuary and parish hall were constructed during the Fall of 1976. With much labor, many prayers, and a great deal of financial help from the Diocese and the congregation, the building was completed in January 1977.

The "Laying of the Cornerstone" Service on January 23, 1977 was a dramatic and moving event for all who had been involved with the development of St. Anne's throughout the previous decade. The atmosphere was celebrative. The theme of the Service was, "The dream

has come true. St. Anne's Church, Trexlertown, is a reality. The vision of those who founded St. Anne's Church on September 25, 1966 has come to fruition."

The bricks and mortar of St. Anne's were now in place, but the real building of St. Anne's Church as a lively, active, worshipful Christian community now began. The availability of the building and the increased presence of Ron Molrine were both helpful in stimulating an adolescent growth spurt. Once the sanctuary and parish hall were constructed, Episcopalians who lived nearby but had been attending The Mediator started to attend St. Anne's. When in August 1979 a Christian Education wing was added, providing permanent Sunday School facilities, more families with children started to attend St. Anne's. At the end of 1976, St. Anne's had 129 baptized members on its roll; by the end of 1980, St. Anne's had 234 baptized members on its roll, almost a doubling of its membership in four years. The church building became partly a community center, something Trexlertown did not have at the time, and many non-church groups met at St. Anne's during the week. The establishment of St. Anne's as a community center served St. Anne's well as a low-keyed evangelism tool.

In 1978, Ron Molrine, seeking to expand St. Anne's outreach into the community, was instrumental in starting a nursery school in the new church building, one that continues to serve the community. The need for a well-run, well-staffed nursery school in the Trexlertown area was particularly strong in the late 1970's when the population of young families with pre-school children grew dramatically. Consequently, the school, although not directly affiliated with St. Anne's Church, has served as a community outreach program. Furthermore, while not explicitly religious and Christian, there is a religious and Christian ambiance that informs the school's structure, program, staff, and setting. The school does meet in St. Anne's Episcopal Church. At least one member of St. Anne's serves on the nursery school board. One of the stated purposes of the school, included in its brochure, is to provide all children with experiences that will contribute to their spiritual growth. The children sing grace before meals and at Christmas time read "The Very Special Baby." When Ron Molrine, a very large-sized man, occasionally walked into the nursery school rooms, some children would ask if he was God. (Ron, with characteristic modesty, replied that he was not.) Finally, there was a family from India that enrolled their children in St. Anne's Nursery School, then sent them to St. Anne's summer Vacation Church School. The mother said, "They teach good things here." We agree.

By 1980, St. Anne's was a thriving, growing body of Christians, led by a committed Vicar and a large number of committed laypersons who worked harmoniously with one another. Blessed by God's grace, the congregation had a building of their own and were ready to face their next period of growth and consolidation.

Steady Growth and Consolidation (1981-1996)

The gradual, not always smooth transition of St. Anne's from a family sized mission to a program sized, fully independent parish standing on its own feet, continued during the 1980's. In January 1981, Ron Molrine was installed as full-time Vicar at St. Anne's. At the Diocesan Convention in Wilkes-Barre in 1984, St. Anne's was accepted as a self-supporting parish, and Ron was installed as Rector on December 16, 1984. The parish continued to grow substantially in the 1980's but not as dramatically as it had from 1976-1980. At the end of 1981, 90 families and 272 baptized people were on the roll of St. Anne's; by the end of 1989, the numbers had grown to 116 families and 370 baptized members. Ron tried to keep the feeling alive at St. Anne's that everyone was a member of the church family. However, as the number of parishioners increased to 370, it became increasingly difficult for everyone to continue knowing everyone else, especially with a mobile, transient congregation.

It also became more difficult for Ron to meet the spiritual needs of a parish the size of St. Anne's without some professional help, and help was on the way. The Rev. Robert Fry was ordained Deacon in October 1982 and served St. Anne's faithfully until he retired in 2002.

