

## Getting to know each other

*Parishioner Judy Tingley is interviewing parishioners and helping them to share a bit of their stories with us. This is the tenth 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!*

### **Joan Marie Collins**

If you've spent much time around St Barnabas, it's likely that you know Joan. She sometimes attends the 8:00 Rite I service and other times, the 10:00 Rite II service, and she serves at the altar at both services as an acolyte and a Eucharistic minister. Once you know who Joan is, you'll probably notice that she is often at church! You'll find her most places - at get-togethers, events, discussions, classes, coffee hours and liturgies. Joan is responsible for the Altar Guild and the Altar Guild is the group that help make services happen. Joan also chairs the Worship Commission, which consists of representatives of all the groups involved with liturgy.

Joan is a bright light with deep knowledge of scripture and liturgy. She has educated, coached and supported many of the acolytes, Eucharistic ministers, lay leaders and readers in the churches she's been a part of. She's saved many of us as we learn or relearn words and prayers. She understands the liturgy, knows its flow, and knows too that the work of worship leaders is to help people sink into the liturgy and connect with God. She knows what to do and what to say about every part, procedure and process in our liturgy. She is a fabulous leader, and when needed, she kindly supports the Altar Guild without ever seeming frustrated or critical.

Many years ago in Richmond, VA, Joan was asked to take a class to prepare her to bring communion to dying people in nursing homes and hospitals. That class was both intellectual and sacramental and it opened new doors for her. She read Elizabeth Kubler-Ross who wrote the first book of its kind on death and dying and it had a significant impact on her. When she moved to Boston, she found that the Diocese had not developed a program for taking communion to parishioners who couldn't be at church. Along with others in her diocese, she helped to create a diocesan-wide program and was one of the trainers for that program. When Joan joined St. Barnabas, she was pleased to discover that the church had a team in place to take communion to parishioners who couldn't be in church. Joan had a major role in continuing that ministry at St Barnabas, offering another caring, valuable service to our church family.

Joan came to Bainbridge Island eighteen years ago, from the East to the West at the request of her daughter, Lisa and her husband. Joan has one other daughter and five sons, but they don't live on Bainbridge, the place that was clearly her destiny. Lisa and John loved Bainbridge Island and Joan happily joined them. Following her decision to go West in 2003, she moved into a Bainbridge Island condominium with Maggie, her six-week old soft, sweet white puppy. Maggie and Joan were constant companions and often seen together on Winslow Way until Maggie died just a year ago. Joan often brought Maggie to Wednesday meditation at church – they were so calm and comfortable together. Many of us became fond of Maggie and we imagined that she liked us too.

Joan has a deep faith and church is very important to her, so finding her church home in St Barnabas was very important to her. Joan felt welcomed and at home at St Barnabas, finding it very similar to her church in Boston. She remembers with great fondness some of the congregants who have died, but who warmly welcomed her here - Marilee Rice Macmillan among them. Marilee was the one who quickly asked when she met Joan, "Don't you want to be on the Altar Guild?" Little did she know...

I have found that when people talk about the thin places where the presence of God can be felt, I only need to think of being in this little chapel on the hill when it is quiet, just waiting for someone to come and experience the deep peace and Presence living here. THIS church is my thin place.