

GETTING TO KNOW HELENE & STEVE SCHMITZ

Parishioner Judy Tingley is interviewing parishioners and helping them to share a bit of their stories with us. This is the seventh in her series of stories—look forward to more of them in the future. Thanks, Judy, for helping us get to know each other a bit better!



Helene and Steve Schmitz regularly attend the eight o'clock Holy Eucharist Rite I service at St. Barnabas. As many of our congregation attends the 10:00 service, perhaps you haven't seen or talked with them. Here's an opportunity to know them better! And since these two adventurers are often off on exotic journeys, we were fortunate to catch them here this summer and have them as our "Getting to Know Each Other" featured parishioners for August's St. Barnabas newsletter.

Since Steve retired from his faculty position at Central Washington University in 2013, both he and Helene have kept themselves active by vacationing at least twice a year. Because of that, they are often out of the country visiting foreign lands. Their first trek was one of their fondest experiences of all; walking the entire 500 miles of the Camino Frances, the distance from St. Jean Pied de Port in France to Santiago to the West Coast of Spain. The walk tested their faith and their individual abilities. Steve and Helene had faith that God would provide for them and after 44 days of safe and adventurous trekking, they landed in the perfect place and knew God had been watching out for them.

Over the past seven years Steve and Helene have been to the far reaches of Germany, Austria, the British Isles, Cuba, Italy, Australia, Israel, Portugal, France, the Nordic countries, Iceland and many destinations in our own wonderful country. Their next adventure? The frigid and beautiful land of Antarctica. Their bucket list is as vast and open as their hearts. Steve & Helene agree that meeting interesting people who share their homes, time, thoughts and ideas is the most fun, interesting and unique part of the learning experience travel has become for them.

Helene first moved to Bainbridge Island in 1985 where she built a home on South Beach. She spent eighteen years working in the technology field in Seattle, where she was the manager of a group of tech specialists. In a time when programs were being punched into paper IBM cards, she grew as the field did, finally ending her career as the Director of Technology for Westin Hotels and Resorts. When 9-11 changed the world as we know it, Helene left the big city of Seattle to return to her Bainbridge Island community to work here as a realtor for twelve years. Helene enjoyed the many people she worked with. My husband Mike and I met Helene when she sold us our condominium on South Beach!

As Helene was growing her skills in technology, Steve was building a successful and varied career in education. He started out as a classroom teacher. With some mentoring, Steve earned his principals' credentials and began working toward a career in school administration. Recognizing that administration gave him little time with students, Steve decided to engage his talents by earning a Doctorate in Higher Education. As a professor at Central Washington University, he was able to encourage college students, many of whom, with his help and guidance, earned Master's degrees and became educators themselves.

Helene and Steve first met in 2007 after both had been previously married. Having learned about life and love through those experiences, they found in each other the love, support, and contentment they sought. Helene and Steve were married in 2008, the first wedding presided over by former rector Dennis Tierney.

Steve & Helene take great satisfaction in being involved in our church community serving on Altar Guild, ushering, volunteering for coffee hour, soup making, vestry, burger grilling, stewardship, "giving tree" decorating, Outreach Committee and soon to be leading the Italy "Spirit of Food" pilgrimage. Steve and Helene have also been the catalysts for St. Barnabas' deep commitment to "Chaplains on the Harbor." One of their favorite ways to serve has been for the youth at the Coffee Oasis. That experience led to a partnership with Suquamish Kitchen, which has blossomed over the years. At least four times a year, St. Barnabas volunteers cook meals at the Suquamish Kitchen for over 100 people.

Helene and Steve's love of God's people is evident in their many ways of volunteering, their travel and their engagement with the world. "We are always drawn to people," they tell us. And we are drawn to them.