

PAX 40th Anniversary



REFLECTIONS

*PAX Reflections Committee includes Molly Cameron editor, Virginia Foley, Ken
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MAY 2009

Barbara Ahearne

I met Carol Banfield when we were both teaching CCD at St. Luke's religion program. One day she mentioned that a group of people were going to Mass at the Parish Center and that I might enjoy that Mass. I took her up on the invitation the following Sunday and went with our oldest child, Tom, then a sixth-grader. The Siebentritts were Mass planners that Sunday. Tres read and Mary Spaulding took the young people out for Liturgy of the Word. I thought everything about that experience was perfect, and we joined PAX.

Betsy and Harry Schnibbe were PAX members. Betsy taught kindergarten. When Betsy's diabetes grew worse, she was confined to home. Harry asked if some women could stay with her from when he left in the morning until after 2 when their children got home from school. Many of us who were free during the day took turns keeping Betsy company and fixing a light lunch until someone got home. Each of us did our own thing there. I spent a lot of time talking politics with Betsy. Mary Rappaport reorganized the kitchen. I don't remember what others did. The kids – John, Phillip, Marilyn, Peter, and Valerie – were great! At least one would be back promptly and take over. Betsy also belonged to the Ladies Sodality at St. Luke's, and after a while a number of those ladies volunteered to take turns also. From them I heard, "Why don't the kids do this? They should take better care of the laundry," and other criticisms. If I had stepped in with another group, I probably would have been giving organizational advice too. I thought about this difference in perception and came to the conclusion that in community we had a different understanding of each other.

We arrived in McLean with five children spanning 6 weeks to 10 years, knowing not a soul. We came from a military base where everyone made friends quickly and were very supportive of one another. At our last base, John came home for lunch and was home by 4 each day. After we got to McLean, John worked at the Pentagon and left at 6 a.m. and came home at 9-11 p.m. most week days. It was an extremely difficult transition for me. PAX – the people, their challenges, meetings, Mass planning, and activities – saved my sanity and nurtured my creativity. I volunteered to run a Family Religious Education Program and planned a children's liturgy on Christmas Eve for the whole church and a Parish Seder for the entire parish. Each time I turned to PAX for assistance, and they did it all. They were amazing!

John Ahearne

Barbara describes the importance of PAX to her and therefore to our family. Another influence PAX had on us was that on our children. All five grew up in PAX. Four, Tom, Mary Ann, Robert, and Patricia, were leader or co-leader of the folk group. The fifth, Paul, was a recruited soccer player who went to Duke and played on the team that was always ranked in the top 2-3 in the country. Several times he brought players home with him and took them to PAX, since he thought PAX provided a true sense of Christianity. The PAX influence on our children was strengthened as they met many adults for whom faith was important and for whom living as a Christian was much more than weekly attendance at Mass. All five remain practicing Catholics.

I believe PAX saved our marriage. Moving to DC and going into 70-80 hour work weeks was equivalent to setting Barbara with our five children adrift in a rowboat on uncharted waters without any oars. Not only did PAX provide oars and a tow to shore, she met others in PAX who also worked long hours, making her realize it was not unique in DC.

As our children left and we moved to North Carolina, all of us have realized what a treasure was PAX.

S. Kevin Bissell y Caridad Inda

Guadalajara
Good Friday 2009

Dear PAX friends,

Someday before I die I am going to write something that doesn't have to start with an apology for being late. This isn't it. I'm sorry. For weeks now, I have been trying to think of how to convey all that PAX has been to us over the years and there just isn't any way I can do this. It has been another full life. But no, that's not it either, it is the same life integrating care, concerns, inspiration, energy, support, friendship, tolerance, welcome, obligation, encouragement, insights, joy, help, sharing, companionship, solidarity, acceptance, participation, direction, challenge, anchor, commitment, sounding boards, solace, opportunity, and celebration.

One of the things we are most grateful to PAX for has been the sharing of yourselves and your families. We watched the kids grow up, become participating members, and build families of their own. We appreciate the sharing of holidays, successes, rough spots, retirements, and final farewells. We appreciated the opportunity to be ourselves, to speak our minds, to share our concerns, and to actively pursue solutions great and small. PAX has created a viable pattern for the church to come.

Gratefully,
Kevin and Caridad

How PAX Found Us ... Joanne Alfano

I had not "settled" into a Catholic parish since relocating here in the early 1980s. I bristled from the authoritarian rule of several pastors, and could not bear the "in-your-face" patriarchy delivered from the pulpit. Jerry (my former husband) and I were cradle-Catholics who sought what we called "an adult Christianity."

