

The San Antonian

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Who Is My Neighbor?

By Mary Anne Bressler

For this issue of the San Antonian, we chose the question that Jesus is asked by the scholar of the law: Who is my neighbor?

In the story of the Good Samaritan, which is Jesus' response to that question, the concept of neighbor is defined by how individuals responded to a person in crisis, but it also relates to people stepping outside of their boundaries. The priest and the Levite had no obligation to stop, and in fact some scholars argue that they should not have stopped to help the man on the road because he was ritually impure—covered in blood and dirt. The Samaritan should not have stopped because Samaritans were mortal enemies of the Jewish people. But the Samaritan ignored the boundaries and offered assistance. Neighbors in this Biblical understanding can sometimes be unlikely people encountered in unusual situations, or they might just be the people down the street.

My "neighbor story" fits in that second category and will likely not come as a surprise to anyone who talked to me, saw NextDoor or Facebook, or read some email blasts in August. I brought home an adorable beagle named Snoopy on August 2. In the two weeks following, Snoopy ran away twice. The second time he took off, he was gone for 9 days. I say gone because he wasn't actually "missing" in the sense that I didn't know where he was. I often knew exactly where he was because of neighbors. I probably spoke to over two dozen total strangers in those ten days—in person, online, and over the phone. People would call to report that they had seen him even if he had already run off again, because they just wanted me to know that he was ok and still around. A man I see when I walk to work in the morning would ask every day if I'd seen him yet. A little boy up the street from church explained in elaborate detail how I should go about trapping him. The UPS delivery person handed me a

dog biscuit to give Snoopy when I found him. People offered advice about collars, harnesses, and beagles' personalities.

So many people were kind and caring enough to walk down the street to find my phone number on a flyer or look it up on the online post, and to call me—a total stranger—to help me find my lost pet. It was a difficult couple weeks, but as

stressed as I was, I was also incredibly blessed by my neighbors. I already loved Madisonville from my years working here, but that experience really confirmed my belief that this is a neighborhood in the truest and most holy sense.

We hope that you will enjoy these stories and perhaps be inspired to be a neighbor to those in need around you.

Welcome To The Neighborhood!

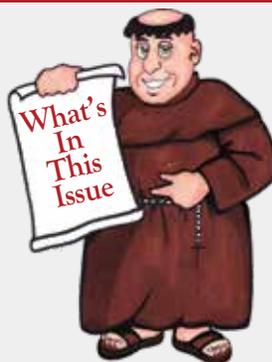
By Jody Coaston

Growing up in the suburb of Wyoming, I'd never heard of Madisonville until the mid-'70s when I was sent here to pass out campaign literature for Jack Gilligan's last (and unsuccessful) run for governor. I spent a gorgeous October weekend walking up and down streets from house to house and I fell in love. This place had everything I like; there were old houses and mature trees, but most of all I saw different kinds of people living together as neighbors. Black families lived next to white families, old people sat on front porches as little kids ran around in the yards next door, professional people shared the block with blue-collar workers and families who were obviously struggling to hang on economically. That Saturday evening I went to my parents' house for dinner and announced, "I've discovered the neighborhood I want to live in!" Years later, when I got to know Jack Gilligan at St. Anthony's, I told him about my serendipitous discovery of Madisonville, and he grinned broadly, saying, "Glad that campaign did somebody some good!"

So when Byron, a Madisonville native, and I went house-hunting in 1980 in search of a promising fixer-upper, we were delighted to find this house on Roe St. In mid-summer, we moved in, camping out in one room as we worked on the rest of the dilapidated old house, and cooking meals on a backpacking stove in the backyard while the kitchen was under construction.