Bob and Joan Fry and their two children had been active members at St. Anne's, almost from the time the church was founded in 1966. At one point in the late 1970's, when Ron Molrine was working closely with the Associated Parishes of Allentown and had an office in The Church of the Mediator, Bob was walking in the neighborhood, stopped in Ron's office, and offered to do more work for St. Anne's. Ron sensed Bob's call to the ordained ministry, a call that Bob had felt when he was younger, and suggested to Bob that he enter a program at Moravian Seminary that led to ordination. Bob accepted Ron's suggestion, enrolled in this program, and was ordained a deacon. Bob helped out at St. Anne's services and in pastoral work more and more during his study period and after his ordination as Ron led St. Anne's through its building programs. Shortly after being ordained, Bob served for one year as a regular Supply Minister to St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church in Kutztown, reaching out to it and trying to build up the small, discouraged congregation that was meeting in the basement of St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Kutztown. But for his remaining nineteen years of active ministry, he served St. Anne's devotedly as a nonstipendiary Deacon Assistant.

Bob, a caring, compassionate man, was particularly strong in personal and pastoral ministry. Mary Moore was one of many parishioners who found Bob's visits particularly helpful when in the hospital. Jean Blakesley remembers how caring Bob was as he spent many hours at the bedside of Forrest, her husband, when he was in the hospital and nearing the end of his life on this earth. Lyn Danni remembers Bob's preaching a series of sermons during the Danni family's early days at St. Anne's that really spoke to her and to her husband, Gary. They enjoyed Bob's upbeat personality and especially appreciated his affirming their early efforts at parenting young children. Largely because of Bob's warmth toward the entire Danni family, Lyn became very active at St. Anne's. For many years, Bob was the leading ordained helper at St. Anne's, actively promoting its dynamic growth and development.

Ron Molrine's philosophy as Rector was always to emphasize a shared ministry with parishioners, a philosophy he believed was particularly helpful in developing strong, long range programs. One of the most effective forms of shared ministry, initiated by Jim Harding and others in the early 1990's, was the development of Parish Life Teams that worked with areas of ministry such as Pastoral Care, were connected to the Vestry through liaison representatives, and had input directly to the clergy. This system, modeled on modern business management practices, has served St. Anne's well.

In the early 1990's, St. Anne's surpassed the 400 member mark, thus necessitating an increase in staff and space. On August 1, 1990, Linda Moggio was engaged as Director of Music. In October-December 1993, St. Anne's enlarged its worship space and added an office wing to help deal with growth and provide more flexibility for programming. On September 1, 1995, Linda's role expanded as she was called to become Director of Christian Formation for Children and Youth as well as retaining her position as Director of Music. Under Linda's guidance, a vibrant program for pre-school children (Catechesis of the Good Shepherd), a lively Sunday School program, and an effective youth program (Journey to Adulthood) were developed. The Vacation Church School was oversubscribed. As a result of the development and strengthening of these programs, many new families were attracted to St. Anne's, and children and youth in the congregation were given a firm grounding in Christian faith and practice.

And then, Ron Molrine announced that he was retiring on August 1, 1996. He had served St. Anne's for 21 of its first 30 years and had left a positive, indelible mark on it. He had been a faithful, caring, and effective minister, a decent man, and would be missed. Ron had been key to St. Anne's growth and development. Elfie Maniatty was part of a conversation between Ron and Michael Piovane in 1998, shortly after Michael had accepted the call to serve as St. Anne's next Rector. They were together as co-celebrants at David Lowe's wedding. Michael gratefully and gracefully thanked Ron for having left St. Anne's in such good order. Ron, with tears in his eyes, replied, "I gave it all I could give."

St. Anne's in Transition: The Interim and the Search (1996-1998)

When a priest who has been spiritual and religious leader of a church for 21 years, more than two-thirds of its life, retires, there is a tendency for the congregation to mourn and collapse. The mourning occurred. Almost everyone at St. Anne's was sad to see Ron Molrine leave. But the collapse did not. Thirty years of committed lay leadership played a large role in enabling St. Anne's to function effectively during its two-year search for a new rector, and the leadership of four capable women carried the church successfully through its first significant transitional period. The Rev. Eleanor Hart served as Interim Rector from August 25, 1996 to May 21, 1998. Ruth Davis was Senior Warden during these transition years. Jeanne Wirth, longtime church secretary at St. Anne's, kept the daily business of the church running smoothly. And Susan Jacobsen chaired the Search Committee that was entrusted with the difficult task of first finding and then recommending the calling of a good new rector. These four women

worked congenially and effectively together during a time that was stressful and uncertain for the staff and congregation at St. Anne's.

