

Jane Misslin Temple Talk

Together: Called, Sent, Serving
October 22, 2023



John 20:21-22 Jesus said to the disciples "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Good morning. My name is Jane Misslin and I am speaking with you today as a member of the Stewardship Ministry. The ongoing mission of St. John is as important to me as the air I breathe. Every Thursday night and Sunday morning I join Ben, our Choir Director, and Bart, our organist, for choir practice. It is my privilege to sing with other choir members accompanied by our priceless organ, our smart piano, our mobile electronic keyboard and a host of other string and wind instruments, bells and drums. Like the yoga that Ben and I practice throughout the week, singing is a breath practice. We begin rehearsal with breathing exercises, in and out. Then as we attack each piece of music Ben tells us where to breathe. Here take a big breath, there a quick breath and on this line don't breathe at all as you sing a long, smooth, flowing line uninterrupted by a gulp for air.

When I am facing the challenge of singing alone, Ben reminds me to take deep, cleansing, yoga breaths. Ben is much better at breathing and singing than I am, except when he isn't. Last August Bart sent out an email explaining that Ben was gravely ill, in a coma in the hospital and fighting for his life, unable to breathe without mechanical assistance. Ben is like a second son and I had an immediate, gut-wrenching awareness of the anguish his actual parents must be experiencing. Bart's email directed me to the day-to-day updates posted by Steven Perry, Ben's father.

I joined the crowd of family and friends praying and breathing through Ben's illness. After factually delivering grim information about Ben's condition, Steven Perry's posts continued in a recollection of wacky and wonderful moments from Ben's childhood and included pictures of a boy vibrating with energy and joy. Another picture showed Ben in his hospital bed, referencing the tattoo on his arm, a Sanskrit symbol for impermanence reminding us not to become attached to earthly things but rather to focus on lasting truths. While Ben slept, his friends

and family gathered for a dinner party celebrating Ben's 27th birthday. Finally, we read a joyful post from Johanne Perry proclaiming that doctors had diagnosed Ben's illness. Treatment became more focused and Ben, with hard work and persistence, began to breathe on his own.

So, I've learned a lot about breathing through life's challenges from my St. John family of faith, which has grown to embrace Steven and Johanne Perry. Come join Ben and Bart for choir practice on Thursdays and Sundays. Musical ability is not essential. Practice is about learning to breathe together.