We did, however, feel a tiny bit of uneasiness as an interracial couple moving into what Byron remembered from his childhood as the "white part" of Madisonville, and wondered how we'd be received. We had begun working on the yard, an overgrown

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A Neighbor And Benefactor

By John Bange

When our parish learned in early 2019 that we were receiving a generous sum from the estate of Miss Clara Chervenak, many asked "Who was she?" She had not been seen at St. Anthony much after Saturday liturgies ended in 2002 or participated in parish activities for many years. She was known to only a few in the parish other than our pastors and parishioners who brought communion to her and her sister. Fortunately, I did remember her and knew a few people to ask for memories. With additional research, other details came together.

Stella Clara Chervenak, who preferred "Clara", was the first-born child of Michael and Helen Chervenak, born in Chicago on July 30, 1919. Her sister, Dolores Alice Chervenak, was born there on September 1, 1929. The family moved to Cincinnati, bought a simple house on Plainville Road, and joined St. Anthony in Madisonville. Michael was a shipping clerk at a battery manufacturing company and Helen was a housewife.

It is not known whether the girls attended our school, but the Withrow High School alumni association confirmed she was a member of the class of 1938 and the yearbook yielded her senior photo.

Miss Clara's father died on January 20, 1967, at age 70. His funeral mass was celebrated at St. Anthony on February 24, 1967 and he was buried at Gate of Heaven Cemetery, with Fr. John Campbell officiating. [It is interesting to note that during my research I saw that Michael was buried from the W. Mack Johnson Dun and Lashbrook Funeral Home, 6111 Madison Road in Madisonville, and the funeral director was Eugene P. Brubach. I asked current parishioner Winnie Brubach if she had any relatives that worked in the funeral business and she said Eugene was her father.]

Miss Clara was employed by Procter & Gamble at their General Office downtown in a clerical position in the Treasury Department in 1945, where she had a variety of assignments. She told me, "I started as a private and retired as a private." Miss Clara was featured in the



Miss Clara Chervenak

P&G company magazine, "Moonbeams," several times. A 1971 issue noted her 25th year of service and included her photo. She retired December 31, 1984 with 39 years of service.

In the 1980s, when names were called out during the Prayers of the Faithful of people in need of our prayers, we heard Helen Chervenak's name every Sunday for several years. Miss Clara's mother died on January 30, 1985, at the age of 84. Her funeral mass was celebrated at St. Anthony's on February 2, 1985 and she was buried at Gate of Heaven Cemetery, with Fr. George Jacquemin officiating.

In 1989, Ann Ossim, longtime parishioner and nurse, took communion regularly to the Chervenaks. Ann was concerned about the condition of the house and wanted at least the first floor to be cleaned, repaired, and painted. By this time Dolores was very ill and bedridden, and Ann was concerned about their living conditions. Ann got a group together at St. Anthony's to do the work. Dolores,

whose hospital bed was in the living room, spent the weekend in a respite center for care while they worked. That must have been difficult for both women, but Ann stayed with Miss Clara, sitting on the couch and sorting through papers together as our team repaired plaster, cleaned, and painted all the down-stairs rooms.

For some years Miss Clara continued to care for her sister, who had multiple health issues and had eventually become bed-ridden. Dolores died on April 5, 1996 at age 66. Her funeral mass was celebrated at St. Anthony's on April 9, 1996 and she was buried at Gate of Heaven Cemetery, with Fr. George Jacquemin officiating.

Miss Clara herself died on May 20, 2009 at the age of 89. Her funeral mass was celebrated at St. Anthony's on May 26, 2009 and she was buried at Gate of Heaven Cemetery, with Fr. Len Wenke officiating.

Parishioner Barbara Lundy remembers that the late parishioner Bill Otto, who lived a few blocks from Miss Clara, cut her grass regularly but would never take any money for it. After she died, he was pleasantly surprised when he received a generous check for his years of kind service. The late parishioner Randy Bennett also cut her grass. Miss Clara deeply appreciated the kindnesses that St. Anthony's parishioners gave her family over the years.

Miss Clara was a private individual whose top priorities were taking care of those close to her and praising God, and few knew much about her. From her appearance, simple car, and dilapidated home she might have appeared poor, but she was a woman of many riches which she held in reserve to benefit many of us. We are thankful for her gifts and hope she would be pleased with how we use them.