Despite several thousand parishioners at St. Mark's (Vienna), there was no child care during Sunday Mass – only that dreaded noisy, crowded cry room. We wanted to worship together but our energetic toddler daughter was too distracting. To no avail, we tried to start co-op babysitting. I was ready to leave a church that outlaws contraception yet made no provision for child care at the required Sunday Mass.

I found an ad for "Woman-church Gathering" at Catholic U. It was intriguing, so I went. At liturgy, we sat in a circle on the floor. Baskets of bread from all over the world represented our ethnic diversity and our common need for bread. These women had gone beyond the patriarchal boundaries; one provided contact info for a Catholic community in McLean. I felt a new excitement about faith.

Mafalda French, from PAX, warmly answered all my questions. "Yes...a Sunday liturgy in McLean. Catholic priests but not connected to a specific parish ... a lay steering committee that [she assured me] was not in the least autocratic. A religious education program ... about 90 families ..." PAX seemed so small, but I asked the question anyhow. "Yes, of course we have child care ..." she answered quickly.

I put it off. Sometimes I don't really know what I'm seeking: What if it was "adult" Catholic? What if I couldn't find any other excuses to walk out? Worse yet, what if I liked it? Several months later, Jerry and I went to find PAX. The Franklin Sherman school cafeteria was crowded, and the walls were decorated with graphics of hamburgers and hotdogs. It was not bread from the world, but it became Bread, because we let PAX find us.

They were warm and welcoming. They played, sang, and prayed familiar songs. They made their inclusiveness a point: all were welcome to community liturgies and activities, they were moving to inclusive language, and women seemed more visible. They supported, walked, marched, helped, and prayed with each other. They shared their vision for peace and social justice, and their faith and actions demonstrated their commitment. And the child care was terrific!

Mike Brehm

My enduring memory of PAX is watching Marilu MacCarthy walking up the street, holding eight-year-old Hannah's hand, carrying Matthew on her back and Rebecca on her hip. Elizabeth and I had just returned from her chemo in 1999 and the house was empty. We started walking down to the park and that's when we spotted this kid-toting machine.

I don't like defining my relationship with Elizabeth or our relationship with PAX by the cancer, but it was during my wife's treatments that I realized why community was part of our church's name. Marian Klymkowsky held my hand when I announced Elizabeth's diagnosis at Mass. Joan Urbanczyk showed up unannounced in the waiting room as my wife had her original surgery. A boatload of casseroles awaited us after each treatment. And once her cancer returned, the help returned, too, from Nancy Rosso telling church because I couldn't do it to the prayer chains to Molly Cameron taking Elizabeth to chemo to give me the occasional break to Ken Melley riding herd to make sure the new floor was installed at church in time for her funeral. And we, especially Elizabeth, helped others in the congregation. After all, that is what community is all about.

I grew up Lutheran and converted to Catholicism because I wanted to feel spiritually closer to Elizabeth. I loved the rituals and the structure. We began looking for another church after a leadership change at St. James, and neighbors Ann and Steve Brown told us about PAX. I didn't know what to think. We met in an intermediate school's music room. The introduction of visitors caught us off guard because Matthew was in the middle of nursing. The inclusive language tripped me up, just as non-inclusive language trips me up now when I go to a "regular" church. There were lots of hugs. Elizabeth loved it and asked me after a month what I thought. My initial reaction was that it was "kind of touchy-feely." But after spending more time there and growing to appreciate these rituals – and especially after seeing how the community rallied around our family during her cancer battle – I realized that PAX isn't touchy-feely.

Instead, it is very, very touching.

What PAX Means to Me Rich Brentin

In the 1953 science fiction book *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, the future society is one where conformity and blandness are the norm. Rules are imposed by those elite who know what the people need. After all, it's for the people's own good! Free expression, and its venue, books, are strictly forbidden.

It so happens though, that there is a community, hidden in the forest, where books are memorized and free expression is encouraged.

This is how I think of PAX; a small community trying to keep the basic Christian values alive. I feel blessed that I found it.

Ann Brown

I first came to PAX with Steve, before we were even dating. We had met in the music group at the chapel at Virginia Tech. I was not Catholic at the time; somehow in my church sampling at college, I just ended up attending the Catholic service and stayed. Of course the Catholic churches here were not quite as liberal as the community on campus, so Steve took me to PAX. That was probably 1979. PAX was still part of St. Luke's and was meeting in the school gym.

Of course coming from a folk Mass at college, I loved the music at PAX (which at the time was created by a bunch of incredibly talented kids!). But what really caught my attention were the priests and the homilies. Since one priest would often do a whole season then, it caught me quite off guard the first time I came in to find someone else celebrating. But soon I learned they were all wonderful and each brought unique gifts and perspectives.

