

St. Peter's Reflection

By David Mosteller, May 8, 2022

When Laura asked me if I would give the Reflection, I said yes. And I said yes because I couldn't think of a good no, and because I knew if I said no I would just be asked later, so I thought let's get it over with.

So, one of the reasons I cringed was that I pictured myself standing up here talking about all the ministries I've been involved in, and that didn't seem authentic. So in a way, for me to stand up here and talk about all that stuff, I'm standing at the edge of the abyss, because it brings up a lot of conflicts in my head (which many of you, I'm sure, have as well) –

I'm judging my ego

Am I doing enough?

Am I doing it for the right reason?

Why am I here? Why was I born?

If God is perfect and created the world, why isn't it perfect? Are we supposed to fix it? (And how are we doing with that!)

These existential battles rage in my head, because I was never good at accepting that things aren't OK -- or actually -- accepting that it was OK that they're not OK.

I would much rather sing. In music I am free. I'm not distracted by trying to solve these conflicts. Only in music am I OK with dualism. I love it when music evokes conflict, especially when expressed with depth and poignancy.

I just felt I had to put that out there because it's sort of the back story.

So... Laurel and I came to St. Peter's with our children in the late 80's after searching for a church near our home here. We were at the Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr; we were in the choir with some dear friends and a dear organist friend, and it was a wonderful situation. But it was too much to be schlepping a baby back and forth every Sunday and that sort of thing, and we knew it was time to find a church near our home. Now I'm not going to tell the rest of that story, for two reasons: number 1, it's going to be too long, and number 2, it's a good story and I'm going to leave that for if Laurel gets asked to speak.

So here I found myself at St. Peter's, and pretty quickly I joined the choir, and also pretty quickly Laurel got involved in Christian Education.

So, great!! And then things happened... Our organist left, and I found myself being asked to be an interim music director, and that's happened several times since I've been here: after Jane left, after Charles left, after Stan left, ... and then – fortunately -- with the Flaherty's help (thank you, thank you, thank you!) There were some great experiences I had with all that, despite all this “stuff” that I had rattling around in my head, [for example] I wrote a song for the Cherub Choir based on some prayers that they had told me about, and that was cool!

And so, our children benefitted a lot from St. Peters with their J2A involvement. Don had a pilgrimage to Ireland, Amy to France, and it was one of the most important things in their lives. At one point, Don suggested a Talent Show, and that became a tradition here that we've had, where the bar is low, we perform, and it's great! I tell jokes to keep the bar as low as possible (but I have no trouble with that!)

Laurel became involved with the J2A program, as I did, she had an amazing experience with that, still has friendships to this day, they went and walked the Camino to Santiago. I was actually involved in two pilgrimages – one to Coventry (that was 150 years ago) and also one later on, to Italy (we went to Assisi and Rome) and these were just amazing experiences – as was the Urban Adventure where we took the kids to New York City and we cut them loose and they had to find their own way around.

I've been involved in some other things here –

Helping put the sound system in here

There was a Men's Group at one time that I was part of (you know men, we don't organize, but it existed and that's huge)

Being involved with the Bell Choir – I really enjoy that

Being involved in the Pumpkin Patch

I help solder wires in the organ

I took EfM, graduated from that program (it did not answer all my existential questions; I put that out there in case you're thinking of joining EfM for that reason!)

We had people that went up to New York City after 9/11 to minister and be with the first responders and the police up there – it was an incredible experience.

I've been involved as a lay reader...

(None of these things I "wanted to do" – these were things I was asked to do!)

We had a road rally here at one point – lots of fun – literally that – as a fun activity.

The home eucharists that we did from time to time, again these were wonderful experiences.

I guess the last thing I just wanted to say, was that when we first got here there were giants (in my mind) that were here – male role models for me – and some of these names you won't know, but... Jack Mann, Bill Carr, Don Kelley, Van Harrison, Richard DeKalb, Art Lorentz-Burnett (still!) – and many that are here today but I'm talking about the ones when we first got here. And one person I just want to mention was M. Luther Kaufman, who ... was a very important person for me because he was incredibly generous, and I believe he left his home [bequeathed his house] to St. Peter's. And we would sing Happy Birthday every year to Luther at the Annual Meeting. But Luther Kaufman gave a sermon about Stewardship, and I'm going to close with this, and he said what I thought was the coolest thing about Stewardship: he said, don't give until it hurts – the nerve that connects to your wallet is very sensitive and it will clamp down like an oyster – [instead] give until it feels good.

So that's all I have to say. Thank you!