We celebrate your generous spirit of giving. Miss Clara. May you rest in peace.

NOTE: This is an edited version of the story. A more detailed version is available from Mary Anne Bressler or John Bange.

Faraway Neighbors

By Sherri Mathis

In the Gospel of Matthew we read “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”. And secondly, we read “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” So who is my neighbor? The dictionary defines neighbor as someone who lives near another, but Christ gives us a much broader definition. He includes all people wherever they live and whoever they are.

Our neighbors at St. Anthony are, of course, those people living near the church in Madisonville, but they also include the wonderful people of Our Lady of Health in Dominica. The Church teaches solidarity with all our brothers and sisters across the globe. We have chosen to extend our outreach to our neighbors in a faraway small island. Over the years since 2003 when we first established our Twinning relationship with Our Lady of Health, we have developed lasting friendships with many Dominicans. Our love transcends the many miles and cultural differences. Many of our parishioners and several Our Lady of Health parishioners have traveled the distance to visit and solidify our friendship. The joy and compassion we share are blessings to all of us. We treasure the experiences and mourn the losses. Our prayers at Mass always include the people of Dominica. Peace and justice are integral parts of our philosophy at St Anthony, and our Twinning relationship is just another way we live out our commitment to our values.

“Twinning” is more than “Mission”. It is our way to confirm our belief in “the deep solidarity with the human race and its history” Vatican II (The Church in the Modern World). It is the development of loving relationships. “Mission” signifies more of a paternalistic giving and doing relationship, whereas “Twinning” is more of a compassionate giving and receiving relationship. We both give and we both receive love and support. John Paul II called for “a commitment to the good of one’s neighbor”. He urged that solidarity be built on national and international levels. John Paul II was a Vatican II pope and we are a Vatican II people.

Our friends in Dominica have been hit with many hurricanes, but the category 5 in 2018 was devastating. The recovery has been slow and painful, and we send our prayers and compassion as well as financial assistance. At the end of September we had the privilege of welcoming four parishioners from Our Lady of Health, including Fr. Godfrey Tarimo.

Welcome To The Neighborhood! *continued from page 1*

mess full of mostly alcohol-related litter, when one afternoon our next door neighbors’ young granddaughter came out onto their back porch and called out, “Grandma, Grandpa, come look at the new people!” Uh oh, we thought. Here it comes. Now joined by both grandparents, the little girl went on gleefully, “Look! They’re cutting the grass!” Oh, we thought. I don’t think we’re going to have any problem here at all! And, of course, we didn’t.

(A couple weeks ago, I told this story to the granddaughter, who now lives in the same house with her husband, with her own biracial grandchildren playing happily in the back yard. She cracked up. “I remember that day,” she said. “We were so amazed and happy to see somebody doing some work over there at last.”)

A day or so after that, we heard a small, high voice from the back fence. It was our neighbor from the house behind us, a tiny, fragile-looking lady in her nineties. “I know you won’t have time to get your garden in this year, so could you use some tomatoes?” (How Mrs. Heinert could tell at first glance that we were the kind of people who would plant a vegetable garden remains a mystery.)

Byron and I knew that we had truly come home to stay, and stay we did. We’re still right here, garden and all (now including a flock of hens), happily extending the same kind of welcome to new neighbors as we received so gratefully all those years ago.

Won’t You Be My Neighbor

By Jackie Schneider

“Won’t you be my neighbor?” Even though many definitions of neighbors limit these to those living in close proximity to your residence, I have always thought of a neighbor as every person. I guess I think of a neighbor in a figurative sense rather than a literal one. In that sense, a neighbor can be family, friend, stranger, enemy, etc. – even the neighbor dog or cat.