Mass planning became one of my favorite things about PAX. I loved the opportunity to gather with some of the more seasoned members. There was no real division between generations in the community. Once Steve and I were married and Suzanne and Daniel were born, I had wonderful mentors for parenting my children. They also received an incredible religious/spiritual education – not only through the Atrium and J2A, but because they have grown up in a community where their contributions are valued.

Of PAX events, I probably have the best memories of Easter sunrise services. There were several magical moments when we would do the walk-through the day before – also during the exhausted, cold, but very sacred quiet as we would gather early on Easter morning. It was always hard to get up, but always worth it.

The best part of PAX is that it is truly a community.

Memories of PAX in the Early Days
Brinton Brown

We joined PAX in 1971, just when it initiated a new Sunday Mass at 9 a.m. in St. Luke's parish school cafeteria. Leadership comprised two coordinators, advised by a steering committee. The object of Mass planning was to attain excellence in celebrating Sunday liturgy (not perfection). After every Mass, the leaders critiqued the results with the planners. When I was asked how I felt about planning our first Mass, my response was, "It was like a big penance." The leaders were crushed.

PAX had Communion in the hand and partaking of the cup long before the U.S. bishops approved. Some parishioners liked the 9 a.m. liturgies but never participated with PAX in gathering around the altar or the dialogue homilies. Rose Kennedy attended when she was in town. One prominent parishioner who attended regularly with all her children, complained frequently to our pastor, Fr. Al Pereira that the PAX Mass never started on time. There were always last-minute details that caused delays.

General meetings were monthly, along with numerous meetings in between, to define PAX and establish membership requirements. PAX members were involved in virtually every parish committee, taking leadership roles in some. PAX supported the pastor's proposal to build low-income housing on St. Luke's land, rather than a new church, a proposal that infuriated most of the affluent parishioners. The new church was built after Fr. Pereira left.

I asked Fr. Pereira how PAX received the Bishop's approval. He said PAX didn't need approval because it was in St. Luke's Parish. Then he proceeded to tell how NOVA received the Bishop's approval. The Diocese of Richmond had just formed a Diocesan Council, and Bishop Russell agreed to accept unanimous Council decisions. Fr. Pereira went to Richmond, and made his pitch at a Council meeting for NOVA to have non-territorial status. Everyone voted in favor except the Bishop. On the way to lunch, Bishop Russell asked, "How could I be so wrong?" Fr. Pereira told him, "That's easy – it wasn't your idea!"

Whenever Fr. Pereira wanted additional money for something, PAX would offer to raffle his Mercedes, which always put an end to the request. PAX was truly blessed to have Fr. Al Pereira as founding pastor.

Steve Brown

I came to PAX with my parents and younger brother and sister while I was in high school – about 1971. My experiences in California had been in a traditional parish (as an altar boy – the Vatican II part was that I didn't need to learn Latin) and then at Vatican II-inspired liturgies run by the Jesuits in Alma. PAX was very similar to my Alma experience, with new folk-style music accompanied by guitar, Communion under both species, and a feeling that you were really part of the celebration.

Music was a big draw for me at college, both in a number of Christian groups and at the Catholic Masses in the chapel at Virginia Tech. I met Ann, my wife, in one of the folk groups that played for the campus Masses. After college, I came back and joined the folk group where Bob & Dave Nealon, Joel Siebentritt, and others helped me learn how to play the guitar and accompany the singers. In turn, I am pleased to have helped train some of the high school guitarists that came after me. Dan Mulholland, Dale Chambers, Fred Schellenberg, and I formed the PAX Pickers when we realized that Jeremy Hushon, the last in the line of High School folk group leaders, was going to graduate and there did not seem to be any more high school guitarists to pick up the leadership. Until that time, we were fortunate to have very talented teenagers who had the skill and interest in leading the music for the community – I think one of the benefits of being associated with St. Luke's was having an uninterrupted supply of these youth resources.

At all times during my 30 + years in the folk group I've been most fortunate to have been close to very talented musicians, both instrumentalists and singers, who have nurtured me and helped me grow. I really enjoy getting to play with Ann and my children, Suzanne and Daniel. I have also been moved to be able to honor God and many of our community members at the special times of baptism, reconciliation, first communion, confirmation, weddings, and funerals and memorial services.

Joan Browne

I came to PAX when I met Father Joseph Nangle OFM, who was providing divorce ministry to divorced and separated Catholics. I shared with him how much trouble I had with the Church's approach to divorced individuals. I also found that my local church wasn't meeting my faith needs. Father Joe suggested I try the PAX Community. I came and loved it. I was very much a fan of Vatican II. I felt PAX's liturgy was meaningful, inclusive, and very devout. Most of all, it was participative, with joy and relevance to how to live my daily life. I felt I was being treated with the respect due an adult who was committed to a relationship with God. I am so grateful to the PAX Community. I love our worship services. I am grateful that I get a chance to plan Masses with others in the community. Thank you to all of the PAX community and our celebrants who make this a meaningful celebration every Sunday.

