

Stewardship Message – Brenda Ridgeway – September 13, 2020

Six years ago today, Brian and I were married at Church of the Holy Spirit in a beautiful ceremony attended by our families and our church and community friends. It is fitting that our wedding was held at the church as The Church of the Holy Spirit has become central to our lives as we seek to show our love to God, to each other, and to our fellow man. And it is fitting that I take the opportunity today to share why it is so important to support the ministry that we all share in.

Central to loving God is worship. Our services, our music, the Eucharist. Before I ever attended a service here, I had heard from acquaintances and even my students that CHS was a warm and welcoming church, but I was alone and hesitant to go where I believed that I wouldn't know anyone. How quickly that has all changed as I've been warmly welcomed into the church family. I look forward to seeing all of you each week on Zoom, but I eagerly await the day that we can again gather in the church or Parish Hall to worship together.

A year ago, as Father Adam was preparing to retire, he asked Brian and me to head up the Building and Grounds Committee. It was an honor to assume this role. We were able to work with the dedicated Nat Goddard and others to plan the very soon-to-be-installed solar field. We were able to experience firsthand Gilbert's wit and wisdom as we addressed parking lot lighting, tree trimming, a new door on the rectory, and the list goes on.... We try to be good stewards of our land and also to care for what God has given to us.

This past Friday at our Garden Party, as I was pulling ivy away from the foundation of the church, I wondered at the loving care so many of us give the buildings, the property, all the while realizing that the church is so much more than a building.

At Church of the Holy Spirit, we try to love our neighbors as ourselves. I joined the Outreach Committee as a Vestry Liaison this year. I know Chris Crighton shared several weeks ago that the church has donated to various organizations already this year. Just a week ago, I attended an Outreach Committee meeting where the objective was to help those agencies which would aid our neighbors most affected by the pandemic. Another \$12,000 was earmarked for those who need it most. I am so proud to be a member of Church of the Holy Spirit.

During the summer leading up to our wedding in 2014, I became aware that there existed opportunities to volunteer with Food4Kids. I spoke to Ruth Campbell, and Brian and I soon found ourselves packing lunches and delivering coolers. As you probably know, I've become a bit more involved with Food4Kids, but I am always awed by the outpouring of help and donations we receive every year.

When I mention that I attend The Church of the Holy Spirit, people first ask where we are located. When I start to explain, they say, "Oh, that's the church that feeds the children!" I truly feel that Church of the Holy Spirit tries to live its mission.

Another way I think that we care for our neighbors and ourselves, is by supporting our pastoral care leaders and by reaching out to other church members ourselves. We need to check on our friends and neighbors, especially those who are alone or ill. Your Vestry and Pastoral Care leaders work very diligently to reach out to everyone. Covid has only increased the scope of pastoral care while also making it more difficult to attend to the needs.

I grew up attending a very different Protestant church and then moved around quite a bit from church to church during my adult life, never feeling quite comfortable. But, I've definitely found a home at CHS where I feel the love and acceptance for all who enter. Brian and I have been blessed in so many ways during our short marriage. We have prayerfully discussed our pledge and will increase it this year as we look forward to continuing to do our small share of the work done by the members and staff at The Church of the Holy Spirit. I ask that you consider doing the same.