

FELLOWSHIP

NEWCOMER PROFILE

PEOPLE MAKING THE REDEEMER THEIR FAITH COMMUNITY

INTERVIEWED BY KEN GARNER

We thank Cynthia Flynn for sharing her story with us about her entry into The Redeemer community.



How long have you been attending services here?

I moved to Bryn Mawr May 15, 2012 and started attending right away.

Are you a life-long Episcopalian? If not, have you had religious affiliations before becoming involved at The Redeemer?

I was raised in a Calvinist Presbyterian church, where my father was an Elder and choir director, my mom was the organist, and I started singing in the Cherub Choir at age 5. There was no infant baptism, people were baptized shortly before they were confirmed about age 13, and there was no dancing or make-up in those days. We memorized huge swaths of the Bible, which was taken literally in some cases (practicing homosexuality is a sin) and ignored in others (Christ died for all). I have also had other spiritual affiliations, having participated in a Lakota Medicine Circle for three years, attended a 5-day silent Christian/Buddhist retreat each of the last five summers, and more recently started to learn about Quakerism (when in Rome . . .).

What other Episcopal churches have you attended? I began attending Episcopal churches with my high school boyfriend, an acolyte at Trinity, Seattle. I was received into the Episcopal church in college at All Saints, Portland OR. Then I married a recovering Roman Catholic who was anti-religious, and so I did not attend church for over a decade, but later, after we divorced, I went through a period when I attended a Unity church. Eventually, I returned to the Episcopal worship community. My work has made me a bit of a gypsy, so I have attended church in several states, but among them I have continuing strong ties to All Saints, Kennewick, WA; St. Thomas, Medina, WA; and St. Albans, Washington DC.

How did you find The Redeemer? On-line! When I knew I would be moving here, I did my usual canvas of Episcopal churches in the area. Truthfully, I have two criteria to start with before I even look at sermons, programs, etc. First, because I am a health care provider, I no longer support the use of incense. When I was younger I really liked it, but like many, I have become more allergic to smells as I have aged, and I now have physical reactions to heavy incense, as do asthmatics, the elderly and babies, and a whole host of others who should not be exposed to any but the cleanest air. For me, churches that regularly use lots of incense are not an op-

tion. Second, I look for a good choir. For me, singing is a ministry that supports my own spiritual journey as well as that of others (hopefully). The Redeemer passed with flying colors on both counts! Then I looked at the rest of the web site and liked what I saw, it felt like a fit. And it didn't hurt that I can walk to church. Of course, actually coming to the church is the real test, and what I have found in this community is, indeed, what feels like "home" for me.

What would you like to tell others about The Redeemer to encourage them to come and check us out?

Nowadays, many people say they are spiritual but not religious. Their past experience with "religion" has not been good. What do I say to folks like this? Unlike many religious traditions, Episcopalians do not require that you leave your brain at the door when you enter the church. The three-legged stool of the Bible, our traditions and our intellect inform how we approach God—really. I remember a sermon I heard once in which the priest said that if anyone had come expecting that the priest had everything figured out and could give them "the answers," they were in the wrong pew.

My experience so far is that at The Redeemer, the strong faith of the community rests on a willingness to learn and grow in the Spirit, rather than by rote "following the rules," as many have experienced in other faith traditions. And that faith is lived out in a myriad of ways beyond the walls of the church and beyond noon on Sunday. Many people who are "not religious" are looking for just such a community, especially one as warm and welcoming as The Redeemer. As a bonus, if you like to sing, they have great music!

Tell us a bit about yourself outside of The Redeemer—your job, your family, your hobbies. I am divorced. My four kids are grown and live throughout the country, and my mom and several other family members live in Seattle, where I was raised. I did my initial graduate work (MA, PhD) in Sociology at North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and my Master's in Nursing at Yale. I started a solo midwifery practice when I graduated, attending births at home and in the hospital, and then built a free-standing birth center. During the 1000+ deliveries I attended, I knit a hat for each baby during labor. Eventually, I became President of the American Association of Birth Centers, and have been very involved with maternity policy issues at the national level for some years, in hopes of reversing our appalling and expensive care for moms and babies that produces worse outcomes every year. I currently serve as Executive Director of The Birth Center in Bryn Mawr, which provides quality maternity AND women's gynecological health care (no, you don't have to be pregnant! but you *do* have to be a woman) for those we have room to serve. I am also partnering with others throughout the Philadelphia area to increase high-value care for the whole community.

Besides living on the West coast and in the Midwest, this is the fifth state I have lived in on the East coast (CT, NY, DC, NC and PA). Especially after DC traffic, I *love* living in Bryn Mawr, where I can walk to practically everything, and especially enjoy my morning walk on the Haverford College Nature Trail. In the past, I have enjoyed participating in play reading groups, Great Decisions groups, and going to movies, concerts and art exhibits with groups with similar interests. I am looking forward to getting to know this area better!

Join us and bring along your animal friends

Sunday, October 7
for a St. Francis Day
Blessing of the Animals
12:30 pm in the Church



Up to date
Parish Calendar
available online
www.TheRedeemer.org

All Parish
Pancake Breakfast

October 13
from 8:30 to 10am
Parish House
Assembly Room



The Rite 13ers will be your hosts, and the Christian Formation Committee for Children and Youth will offer a hands-on activity about All Hallow's Eve. Voluntary donations will be accepted with any proceeds going to Sister Jean's mission in the Dominican Republic. Please join us for food, fun, and fellowship.

PARENTS PARTY

Tracey Steele (center) and Ulf and Kristin Cahn von Seelen (left and right side) were among the large number of parents of Church School children and youth who partied at the home of Ellen and James Wang on Saturday, September 15, the night before the beginning of Church School. View a gallery of photos from the event at: www.TheRedeemer.org/photos. Photo by Tory Kline.