The Road to Emmaus
Molly N. Cameron

It was 16 years ago. Our sons were two and six and I was overwhelmed, so I'd stopped trying to get to the PAX service. After I'd dropped Jimmy off for Kindergarten that spring day, I said to his brother, "Y'know Teddy, I have to get us all back to PAX." He looked uninterested.

But first we had errands. We stopped at the craft store. I was wandering down an aisle, lost, and suddenly a man who looked vaguely familiar from the back turned around and said, "Oh, I see your son is with you – do you remember our son Paul?" Of course it was Ben Scott. I was taken aback because I'd just mentioned PAX and there he was. He went on, "We miss you, Molly; we'd love to have you back."

I left full of resolve. The next Sunday I made it to church. That week I had been doing some more thinking about how accepting Ben had been, and how weird it is to see someone you sort of recognize but not really. Until they speak. Or move. Or do something you remember. And then it's so clear who they are.

I was shy about my return to PAX so I didn't even notice who was sitting next to me. The celebrant was reading my favorite Gospel story about the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They have this feeling that the man speaking to them is *very* important, compelling...and do they maybe know him? They decide to eat dinner together. They're still not sure who this man is until he breaks the bread. I love that moment – the quintessential aha moment.

I sat there absorbed in the aftermath of the reading, thinking about recognizing people, how it felt to be in a holy presence, how grateful I was to be back at PAX, grateful that there *was* a PAX. Then the man next to me spoke, "Did you bring your son?" Ben Scott.

On the road to Emmaus, the road to where Ben worked, I'd journeyed back to PAX.

Maria and John Chomeau (founding members)

What a wonderful pilgrimage! Forty years, many good ones and a few quite difficult, but we were together with our other close friends throughout. In fact, we still speak of our best friends as being the members of PAX.

How did we get started and how did we end up creating something as wonderful as PAX? That is a story in itself. While at Notre Dame, we had many liturgical discussions and were quite interested in the reforms recently introduced by the Second Vatican Council. Coming to live in Washington was new for us – Maria having graduated earlier from St. Mary's and John from Notre Dame and then after six years of service in the Navy (various ships and a shore tour in Morocco) – we were ready to settle down and raise our family in a stable environment. A good education for our children was high on our list, and we attended a PTA meeting at St. Luke's where John sounded off about all the weaknesses inherent in parochial school education. Our wonderful pastor, Al Pereira, sensing that people were searching for a more meaningful and hands-on liturgical experience, tasked Anne Duncan to gather a small group and move "off-campus" to hold our experimental liturgies and find ways to enhance the lay person's participation in the Mass. Anne invited us to join this group, at Father Pereira's suggestion, saying that Father Pereira had suggested us as participants.

Needless to say, in those early days there was not yet a PAX nor were we a community. We held our first liturgies in a room at Tysons and next went to a public school. We started our Mass planning and preparation for the liturgy much as we do now. Four to six Mass planners plus the presider designed a Lenten Sunday liturgy that would appeal to the lay person. We became quite innovative in what we introduced into our liturgical worship. Some things caught on and became part of our routine ritual, whereas others were a flop. But always we searched for ways in which the lay person could play a more meaningful role in the liturgy.

From the start, our ladies and children were involved in everything. They brought so much to the development of a meaningful liturgy. Likewise, we had a wonderful music group (made up mainly of young persons), and each Sunday, we experimented with various music plus small and large changes to the liturgy. Some things that we do routinely today, such as standing around the altar during the consecration and receiving communion in both species and the host in the hand, were well ahead of normal liturgical practice in those days. Our early celebrants were primarily the assistant pastor at St. Luke's plus a few great priests such as Fathers Nangle and Hug who have been with us throughout most of our long trip. I recall vividly the first Mass that Maria and I helped plan. It was Palm Sunday. Instead of reading the gospel and having a homily, we elected to show an excellent movie of the passion of Christ.