After Ron Molrine announced his date of retirement, the Vestry began to meet twice a month, once to take care of its regular business and once to discuss how best to deal with the upcoming Interim. After much thought, discussion, and prayer, the Vestry recommended calling a part-time Interim Minister. The Rev. Richard Cluett, Archdeacon in the Diocese of Bethlehem, suggested that the Vestry consider calling a priest from Reading, Pennsylvania—The Rev. Eleanor Hart. Pastor Ellie was interviewed, felt right, and was called to serve as Interim Rector at St. Anne's in August 1996. She accepted the call and served faithfully and with distinction in this position for almost the next two years. She worked with the congregation compassionately, trying to be sensitive to and meet, as best she could, their spiritual and religious needs. She kept people abreast of the search and, as part of her readying the congregation for its new, permanent religious leader, reminded them regularly that the new priest would be different from Ron Molrine. She made some changes in the liturgy that sharpened its focus and strengthened its impact, allowed grieving for Ron Molrine's departure, but encouraged the congregation to move on with its life and ministry.

The congregation held together well, the finances remained sound, and, by the grace of God, the average attendance at services stayed about even. Ellie Hart labored to care for the spiritual needs of St. Anne's while Ruth Davis labored at supervising the management of St. Anne's during its search for a new rector.

Ruth Davis had always been active in the life of St. Anne's as a regular communicant, but she distinguished herself notably as a church leader during the interim between the retirement of Ron Molrine and the calling of Michael Piovane. Ruth had served on the Vestry for a three-year term in the 1970's and again for another three-year term in the late 1980's. However, from the middle of 1994 to the end of 1999, Ruth served on the Vestry not only as a member but as Senior Warden. When Ron Molrine appointed her Senior Warden in January 1996, he told her that he planned to retire at the end of that summer. And although Ruth knew that the period following Ron's retirement would be a stressful time for the Vestry and the congregation, she accepted the appointment.

Once Ron announced officially that he would be retiring, Ruth met frequently with Rick Cluett to prepare for the interim. Ruth felt that she was on a particularly difficult journey with no clear road map to guide her and no experience in facing most of the challenges. But with the help of many people in the congregation and a supportive Vestry, she helped lead the congregation successfully through a difficult period in its history.

Throughout the long, sometimes messy search, Jeanne Wirth, St. Anne's longtime secretary, took charge of the day to day operation of St. Anne's. Jeanne was one of those rare people who, early in life, made an intentional choice to be a church secretary. She worked as a church secretary for St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church in Scranton, Pennsylvania shortly after graduating from high school. Ron Molrine hired her as church secretary at St. Anne's in 1978,

and for more than 25 years, her voice was the one that most people heard first when they called St. Anne's or visited the church during the week. Her welcoming presence and pleasant, upbeat manner helped to calm many frayed nerves during the stressful interim period.

In the Fall of 1996, St. Anne's held a Congregational Retreat at which the membership reviewed, with the help of a diocesan staff member, their history as a congregation, their present status, and their goals for the future. Susan Jacobsen agreed to chair a Search Committee, which started functioning shortly after Christmas 1996. With the help of the Vestry, Sue formed a twelve-person Search Committee that represented a balanced cross section of the congregation and that worked very well together for almost the next two years. During its first year, the Committee, under Sue's able leadership, met, prayed, struggled to discern God's will for St. Anne's, and after thoughtful, prayerful discussion, wrote the parish profile. During the second year, the Committee reviewed the credentials of 33 applicants, selected three finalists, reached a consensus and in 1998 recommended that The Rev. Michael Piovane be called as Rector of St. Anne's. Michael was promptly approved by the Vestry and the Diocese.