I recently read an article written by Danielle Bernock that appeared on the Crosswalk.com website. It was titled, “What Does it Mean to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself?” Ms. Bernock reminds us that God is the source of all love, and you must receive God’s love before you give it back to your neighbor. To love your neighbor as yourself, you must first love yourself. That can be a roadblock for many people. Just as we have trouble loving and accepting ourselves, warts and all, it can be difficult loving our neighbors. Loving yourself or anyone else is an intentional act that takes some work and discipline. I really was inspired by Ms. Bernock’s list of actions that can help direct our love for our neighbors (near or far) and ourselves, too:

- ◆ *Show grace*
- ◆ *Act with compassion*
- ◆ *Look out for your or your neighbor’s wellbeing*
- ◆ *Serve*
- ◆ *Speak kindly*
- ◆ *Allow for your or your neighbor’s humanity and give each one the benefit of the doubt*
- ◆ *Share joys and sorrows*
- ◆ *Forgive*

This list offers so many valuable ways to love, respect, and acknowledge all the people we encounter every day – all of our neighbors. Make an intentional effort to do one of these acts every day for a loved one, co-worker, service provider, or stranger. It’s the neighborly thing to do!

“Loving your neighbor as yourself is being moved to help to the full extent of your ability.”

Neighbors In Sickness and In Health

By Pat Mezinskis

You may be thinking about the neighbors where you live and the relationships you have with them. Perhaps you help someone shovel snow or share vegetables from your garden with the people next door.

But what about your neighbors at church, the people who sit near you on Sundays? You may know their names, or perhaps not, but you probably say hello before Mass and offer your hand at the kiss of peace. After being in our parish a while, and maybe by attending the Saints' Café, you have come to know your church neighbors and their families. At St. Anthony's, we help each other in many ways. We may give someone a ride if they need it or run an errand for them if they are sick. Certainly, we pray for them if they are on the prayer list. This is the community we have built at St. Anthony's. It is a wonderful, caring community.

Just as we offer support to those with health problems such as heart disease or stroke, we might think about helping those with a dementing illness. They may not seem to be the same person they were a few years ago, but still get comfort from coming to church, listening to the music, and seeing familiar faces. Unfortunately, some become isolated because their caregivers may have difficulty with transportation or because there is a concern about the possibility of inappropriate behavior in church. At St. Anthony's, I have witnessed many parishioners who reach out to people with dementia, such as helping them get back into the right pew following Communion, and offering support to their caregivers.

The Health Ministry Committee is partnering with Episcopal Retirement Services on their city-wide project called "Dementia Inclusive Cincinnati." They have already done trainings in the Cincinnati Public Library System, a bank, and a local restaurant. We are doing a pilot along with

four other churches in Cincinnati. The goal is to provide education on dementia and offer some helpful communication techniques. We want people with dementia to continue to feel welcome here. This summer we offered training to a core group of fifteen parishioners as well as two presentations to the wider parish. Now, with the help of the core group, we have developed our pilot program. It will focus on providing caregiver support and will include three presentations in the next few months. Our first session on October 15th was on "Day-to-Day Care" and several members of the parish attended. The next two sessions are listed below, and we welcome caregivers and others to attend. They do not have to be a member of our parish.

■ **Interventions that are Productive and Meaningful**

Kathy Farfsing, Sally Von Lehman - Tuesday, November 12, 6:30-7:30

Activities that are meaningful to the person with dementia and that engage the person, enriching their lives and the lives of their family.

■ **Resources for the Caregiver**

Sally Von Lehman, Health Ministry Team - Tuesday, December 9, 6:30-7:30

Caring for oneself, focusing on resources that are available for the caregiver, need for sleep and good nutrition, support groups, spiritual support, journaling, possibly a "buddy system" with a parishioner at St. Anthony's who has gone through this experience and can offer support and a sympathetic ear.

The presentations will be held in the Parish Center. If a caregiver has no one to stay with their loved one, they can bring them. We have parishioners who have volunteered to engage them in an activity while the caregiver attends the presentation. Help us continue to make St. Anthony's Parish a Dementia Inclusive neighborhood.