After we had been with the others in the "experiment" for about a year, we moved back into St. Luke's, where we planned the 9 a.m. Mass each Sunday. Many of the other parishioners took affront at some of our liturgical practices, but we managed to hold our position until the new pastor Fr. Hughes replaced our beloved Fr. Pereira. Things then became quite difficult for PAX. We adjusted first by forming ourselves into a community that would look after its own; we did

all we could to preserve our beloved liturgical practices. We had many long constructive discussions, first on the establishment of an independent community within the parish (and without the specific blessing of pastor or bishop) and eventually the decision to leave St. Luke's parish and return to our beginnings – worshipping in rented space in various public schools in the McLean area. Through it all – and these were truly difficult days – we held together as a family, and one must say that the difficulties and challenges only served to make us a more vibrant and effective community. For me, the defining moment for PAX was the death and funeral of Betsy Schnibbe. It was, as I recall, our first funeral and it was done with such loving care that I will always recall this moment.

Unfortunately, Maria and I are no longer living in Northern Virginia but still have wonderful memories of our years with PAX. We try to get back up from time to time on Sunday mornings to worship and meet with all our friends in PAX and to make new ones. This wonderful experiment that we undertook with a few other members of St. Luke's has become a great tradition and now thrives as an independent community. We have learned that whenever there is a problem within the family or at work, one can turn to PAX for prayers and support.

My PAX
Claire Cifaloglio

As it turned out, a star of sorts guided me to PAX. Her name is Amanda Messinger. Actually, it was a convergence of several strands in my life in December 1992 that brought me to PAX. I was looking for a real church. A new friend knew about Amanda and "her church," and made the connection. To top it off, we were living a few hundred yards from where PAX was celebrating then at Williamsburg Middle School. What luck! PAX stuck – in no small part due to Carl Siebentritt, who welcomed us warmly (if you know Carl, you know what I mean) on the first day – the day of Marla Brown's Baptism.

A funny thing I remember is a celebration at St. Luke's (Orthodox) many years ago when my spouse, Rob Abbot, played the fiddle and I strummed the banjo. This will be funny only to those of you who know how musically disinclined I am. A poignant moment was a Holy Family Sunday when Margaret Schwartz arrived late with her sweet and lively Nicky and Rupert falling off her arms. The whole community burst into spontaneous applause during that Liturgy of the Word.

I am thankful to PAX for bringing more music (via the Folk Group) into the life of Rob, and for bringing notions of an ever-loving, ever-forgiving God to my daughter, Mary Claire. As for me, PAX brought me the Benjamin Family all the way from the South of Sudan. PAX has given me a kind and generous community, loving friends, and hope for the future. I've learned how to share and how to be present. I'm working on listening and on loving. But, wherever I am, PAX satisfies my soul and fires up my heart week after week after week.

Thank you, PAX, and Happy Fortieth Anniversary.

PAX Is Special
Lee Collins

I was attracted to PAX by Carol and Mark Banfield, and their description of this community. It was also fortunate for me that this occurred in the very early days of PAX's beginning. Upon attending my first PAX Mass Celebration, I knew that I wanted to learn more about it, become involved, and contribute to its liturgy, activities, and development. It has proven to be an inspiration and a beautiful medium for expressing my Catholic faith, my spiritual life, and my social outreach and enrichment. Even having since moved three thousand miles away, I still keep in touch and benefit from my association with it. May God continue to bless our beloved PAX!

Sylvia Diss

I remember my gratitude when Joan Miller Browne brought me to PAX more than ten years ago. Now and then I would whisper "thank you, Joan" as we sat together in the beautiful space where our community gathers.

It has been a joy being with you all, and especially so when the knitting group made a beautiful prayer shawl, vibrant reds and oranges and purples, and the whole community gave Charlie and me its blessing. The tradition of breakfasts after Mass at Corky's is a wonderful way to enrich our community, and the Women's Group has been especially meaningful to me, as we discuss issues and get to know each other over cappuccino and chocolate! Again, my gratitude for everything!

Early PAX Memories
Marie Dennis (then Grosso)

We joined the PAX Community in 1969 shortly after the new community began to gather, and in many ways, PAX is where my roots as a mature Catholic Christian are deeply planted. I remember in the early years, when PAX was discerning its mission, reading with others in the community a little pamphlet by Elizabeth O'Connor from the Church of the Savior. Entitled the "Calling Forth of Charisma," it was the impetus for many PAX Community conversations about vocation and mission that shaped my own sense of "call" and, many years later, affected the way I responded to my children as they discerned directions in life.

In the PAX Community early on I also witnessed a deep generosity of spirit, time, and treasure that enabled the community to provide extensive daily support for Betsy Schnibbe as she approached death. It was such a powerful witness – one that has been repeated many times in the 40 years of the PAX Community's existence and that shaped my own understanding of Christian life in communal terms. Thanks to PAX, I began to see that a deep and real commitment to community life, with all its gifts and demands and challenges was to be an essential part of my own and my family's vocation. PAX really planted the early seeds of Assisi Community.