A Change of Season and a Leap Into the New Millenium (1998-2011)

On May 22, 1998, The Rev. Michael F. Piovane was installed as Rector of St. Anne's.

Michael's journey to this position had not always been smooth. In 1985, he left the Roman Catholic priesthood after years of service in the Diocese of Allentown and searched for a denomination that had an affinity to Catholicism, was strongly sacramental, grounded in the Scriptures, and dedicated to Christian outreach. He found his new religious home in the Episcopal Church with its Anglican tradition of Thomas Hooker's "Via Media," a tradition that was both Catholic and Reformed. In 1986, he and Rita Valenti were confirmed in the Episcopal Church, joined the Cathedral Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and were joined in marriage by The Rev. Robert Schenkel, Dean of the Cathedral. Bob was exceptionally helpful in assisting both Michael and Rita through an awkward and stressful religious and personal transition.

In 1987-1988, Michael and Rita had a home built in Macungie and once they moved in, started looking for an Episcopal church that was closer to their new home. They visited St. Anne's, liked the friendliness of the congregation, found that Ron Molrine not only welcomed and accepted them but recognized the complexity of their religious transition and, like Bob Schenkel, helped to make it a good transition. Both Rita and Michael became increasingly active in the life of St. Anne's as they came to like the church and the Anglican/Episcopal branch of Christianity more and more. From 1989-1993, Michael studied Episcopal theology, history, tradition, and practice, served as a Supply Minister, did an internship at St. Michael's in Birdsboro, and assisted at the North Parish cluster of churches for a period of time. He found all of these activities good learning experiences and very helpful in his getting to know the

Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem. In 1993, Michael was received as an Episcopal priest, canonically resident in the Diocese of Bethlehem, and from October 1993 to May 1998, he served as a nonstipendiary Assisting Priest at St. Anne's.

Michael's challenge was not how to transform a sick church into a healthy one or how to energize a stagnant congregation but how to make a thriving church with a lively, active congregation into an even stronger, more spiritually vibrant Episcopal Christian community. Michael started with prayer and sought God's guidance. One of his most significant early decisions was to organize an All-Parish Retreat in 1999, trying to make sure that all segments of St. Anne's congregation participated and that articulate youth had opportunities to voice their concerns and present their perspective. The main purpose of this Retreat was to give the congregation an opportunity to review its past, look at its present, and plan for its future. With the blessing of the Holy Spirit, the All-Parish Retreat was a great success and helped to invigorate the early portion of Michael's ministry.

One of the most significant long range goals to emerge from the Retreat was a commitment to intentional renewal and evangelism. Michael and many parishioners prayed for God's grace and guidance in leading St. Anne's to greater growth in spirit and numbers. When envisioning the future of St. Anne's, Michael tried carefully and prayerfully to allow God and the Holy Spirit to take the lead and to follow the Gospel message.

Throughout his ministry at St. Anne's, Michael, in concert with the congregation, has tried to answer the questions of **why** we should grow, **what** is our vision, and **whom** we will serve. St. Anne's developed the mission statement, "Live God's Love, Tell God's Story," and parishioners were encouraged to share the Good News with each other and with the rapidly growing communities around us. Rooting ourselves in being a warm, caring community of faith, we envisioned St. Anne's as a center for nurturing individuals and families and for fostering the spiritual renewal of people living in the area which it served. And as we grew, we expected to continue to attract people who reflected the current demographic profile of our service area. Michael, himself, has participated actively in the evangelism efforts of the church and has been particularly successful at attracting former Roman Catholics, looking for a new church community. Just as Episcopal clergy welcomed Michael through an awkward and stressful religious transition, Michael has done the same with Roman Catholics who have developed connections with St. Anne's and because of his special welcome, have, subsequently, become dedicated members of the congregation.

One particularly strong recommendation made by St. Anne's Guiding Coalition for Size Transition to implement church growth was to hire an assistant priest. This recommendation was implemented in July 2001 when The Rev. Jane Bender accepted a call to be Assistant Rector for Church Growth and Ministry at St. Anne's.