No Longer Strangers

By Tom Maher

To take liberty with an old irony: "we have met the stranger, and he is us". How to make a friend of the darker side of myself is a daily task and the work of a lifetime. He is the first "neighbor" I want to rescue from the road to Jericho. He has been scorned and mistreated by me over the years.

I am after something much deeper and more substantial than greater self-esteem or self-confidence. And I think it cannot be discovered alone. The search for it is not found only by meditation while on a walk in the woods. It also requires immersing myself in the love given by others. This is one reason I come to this little church on Desmond Street. It holds dear friends and loved ones of half a lifetime!

It is with you my faith rests and by you my knowledge of God's love is sustained.

The liturgy and formal prayers we Catholics mouth often allude to us as sinners. We swallow that and sometimes stop there. Not often enough do I imbibe the fuller truth that I am one of God's beloved. He made me (and you); he called each of us by name. He sent his Son among us because he loves us. "We are Easter people and Alleluia is our song," wrote St. Augustine.

Oh, if only I could grasp the goodness planted in me by God's grace! That's the diamond worth digging for, the pearl buried in the field of me.

I know that when I can see myself as graced by God, I can then see others that way. They are not strangers, not radically different from me. I find myself, by some amazing arrangement, swept up in a vast waterfall of love released by God. It is good to be in it with you.

Neighbors: Some Give And Take

By Jeanette Tepe

When we attempt to define “neighbor” from a secular perspective, we usually think of people who live physically near us, in our “neighborhood”. From a Christian perspective, we are challenged to expand that neighborhood to global proportions, which can certainly feel overwhelming. Unless we feel personally called to do missionary work of some sort in another country or with a different group of people, many of us resort to supporting some organizations financially to help them serve groups of people or pursue causes that align with our personal values and interests. Looking closer to home then, our neighbors can include our family and friends, but would naturally encompass anyone who crosses our path in life.

What then? The sign outside St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church recently commanded “Love Your Neighbor – No Exceptions”. I believe we are called to improve our little corner of the world; however, not everyone with whom we come into contact will require major outreach efforts. What does our neighbor need from us? There is a tendency to focus on what we could or should do. That is often as far as the example goes. There is rarely any mention of how our neighbor was affected by our ministry.

In October 2000, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. That was followed by nine months of surgery, chemo and radiation, all of which my system tolerated fairly well (not counting the baldness!). As treatments progressed, I became more tired than I had ever been in my life. During that experience, a variety of people helped with transportation, food, yardwork, prayers, emotional support, greeting cards and more. Some cards came from parishioners of St. Anthony’s that I didn’t even know at that time - Thank You! I learned that accepting help from others was part of an interdependent relationship in ministry. One cannot “give” unless there is someone to “take”. To soften the image a bit, when one reaches out to address a need in their community, the circle is not complete until their neighbor (either directly or indirectly) is willing to open their hand in acceptance. May we be willing to either give or take when life situations call us.

Neighbor Of All

By Sr. Jeannie Masterson, CSJ

As a recent recipient of the Dorothy Stang award, I’m freshly reminded of Dorothy’s work with indigenous farmers in the Amazon. How her heart must be breaking at the devastation being wrought on the rain forest by fires, deliberately set to satisfy someone’s greed! For Dorothy, the trees and all of creation, as well as the people, were her neighbors. Their lives were more important to her than her own life.

As a Sister of St. Joseph, whose core lens is Jesus’ “that all may be one”, expressed frequently as “love of God and neighbor without distinction”, my awareness of “neighbor” is always expanding. “Who isn’t my neighbor?” may be the more pertinent question. Truly, every aspect of God’s creation is neighbor in the broadest sense – actually more than neighbor, as all of creation is part of us as “one”. Everyone and everything has a purpose, and our future depends on the balance of our diversity. From mosquitoes to aardvarks, majestic mountains to sandy beaches, my most beloved to the most heinous of criminals, all are part of the neighbor I’m called to love “as myself”.