I remember so well the many PAX Community "outings" at our Serendipity Farm in Lovettsville after we moved there in 1976 – the wild Easter egg hunts with confetti spread across 65 acres and the corn picking parties that ended with rousing square dances. It was the greatest gift to me in those years that PAX made the trek out to the country – even celebrating Kristen Hendricks' Baptism in our great old barn – when I was feeling a bit like I fell off the face of the earth! I remember as clearly as though it was yesterday looking out the kitchen window during one PAX outing to see Robert then-Ahearne climbing over a fence into the field where our not-so-friendly bull was hanging out! There was probably no danger, but I had visions of Blackbeard the bull heading for Robert's red hair like a red flag!

I have spent too much of the past 40 years away from PAX, but it always feels like home when I come. Thank you, dear friends!!

Anne Drissel

My name is Anne Drissel. But I was Anne Duncan in 1969. Below are notes I wrote a few weeks before the 20th anniversary celebration for PAX. They tell of the origin of PAX as I experienced it.

It's Palm Sunday 1989 and, as I drive to DC on one of my occasional visits, I see people emerging from Churches carrying palm fronds. My mind goes back 20 years to that Palm Sunday in 1969 when a group of parishioners from St. Luke's Parish held an unusual Mass celebration in the Town Hall at Tysons Corner. The Epistle that morning was a viewing of a silent film depicting Christ as The Clown journeying into Jerusalem. As the figure in the film was led into the city on a donkey, greeted by cheering crowds carrying palms, our community's children burst into the room in a joyous procession, bearing palms and clapping and laughing. None of us had experienced such a joyous, alive, real celebration of a liturgy. Only weeks earlier, the Catholic liturgy had seemed irretrievably remote, rigid, and irrelevant to our lives.

Those were the days of Vatican II. At St. Luke's, we had begun to hold study groups exploring the Dutch Catechism and discovering for the first time for many of us a benevolent and accessible God, a human Christ and a pilgrim church letting go of its all-knowing, all-controlling hierarchy. An underground group in Washington had begun performing unorthodox Masses at different churches in Washington – changing location every few weeks to avoid clamp-down by the pastors and archbishop. Religious communities in the Washington area began having small home Masses with friends. And Home Masses were beginning to be sanctioned in parishes.

We had experienced the shock a few years earlier of questioning Papal authority for the first time when NCR published a purloined copy of the long-awaited report of the Papal Birth Control Commission and we discovered that the majority report *avored* birth control. Our belief in absolute Papal authority was shaken when we realized that the Pope had ignored the Commission's recommendation and subsequently pronounced reaffirmation of the Church's traditional position. For many of us (I by then was the 29-year-old mother of 4 young children) resolving this dilemma of Papal supremacy over evolving theological interpretation, meant facing a choice of leaving the church or continuing to define ourselves as Catholic while "forming our conscience" in the face of differences in interpretation of theology at the highest levels of the Church.

St. Luke's was going through its own struggles. Different factions sought to assert new values for the community. John and Jackie Kennedy had been communicants at a country chapel where our then-pastor, Fr. Pereira officiated. Bobby and Ethel Kennedy had rolled their red convertible into the parking lot at St. Luke's and their kids piled out in all directions. Financial studies of the parish books revealed that the parochial school was absorbing most of the parish's resources, which left little money for social causes or for adequate religious education programs for the adults and the majority of parish children who attended public schools. The prospects of fundraising for a new church loomed on the horizon and many of us were questioning why only five nuns were continuing to live in the three-story convent built to house 15, while the small priests' house was doubling as a residence, meeting house, seminar room, and parish office.

In the midst of this ferment, Fr. Pereira hired Carol Sheldon, an ex-nun, to establish a religious education program for the parish. She quickly became a close friend and advisor to me and many others. When I struggled with new theological and philosophic challenges like wanting to understand “existentialism” – Carol found a Christian Brother, Kevin McDonnell, to teach the course. The Siebentritt house became one of the gathering places for some of the study and discussion classes that Carol organized.

One day over coffee with Carol, I expressed frustration about how difficult it was to get people in the parish to accept change. Carol asked me if it was necessary to change the whole parish in order to get what I needed spiritually. Couldn't I create what I wanted with a few other like-minded people? “Imagine,” she said, “that you're in a small town, far from a Catholic Church and you need to select a spiritual community to worship with. What would you look for?” I told her I wanted meaningful liturgy that tied to real life and that had a vitality that was lacking in the Mass. Then I looked at her and said, “I get what you're hinting at! If I could describe that and find others who were looking for similar things, I'd have the worship community I needed!” The next day I drove over to Elise Siebentritt's house for tea and laid out my idea for a special experimental liturgy “study group” – “It's just for Lent. We'll start small and see what happens,” I promised. She agreed to help get others to consider the idea.

