

Faith Journey, Matt Duncan

When the traffic lights are with me, my journey to St Clements takes about 12 minutes. My journey to a church, and a Christian faith was not so direct.

I grew up in a very loving home but somewhat conflicted in terms of religious affiliation. My Mother, was raised in a small town where the local Catholic church kept its parishioners shrouded in mystery by conducting services in Latin. My Father, who is an agnostic, but respectful of spirituality, made the effort to expose his children to all sorts of religious experiences that ranged from Zen Buddhists to faith healing televangelists - some who would make Liberace feel underdressed.

Despite growing up with an unfocused religious tradition, there is something about a Sunday that calls me to be in church. For many years that church was Unitarian Universalist. The Unitarians draw from various religious and humanist beliefs but uphold the inherent worth and dignity of every person. It felt right. My wife and I were married by Unitarian minister. One of the many things that I appreciated about our congregation was an emphasis on community service. We prepared meals for homebound AIDs patients, provided temporary housing and assistance for persons on the cusp of finding employment.

When we moved to San Clemente I was without a church but devoted a lot reading to religion and theology. By coincidence, I was introduced to St. Clements by our neighbor, who is a world-class opera singer and at that time was a soloist in the choir. Her angelic soprano voice was what brought me to this church but it was the statement: "All are Welcome at God's Table" that has kept me coming back.

It was the first time that I took communion.

I enjoy the warmth and intimacy of this historical building and ritual of the Episcopal service. I am regularly inspired by Father Patricks' sermons and those that came before him. His homilies often provide new insight into ancient scripture but don't shy away from the issues that Christians struggle with in modern life.

Much of my spiritual growth has come from the conversations we have had at coffee hour and participation in break-out groups. Six years ago, I was introduced to the Contemplative Meditation group by Randy Seech who led us to receive God by quieting the mind, in silence. The friendships that formed around our shared spiritual inquiry and grief following Randy's untimely death, has allowed me to experience the healing power of grace and acceptance of things beyond my control.

St. Clements is where I experienced an awakening to the radically loving and divinely inspired message of Christ. It is a place to seek a deeper understanding of the Infinite Mystery of God while my faith still calls me to serve in the real world.

St. Clements provides that opportunity serve with its commitment to outreach. A significant portion of our budget is dedicated to stewardship. As I look around, I see so many of you that have participated in making and distributing sandwiches, programs such as Laundry Love, Peace and Reconciliation, support for military families, Peaceful Warriors, United Thank Offering, FAM, Mary Erickson, and others. This action is what St. Francis meant when he said "Always preach the Gospel and when necessary, use words". Whether it be an increase in our pledges or volunteering our time or donating some clothing, the ripple effect of these acts of caring will reach farther than we can imagine.

I am happy to say that my faith journey includes all of you, my fellow passengers. You have welcomed me into this place of worship and you have shown me that St. Clements is also a vehicle, empowered by each of us to serve Christ by serving those in need.

I look forward to serving with you.

Thank You