

# Surviving the storms of change

The “Monumental City” – this is how President John Quincy Adams referred to Baltimore in 1827. The president was talking about Baltimore’s unique skyline with its church steeples and monuments.

St. Ann’s Church steeple has graced the Baltimore skyline for 138 years. Baltimore is known for many events and people in Maryland and U.S. history: Fort McHenry; the national anthem; the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Babe Ruth; Frederick Douglas; Thurgood Marshall; St. Francis Xavier Church; The Oblate Sisters of Providence; and St. Ann’s anchor. Yes, a piece of St. Ann’s history and Baltimore’s history is cradled in front of the church’s cornerstone at Greenmount Avenue and 22nd. Street, the anchor and chain from the Baltimore clipper ship, “The Wanderer,” commanded by Captain William Kennedy. Captain Kennedy and his crew were sailing off the coast of Vera Cruz in 1833 when a horrific storm hit the coast. Captain Kennedy promised if the anchor of the ship held and he and his crew were returned safely to port, he would build a church in honor of St. Ann, patron saint of sailors. The anchor held, and true to his promise, Captain Kennedy and his wife laid the cornerstone for St. Ann’s Church in 1873.

St. Ann’s faith community has survived many storms of change over the last 138 years: demographic change, downsizing change, church closings and twinings; yet, the faith, strength and commitment of this community has held firm. St. Ann’s church remains “An Anchor of the Community, A Community Anchored in Faith.” The members have embraced change and used change as a stimulus for growth and hope.

School Sister of Notre Dame Jeanne Barasha joined St. Ann’s church 25 years ago after the closing of St. James and St. John church. Sister Jeanne has served as St. Ann’s pastoral associate for the last 15 years. Sister will be leaving in September to work in Mkar in central Nigeria. She will be working at a middle/high school owned by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, a change for sister and a change for St. Ann’s parish. Sister Jeanne navigated St. Ann’s parish through many of the responses to the changes listed above: renovation of the church; renovation of the rectory into The Anchorage: St. Ann’s Parish House and Outreach Center; a men’s homeless

shelter; and the relocation of Mother Seton Academy to the former St. Ann's school building.

A job description for Sister Jeanne's position has been written and circulated. It does not include the subtle works of love Sister Jeanne brought to the job: the beautiful landscaping , not only St. Ann's property but neighborhood properties; keeping the bus stop across from the church clean and encouraging the bus riders to do the same; sometimes reaching a neighborhood fire scene before the Mayor's representative and offering The Anchorage as a haven for families, friends and neighbors; showing up for funerals of family members she did not know; working with the community to have unstable abandoned buildings demolished. The special talents Sister Jeanne brought to the position of Pastoral Associate can be continued, but it requires St. Ann's members to answer the call "Whom shall I send?" Change brings challenges, and each of us is challenged to answer this call by saying "Lord, send me."

School Sister of Notre Dame Charmaine Krohe, speaker for our Lenten series, "Bread for the Journey," encouraged us to continue to accept change and grow with it, "change with the times or get buried in the dust." The dust of change is not covering Sister Jeanne or St. Ann's. Our shared experiences have taught us to welcome change, stay centered in grace, put our faith in God and know that with him all things are possible. The quiet strength, dedicated service and enormous love Sister Jeanne has given to St. Ann's parish and the Greenmount/Barclay Community will be missed. We wish Sister Jeanne a safe and blessed journey. We pray "God be with you, Sister Jeanne, until we meet again".

*Elaine F. Edmonds and Beverly "Penny" Palmer have been members of St. Ann's Church for 53 years.*