We started small – first with a Home Mass at the Siebentritt's. We invited couples actively engaged in Parish activities. I had surmised that, like me, these people were hungry for spiritual engagement but the primary means available to them were positions on parish committees. Many of these people had been showing up in courses taught by Carol and Kevin and others.

My then-husband, John Duncan, was the drama and film teacher at McLean High School. I was the costume designer for his productions. I had helped design costumes for the St. Luke's Mardi Gras celebration. Our house was filled with audio and video equipment; our lifestyle was steeped in “theatrics.” Thus, it was inevitable that we brought this orientation to the liturgies we planned. The first Sunday I suggested a meditation accompanied by a Charlie Byrd guitar solo. We had never experienced a silent meditation of this duration during the Mass before. We introduced the use of film on Palm Sunday. As the children burst in on the deeply moving silent film depicting Christ's journey into Jerusalem, many of us wept – a deep, soulful weeping.

On Easter Sunday, we held the Mass at the Siebentritt's. We acted out the key ceremonies of the Easter week liturgy, moving from inside to outside the house for various parts of the ceremony. My husband had secured a copy of the NASA tape of the Apollo 8 Space Launch in December '68. At the Epistle, instead of a reader, participants heard the astronauts reading from Genesis “In the Beginning was the Word...” We flashed up an “Earth Rise” simulation on the screen as one of the children lit a blazing fire to signify the coming of the New Fire of life to Earth. Again we had witnessed together a powerful sense of Spiritual Presence. “In the beginning was The Word...”

In the spring of 1969 and we had begun something that no one wanted to let go of. Though it had no name yet, PAX had been born and would continue to live and grow. Many have been born, married, moved away, or died in the 40 years since then. But PAX has continued to serve as a beacon spiritual home for us, no matter where we are.

My Glorious Life in PAX Barbara Fischi

On February 1, 1997, I came to my first PAX liturgy and found the spiritual home for which I had been searching for five years. In 2009, I celebrated my twelfth anniversary with the PAX community, and I will always be grateful to Joan Browne, who graciously told me about PAX at Beginning Experience, a weekend retreat for separated, divorced, and widowed persons.

My joys have abounded in PAX! Many times I have experienced **words of welcome** (especially from Carl Siebentritt and Lois and Bob Merrill), **encouragement** (from Mary Lou and Ken Melley), and **witness** (from Mary Lou Sleevi, Joanne Alfano, CeCe Vernaci, Randy French, and Bob Smith); all have enriched my personal and spiritual life. I have been excited by sharing my faith with others, especially Elizabeth Hurley, who cooked and delivered food to me while I was recovering from hip surgery and she was traveling to her weekly chemotherapy treatments. Now I am blessed with sharing our faith with her husband Mike Brehm and her dear friend Molly Cameron.

People have made the difference in my life at PAX. Kay Larrieu has made a magnificent impact on my spiritual journey. Of thirty-five people I have brought to PAX to share our liturgies, Kay is the only one who has returned and joined our community life. I have learned that PAX is not the spiritual home for everyone, and I am always elated to hear when my friends have found their own spiritual home. Kay has shared many conversations with me about women's rights, women's issues, women's roles in the workplace and society, women in the Catholic Church, women's ordination, inclusive language in liturgy, prayer and meditation, and being a grandmother. She has helped me to understand and embrace the feminine images of God and the importance of Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

Prayer, especially during the Prayers of the Faithful at a PAX liturgy, has created for me an environment of understanding the values and vision that I believe the Spirit of Beauty, Truth, and Wisdom wants us to enjoy in our daily lives. I just love the refrain: **Rejoice! Rejoice! And again I say, “Rejoice!” HAPPY FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY TO ALL OF THE PAX COMMUNITY!!!!**

Betty Fraser

In 1994, I accompanied my husband to Boston where he was to attend a medical conference. We met my college roommate and her husband for dinner while we were there. Before they left, my friend Nora exclaimed that I had to go to the nearby abbey for Mass in the morning.

As she'd suggested, I did go. It was wonderful. Afterwards they had a coffee. I went up to the celebrant and said that I "would kill" for a Mass like this in Northern Virginia. The priest was Michael Himes, SJ. "Funny thing" he said – his brother Ken Himes said Mass at a few communities there. (There are no coincidences.) He promised to send me information on these in the next week or two. True to his word, he sent me info on PAX and Nova and contact people's names. I called Marilu MacCarthy and attended the PAX 25th Anniversary Mass the following Sunday. After that, I never saw the need to call Nova. I have been coming to PAX ever since. I am sure glad that I followed my friend's suggestion.