In her ministry at St. Anne's, Jane was involved with worship, pastoral care, hospital visits, crisis counseling, and preparation of adults for marriage and youngsters for Confirmation. However, her most important responsibilities lay in the areas of adult Christian formation,

renewal and evangelism, and church growth. Under her leadership and that of Michael's, average Sunday service attendance at St. Anne's increased noticeably, a steady stream of visitors and new members flowed into the church, and the number of baptized members started to approach 500. In 2005, Jane left St. Anne's and soon afterwards accepted a call to serve as Rector at another church in The Diocese of Bethlehem.

Into the Present (2005-2011)

On October 1, 2005, The Rev. Judith U. Snyder accepted a call to be Priest Associate for Spiritual Formation at St. Anne's.

Judith felt her first nudgings towards ordination in the early 1980's. She had taught in secondary school for a number of years; her daughter was now in school, and her husband had completed his doctorate. She was looking for a new direction and prayed to God for guidance. Judith had been an active lay woman at the Cathedral serving in Christian Education for children and adults. She also served as a lector and chalice bearer and had a strong sense of God's grace flowing through her in these ministries. She found a role model for a woman considering ordination in the person of The Rev. Gwendolyn Jane Romeril. Following three years of discernment, Judith enrolled in religion classes at Moravian Seminary, liked the coursework, and enrolled as a full-time student at General Theological Seminary in New York City, graduating in 1992. She was ordained to the diaconate on March 8, 1992 and then assigned to serve as a Diocesan Intern for two years at St. Anne's.

After she had served in several ministries, Judith was invited in September 2004 to work at St. Anne's one-quarter time, focusing on spiritual growth and renewal. This led to her being called in 2005 to serve as Priest Associate with full responsibility for spearheading programs in Spiritual Formation for children and adults at St. Anne's. Under her watch, the Sunday School, the Vacation Church School, and youth programs have grown in numbers and spirit. The biennial youth pilgrimage to Canterbury, England has been a highlight in the religious journeys of a number of youth in the parish, and Judith has taken the lead in this spiritually transforming event.

At about the same time as Judith started her ministry as Priest Associate at St. Anne's, Virginia Knapp started her Music Ministry at St. Anne's. In August 2005, Virginia was asked to serve as substitute Organist/Choir Director at St. Anne's until a permanent Music Minister could be found. However, she did such an impressive job as a substitute that she was asked to apply for the permanent position, a position she accepted in November 2005. Since that time, under her caring and conscientious leadership, the Senior Choir has grown to the point where there is hardly any room left in the back of the church for new choir members to sit, and the Choir has been inspired to sing different kinds of church music extremely well and with religious fervor.

One highlight during Virginia's period as Music Minister was the exciting performance of an Easter Cantata at St. Anne's in March 2008 by several church choirs, including St. Anne's, to an

overflowing church audience. Another highlight has been the introduction of a Praise Band that plays contemporary religious music on an occasional basis. When Virginia retires in June 2011, she will miss St. Anne's, and St. Anne's Choir, especially, will miss her.

A third person added to the staff of St. Anne's recently is The Rev. Bernice D. Reichard, who was ordained to the permanent diaconate on February 2, 2008 and immediately appointed a nonstipendiary Deacon at St. Anne's.

Bernice's father was Roman Catholic and her mother, Lutheran. She attended Lansdale Roman Catholic School from grades 1-12 but also attended a Lutheran Sunday School. When Bernice was about 8 years old, she attended religious services at her school and felt she would like to be an ordained minister but thought it was impossible for a woman to be ordained. Therefore, after graduating from high school, she enrolled in nursing and completed nursing school at Abington Hospital in Abington, Pennsylvania. After earning her RN degree, she served for 17 years as an emergency room nurse and then 28 years as a psychiatric nurse.

In 1999, Bernice and her husband, The Rev. Richard Myles, started to attend St. Anne's. Both became more and more involved in the life of St. Anne's. After Richard passed away in 2003, Bernice continued to attend St. Anne's and continued involved in church life. She had never thought of becoming a Deacon, but one day, while meditating in the back of the church, she felt called to be a Deacon. The Rev. Robert Fry, a long time deacon, inspired her and urged her to give prayerful thought to the call. In 2004, she started the process that led to her ordination. The Rev. Sally Dover, an Assisting Priest attached to St. Anne's, was her spiritual advisor and led her through the discernment process. Bernice attended Bishop's School for three years at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, studying church history, theology, and practice. During this period, Michael Piovane advised her on spirituality.

