

A Family's Testimony

This letter was written by Gen Portocalis with the assistance of her daughters, Beth and Maria. Gen stood up on Sunday, April 22, 2018 to tell us what Good Shepherd means to her.

Good Morning. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Genevieve Portocalis. With me are my daughters Maria & Beth. I have been a member of the Good Shepherd family since 1956.

Over 60 years ago when my late husband John & I decided to get married, we had one problem. He was Roman Catholic and I was Baptist. But we had decided that we needed to settle on one religion.

I refused to raise our future children in the Catholic Church. I did not believe in some of their teachings and practices, and Baptist was too different with the religion that John was raised in.

We decided to try the Episcopal Church, otherwise known as "High Church" because many of the Catholic rituals are similar. After meeting with Father Lopez, we decided we would marry here.

It took us awhile to start attending church as we didn't have a car. But after Beth & Maria were born we felt we had to get back to church.

I was confirmed and John was received. Beth & Maria were baptized here, as were our four grandchildren and 2 of our great grandchildren. We have celebrated four weddings here and John's funeral in 2009. Our Good Shepherd family has been there for us through our celebrations and our sorrows.

You can see us sitting on the aisle in the 3rd row on the left side every week at the 10 am service. Beth tells the story about us coming to Church the morning that John passed away. It was a bleak and cloudy February morning, yet when we sat in our usual seats, we left the aisle seat open because that's where John always sat. Our hearts were broken, but we knew John was finally at peace when a bright ray of sunlight shone through the stained glass window right onto the pew where John would have been seated.

For those of you who knew John, you may or may not have known he suffered through epilepsy, Heart disease and other ailments since his time in the Navy. He rarely questioned "why me" To his doctors he was a medical miracle. To us he was a man who loved his family and his church, and found strength and courage from his faith and from this Church.

John & I rededicated ourselves to each other here on our 50th anniversary, and my daughters arranged for a celebration here after church one afternoon in celebration of my 80th birthday last year.

I am proud that my oldest daughter Beth has served on the Vestry and Altar Guild, and continues to help with publicity. You all know my younger daughter Maria, who is the Sexton

and who is involved with youth group and helping just about everyone at the Church. Her husband Wayne started attending church 10 years ago when he & Maria got married ---yes-- Happy 10th Anniversary to them on May 5th!!; and he too has served as Junior Warden, on the Vestry and also in the Brotherhood. Not many people see the hours they spend here, going way above and beyond, because not only do they love the Church but more importantly they love the people they worship with weekly.

I'm also very proud of my granddaughter Chelsea, who has really blossomed since becoming more involved. She has been a Sunday School teacher, leads the Youth Group, served on the Vestry, and been a part of the Search Committee that called Mother Susan to our church. So many people here have been so supportive and influential to her as she grew up and matured into the beautiful young woman she is today. And as she graduates college next month and makes her way into the world, I know that the foundation she received here at Good Shepherd will play a large part in her success.

I'm equally happy that another granddaughter, Meagan, has decided to start attending Church again, primarily so that her two preschool children, Taylor and Carson, can have the same strong Christian foundation that she received attending Church school here. Meagan was also a Sunday School teacher, and values such as caring, concern and empathy have served her well in working in the medical field.

My other two grandchildren, Ron & Candyce also attended Sunday School and are now happily married and successful in their careers and families.

My family and I have been very blessed to have found Good Shepherd; or did Good Shepherd find us? This Church has played such an important part in all of my families lives; we can't imagine not having the love, support, friendships and strengthened faith we have found here in each of our lives.

I encourage you to welcome Good Shepherd into your families as completely as we have done. Yes, like all families there may be differences of opinions and difficulties, but trust that they will be there for you, as they have always been for us. For that is the real meaning of family.

God Bless you.