



Spiritual Journey of Giving: Kaaren Nowicki

...I was a stranger and you took me in... Matthew 25:35

One Sunday morning in 1988 I drove right past my usual worship destination and, by chance, took the turn up the drive off of La Vista Road, parked my Oldsmobile under a dogwood tree, and walked into St. Bartholomew's Church. It was everything I'd been longing for without knowing that I was longing for anything. It was home at first sight. The procession of acolytes (one of them expertly immersing us in a cloud of incense), choir and clergy set an unmistakably celebratory tone. My seatmates stood, sat, kneeled, read, sang and prayed with energy and enthusiasm. The sermon was laced with comfort, challenge and generous doses of humor. But the best part came during the Eucharist when the woman sitting behind me tapped me on the shoulder and I turned to hear her say that everyone was welcome at the table.

Ever since that day I've been unable to stop coming to back to the church where joy trumps dogma, hospitality is unconditional, and personal growth is practically unavoidable. Every committee, guild, team and study group I've been part of has given me a sense of purpose and community. My altar guild team is like family. Sunflower Connections

lets me spend time with interesting people as we work together on our listening skills. Events at Amerson House add to my understanding of spiritual practices. The recent study about racism is helping me recognize my own white privilege. Being on the tutoring team for a refugee family in Clarkston puts me in touch with fascinating people while helping build my understanding of neighborhood and community.

I couldn't be whoever it is that I am without St. Bart's. This community cares for me and I want to reciprocate. I want to keep pledging. I want to continue to take part in the life of the parish, and I want to welcome strangers as warmly as I've been welcomed here.



Spiritual Journey of Giving: Brent Bridges

I remember my Mom or Dad handing my sister and me a little change on Sunday morning so that we could place it in the plate as it was passed down the pew. That act. A quarter. A dollar. I may not have understood it completely at the time, but I was being taught early on the importance of being a contributor. I haven't always contributed. In fact, I've taken big breaks in my life, some because I needed to, some because I didn't have a spiritual home, and some because I just didn't feel like what I had to give was enough.

Once Todd and I settled into the community of St. Bart's in 2012, it was not a question of if we would contribute, but how. Financially is one of the ways that we do that. I feel fortunate that he and I never struggled on that point. We prayerfully and thoughtfully spend time together each year deciding what makes sense for us and for the community we love.

Money is hard. What's the "right" amount? What is "enough"? There's no such thing. It's a personal decision about what makes sense for you in this season and in this moment. But do something. Act. Contribute. The church won't run by itself, and every dollar counts. Consider where you are each year, and go from there. Challenge yourself, but don't stress or feel less than. It can be easy to do nothing because you don't feel like it's enough. Don't make the decision out of guilt, but out of gratitude and a desire to contribute to something that feeds you and that makes our community, this world, and you, better. Give what you are able, and be a contributor. It is enough, and it will make a difference.