Since her ordination, Bernice has developed special areas of ministry that fit her background and personality. She has become a minister to residents at five care facilities located near St. Anne's. She is an active Pastoral Care minister, bringing communion to members of St. Anne's who are unable to come to church. She is an active member of the Outreach Team and Worship Team, and assists with acolyte training. She has been a blessing to St. Anne's.

Between 2005 and 2011, many of St. Anne's active members have made efforts to implement Recommendation #9 made by the Guiding Coalition for Size Transition, "Build a New Worship Space." The congregation generally agreed that we needed more space, not only in the nave and sanctuary to hold clergy, choir, and congregation, but also needed more space for program activities and for storage. The numbers of children and adults had increased to the point where people could not always be accommodated comfortably. I grumbled delightedly that on a cold winter day, I could not find space on the coat rack to hang my coat. Committees were formed; special meetings were held; an architect worked with the Vestry and other church members to draft tentative building expansion and remodeling plans; the idea of conducting a capital campaign was floated, and after much thought, discussion, and prayer, a professional fund-raising firm was retained to do a feasibility study to determine if a capital

campaign was likely to be successful. These plans have been placed on hold temporarily, largely because of the severe Recession that began in 2008 and has continued into 2011.

A Note About Stewardship

From its founding, St. Anne's stewardship of time, talent, and treasure has been excellent. Many talented people have contributed many hours to building up St. Anne's, and an unusually high percentage of the congregation has worked closely with excellent ordained clergy to "Live God's Love and Tell God's Story." In its early years, the congregation held many fundraisers, received several large special contributions, and with substantial financial support from the Diocese of Bethlehem, was able to build a church and expand its facilities without ever needing to conduct a capital campaign. St. Anne's has always balanced its operating budget and, in fact, has run surpluses some years, that is, until the past few years. St. Anne's started to operate under a deficit budget about the time the severe Recession started in 2008, and there is an obvious connection. Many parishioners lost their jobs or had their income reduced and could no longer contribute as much money to the church as they had before the Recession began. But a troubling trend has developed during recent years. The number of communicants at St. Anne's has increased but financial giving has remained flat. The unrestricted surpluses of the good years at St. Anne's have balanced the budget during the recent lean years of giving, but if this pattern continues much longer, it will seriously impede church growth. There needs to be a transformation in financial stewardship if St. Anne's is to continue to prosper and fulfill its mission, and the need of the giver to give must to be underlined and re-emphasized.

What St. Anne's Has Done Well

What is it about St. Anne's that has brought it to the point where it is hard many Sundays in church, fellowship hall, and classrooms to find room for coats and people? There are many reasons that could be cited, but I would like to focus on four that, I think, run as consistent threads throughout the history of St. Anne's and somewhat intertwine with one another.

1. St. Anne's was founded, not because a coal baron wanted a private chapel for himself and his family, but because a World War II sailor uttered a prayer of Thanksgiving. From the start, clergy and congregation have prayed together and stayed together. In the 1970's and 1980's, a large number of people at St. Anne's attended Cursillo weekends and were very much inspired to commit themselves to the religious growth and outreach of St. Anne's by this religious renewal, centered in prayer. Many brought the inspiration for prayer and action back to St. Anne's and, also, helped to lead Cursillo weekends for others. A prayer chain emerged, which is still active and effective. Most meetings begin and end with prayer. We use *The Book of Common Prayer* as the center point of virtually every service held at St. Anne's. We are a congregation of pray-ers, and we mean it.