Deepening discipleship is a challenge to us all, and God’s inclusion and mercy are beyond what I can fathom. Developing my way of thinking and believing about who my neighbor is, no matter how incrementally, is a response to faith’s on-going invitation.

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

John 15:15

Christ Renews

By Kathy Winters

After our move to the suburbs many years ago, I settled in at a local parish, immediately sensing this was where God wanted me to be. I attended Mass regularly, got to know a few folks, and our firstborn son was baptized there. Somehow, though, something seemed missing in my faith practice.

Like other parishes in the area, mine offered Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) retreats. I hesitated to sign up—after all, I knew hardly anyone at the parish yet, was a busy mother, and that probably wasn’t “for me” anyhow. One Sunday, God changed my mind, and I attended a CRHP retreat a short time later. That first morning, I was relieved to find that everyone was friendly and open as we shared the word of God together. I felt such joy and peace, but little did I know that the best was yet to come! On Sunday morning we each received a large manila envelope that we opened in private. I was moved to tears to discover a stack of letters from people who had been praying for and thinking of me throughout the weekend. They were from parishioners I knew and some I did not, from CRHP participants from other parishes, and even a dear one from my husband. As I read these one by one, I truly felt the love of Jesus encompass me as I never had before.

I knew then that God was calling me to much more than ritual practice, and into a personal relationship with Him.

A few weeks later, I felt the Holy Spirit at work once again as we discerned who would lead the next CRHP group. Going into that meeting, I was certain it wouldn’t be I! However, as we prayed in silence, I felt great peace as I said “yes” to that call, and continued to feel God’s guidance as I led our group in hosting the next CRHP retreat. Looking back, this was when I first realized that God knows me much better than I know myself, and it is He I need to trust!

Thomas Merton Speaks To January 2012

By Carol Igoe

*At the corner of
Fourth and Walnut
Downtown Louisville,
He Awoke
From the dream
That we are
Strangers among strangers,
Awoke from a dark dream
Of closed hearts,
Apart,
Deprived of the hope
"that help is always
And everywhere
Present."
Awoke, laughing, to see
All of us,
Walking around like the sun,
All of us, standing
Before the doorway to death,
Before the doorway
To the stars.
Not separate, but joined.*

Race-Related Grace In My Life

By Tilly Pfeiffer

I have always felt connected to jazz and church music born of the suffering and special gift of African Americans. As a little girl, I loved the sounds of Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole and Harry Belafonte played by my much older siblings.

I grew up in Hamilton, Ohio, where segregation was as entrenched as in the south. My parents were a little different; my dad's folks were French immigrants and my mom was from Oregon. But I lived in a white world. The only black man I ever saw drove out to pick up the garbage of people outside the city. It made an impression on me that my parents liked, respected, and appreciated Milton Flowers. We talked about him, saying that he was a lovely man and that all of his children went to college. The seed was planted that sprouted into an awareness of my own white privilege.

The evolution of that awareness grew while working at Pleasant Ridge Montessori, a CPS neighborhood school where many families struggled in the cycle of poverty, although another part of the school population was affluent. When the school opened, it was exciting, challenging, and often very disturbing. Every day children and parents were overcoming tough lives. I learned a lot.

One day I discovered that a teacher whom I liked and admired was also from Hamilton. What she told me about her life there as a black child and adult added to my absolute realization of the stark unfairness of white privilege in America. Her family never went to restaurants to avoid being stared at. In high school she could not participate in after-school activities because the buses did not run to the part of town where blacks only lived. After earning her degree and teaching certificate, the Hamilton schools which she had attended as a child did not even respond to her application.

The black mothers and staff exhibited those qualities of strength, unflagging giving, and wonderful humor that are honed on hard lives. One mother of a child in my class confided in me that my student was the biological child of her sister who had died in childbirth. He had not been expected to survive, but she lived for him and loved him into growing.

Through these experiences I began to understand not only the terrible injustice of white privilege but our loss from knowing so little due to lives of dominance. It has been said that black people know white people but white people don't know black people. Shame on those who look away from this sad and painful reality.

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