2. From the time of its origin in the Trexlertown Grange Hall to the present, St. Anne's has prayed for, welcomed, and valued children and youth. Children's Sunday School and youth activities have always had a very high priority at St. Anne's. The highly successful Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for the very young and the Journey to Adulthood (J2A) curricula for older children and youth are current examples of clergy and laity interested in developing topnotch children's and youth programs, carefully selecting excellent religious education materials and implementing them well. Perhaps as important is the warm, friendly welcome that parishioners give to children and youth when they join the adults in church. Many families have become members of St. Anne's because parents and children felt very comfortable with the congregation from the moment they walked in the door. Adults have strongly supported a large number and variety of fundraisers conducted by and for children and youth to support special programs and events such as the J2A Pilgrimage to Canterbury, England. And the present Priest Associate, The Rev. Judith Snyder has, as her most significant responsibility, the leading of spiritual formation for children and youth. St. Anne's, arguably, has the best program for children and youth in The Diocese of Bethlehem. We are a congregation and clergy that take the religious education and spiritual formation of children and youth seriously, and we mean it.

3. St. Anne's not only welcomes children, youth, and their parents warmly but welcomes everyone who walks in the door warmly. Even though the membership numbers more than 500, there is a sense of family, fun, and fellowship at the passing of the peace during church services. Visitors, some of whom later become members of St. Anne's, comment frequently at how genuinely friendly and welcoming people are at coffee hours before, after, and between services, a friendliness not seen or felt in many other medium-sized churches. Fellowship events abound and are usually oversubscribed. Hospitality is an evangelism gift of many parishioners. One good fellowship dinner probably has more appeal in attracting and incorporating new members than three good sermons, however important their theological and moral implications may be. Both Ron Molrine and Michael Piovane have noted that parishioners at St. Anne's make a high proportion of their religious and spiritual journeys on their stomachs. People at St. Anne's love one another—that's what Jesus taught and what Christians are supposed to do, but they also like one another and like to be with each other at times other than Sunday services. We are a congregation and clergy that take Christian Fellowship seriously and joyfully, and we mean it.

4. The friendliness of St. Anne's is extended in its care and concern for members who are stricken with illness or other serious problems. The Prayer Chain is activated, subject to parishioners' consent, whenever severe problems arise in their lives. Practical and spiritual help is offered and given, not only corporately by the clergy and through an active Pastoral Care Team but also spontaneously by individual members. Visiting the sick and ill in hospitals, homes, and nursing homes; checking on people who are recovering from surgery; sending cards of encouragement and get well; making and delivering meals; taking people to doctors' and physical therapy appointments; grocery shopping for those who cannot do it themselves: these are all activities that reflect the desire of St. Anne's to care for its members. The St. Anne's

congregation seems determined, no matter how large it becomes, to remain a family in which members are genuinely concerned about each other, and they mean it.

The last six years (2005-2011) have not been without challenges, some of which have been mentioned earlier in this history. Let me phrase a few of them in the form of rhetorical questions.

1. Can we overcome our financial and space problems with more sacrificial stewardship of our treasure?
2. Can we reach out more effectively to the growing number of people in the growing number of neighborhoods being constructed in our service area?
3. Can we reach out more vigorously to the poor and needy beyond our service area?

I venture to say that the response to these questions by anyone at St. Anne's would be, "Yes, we can and we should."

A Hesitant Conclusion

I started this history with a basic question: Why had St. Anne's grown so dramatically in its 45-year life span? For starters, the parish has been blessed with many excellent ordained clergy and dedicated laypersons who have devoted themselves to building up St. Anne's in many ways. The construction of industries, commercial establishments, and many new housing developments with many new people moving into them has made the geographical area served by St. Anne's one of dynamic growth. It certainly seems to be God's will that a vibrant Episcopal church like St. Anne's should be able to prosper in its present location.

The first decade of the 21st century has not been a bright one, and the second decade does not seem to be starting auspiciously. The pall of the September 11, 2001 destruction of the World Trade Center still hangs over all of us in 2011. The last three years in the United States and worldwide have been very bad, economically, and bad effects from the worst economic Recession since the 1930's Depression seem likely to continue through 2011. The war in Afghanistan is far from over, and the war in Iraq continues to linger. Poverty and disease run riot throughout much of the world. One could go on and on with a litany of despair. And, certainly, some of this despair affects and infects St. Anne's. However, if one looks at the examples of some of our African sisters and brothers in Nigeria, one could claim that adversity breeds Christian growth. The number of Anglicans in Nigeria, a severely troubled country, has grown from three million to eighteen million since 1989, making it about seven times the size of our Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. In our even more troubled companion Diocese of Kajo-Keji in Southern Sudan, the Anglican Church has grown with amazing speed during a period of terrible persecution. We should thank God for our blessings, look forward to our future, and echo Julian of Norwich, a devout medieval anchoress and mystic, when she wrote that with the help of God and Christ, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

CLERGY AT ST. ANNE'S 1966-2011

The Rev. John W. Watters, Priest-in-Charge	September 25, 1966-June 1, 1967
The Rev. Vernon F. Searfoss, Vicar	June 1, 1967-March 1, 1969
The Rev. David R. Thomas, Vicar	September 1, 1969-September 15, 1971
The Rev. Richard A. Cohoon, Vicar	January 1, 1972-September 13, 1975
The Rev. A. Malcolm MacMillan, Rector	June 2, 1974-February 13, 1977
The Rev. Dr. Ronald C. Molrine, Associate Rector Associated Parishes of Allentown, With special responsibilities for Church Growth at St. Anne's	September 14, 1975-February 12, 1977
The Rev. Dr. Ronald C. Molrine, Vicar	February 14, 1977-December 15, 1984
The Rev. Robert S. Fry, Deacon	October 1982-October 2002
The Rev. Dr. Ronald C. Molrine, Rector	December 16, 1984-August 1, 1996
The Rev. Judith U. Snyder, Diocesan Intern	March 1, 1992-December 1, 1993
The Rev. Michael F. Piovane, Assisting Priest	October 1993-May 1998
The Rev. Eleanor E. Hart, Interim Rector	August 25, 1996-May 21, 1998
The Rev. Canon Michael F. Piovane, EdD., Rector	May 22, 1998-Present
The Rev. Sally H. Dover, Assisting Priest	June 1998-September 2006
The Rev. Jane A. Bender, Deacon	September 20, 1998-May 28, 1999
The Rev. Jane A. Bender, Assistant Rector	August 1, 2001-August 21, 2005
The Rev. Richard Myles, Assisting Priest	August 2002-June 25, 2003
The Rev. Judith U. Snyder, Assisting Priest	February 2004-September 2005
The Rev. Judith U. Snyder, Priest Associate	October 1, 2005-Present
The Rev. Bernice D. Reichard, Deacon	February 2, 2008-Present

Senior Wardens 1967-2011

1967 James W. Bausman
1968 James A. Haines, Jr.
1969 James A. Haines, Jr.
1970 Richard Tyler
1971 Robert S. Fry
1972 Robert S. Fry
1973 Ronald Blakey
1974 Ronald Blakey
1975 Robert S. Fry
1976 Robert S. Fry
1977 George S. Maniatty
1978 Anthony R. Cook
1979 Anthony R. Cook
1980 Anthony R. Cook
1981 George S. Maniatty
1982 George S. Maniatty
1983 George S. Maniatty
1984 Stephen C. Webb
1985 Robert A. Archer
1986 Robert A. Archer
1987 Barbara Malcolm
1988 Connie S. Archer
1989 Connie S. Archer
1990 Connie S. Archer
1991 M. Joan Fry
1992 M. Joan Fry
1993 M. Joan Fry
1994 James G. Harding/Ruth M. Davis
1995 Ruth M. Davis
1996 Ruth M. Davis
1997 Ruth M. Davis
1998 Ruth M. Davis
1999 Ruth M. Davis
2000 Nancy K. DalPezzo
2001 Christopher W. Jensen
2002 Christopher W. Jensen
2003 Christopher W. Jensen
2004 Nancy K. DalPezzo
2005 Nancy K. DalPezzo
2006 Nancy K. DalPezzo
2007 Catherine M. Meholic
2008 Roberta "Bobbi" Messerschmidt
2009 Roberta "Bobbi" Messerschmidt
2010 Nancy K. Gordon
2011 Nancy K. Gordon