Virginia Foley

My journey to PAX began long before PAX came into being. We bought a house in McLean in 1959 and for a very short period of time we attended church at St. John's. Then St. Luke's was built near our home, so that became our parish. Many of the people who started PAX were my friends at St. Luke's, and for many years I lamented the loss of all of those wonderful people I had grown to love. However, the Siebentritt family continued to be our closest friends, and still are. In 1993, after my husband Bill, died, I began to attend PAX. I was looking for a smaller, more intimate church group and knew that PAX would fill that need. I immediately knew that I was home! PAX continues to provide everything that I had hoped for. I feel safe, secure, loved, and fed weekly by the unique, thoughtful, and beautifully planned Masses.

There is always a social event in the offing, special guest speakers, meetings, parties, celebrations, Mass planning, pot luck dinners, coffees, and even knitting (although I haven't tried that yet). Above all, I think PAX is at its very best when one of our members and/or their family is sick or in need of prayers, food, or comforting. I can't imagine life without PAX!!!

Al Galiani

There are many PAX stories that bear retelling. Two of my favorites are:

1#

We were celebrating Mass at Williamsburg Middle School in Arlington. This was a time when inclusive language was becoming a part of our liturgy. Elaine Wolfe (O'Regan) was one of the planners that Sunday.

As Elaine recited her particular biblical reading, there were multiple instances where Elaine carefully used inclusive language: God, our Mother and Father; my brothers and sisters; all men and women. Then, she came to the verse that said, "*AND MAN SINNED.*"

2#

My second favorite story happened at a Mardi Gras Party.

Carl Siebentritt was dressed in a camouflaged bird-watching outfit with binoculars hanging around his neck. Carl darted around the room, looking intently through his binoculars for something. Finally, it was time for Carl's skit. He gazed around the room, once more peering through his binoculars. Then, Carl excitedly exclaimed, "I've found her! I've found her!"

He then rushed across the room to this attractive lady (Phyllis Brown) and placed a placard over her neck. When Phyllis turned over the placard, it read: "A DOUBLE-BREADED PUSH OVER."

Immediately, there was much confusion and excitement as the newly identified species jumped up and yelled, chasing Carl through the house.

Thank God, Carl was still running marathons or his life may have been over.

A Couple of Stories from Megan and Charlie Hookey

When Chris Egbulem first celebrated with PAX, he told this story: The missionary White Fathers were active in Chris' part of Africa. Upon hearing The Call, Chris ultimately joined them in an early step toward becoming a priest. The proud mentors then introduced him as their new "Black White Father Brother."

Always fascinating Sister Kevin Bissell and Charlie were working on a Liturgy where pre-consecrated Eucharist from a parish church might be needed. Charlie mentioned that our boys had never had "the wafer" for communion and it would be a new experience. She cracked: "You know, I have an easier time with transubstantiation, than I do with believing those wafers are bread."

Having a priest come to dinner at your home was/is a big deal. Especially when you've got young children. Now, in PAX, our priests (thankfully) are not quite the mystery such guests were when I was small, but still, it's an "occasion" brought on wonderfully often with PAX Mass planning.

Glen and Dave will always remember a visit to our home by Joe Nangle. I wish I could say it was because of some great spiritual moment. It wasn't. Megan served coffee to Joe in one of her "special" teacups from a collection we use for such occasions. She didn't know I had previously used one for a small flower arrangement, and had secured a cup to its saucer with floral clay. Well, of course, Joe got that one and, with the cup and saucer firmly attached to each other, he dutifully drank from the unwieldy arrangement with nary a word. Megan and I were mortified and the boys are still laughing about it.

There are other memories that only could have come from such a community as PAX: Cathy's weekly plea to "shine healing light into every cell"; Mary Lou the dancer and Mary Lou the painter; A Good Friday "seven last words" with Chris Johnston; Atrium and J2A; the unique music ensemble where everyone's talent is welcome; and from our own family, Dave's occasional trombone playing, Glen's proclamation of Genesis at a Missionhurst Easter, and Charlie's introduction to PAX through Megan, at one of the last Franklin Sherman Sundays – sure glad he didn't miss the pandas!

**Friendship at PAX, or Advice from Elizabeth
Elizabeth Hurley (as told by M. Cameron)**

Elizabeth and I talked about everything. In sheer percentages, we probably talked most about our kids; they were all teenagers – her three and my two – during most of our friendship. Either heading into, in the not-so-pretty throes of, or heading back out of adolescence. We took great comfort in the strides made by the older ones, holding their experiences up as proof that maturation would eventually side with our mothering instincts, and create happy, productive adults.

But our topics covered a wide range. Some I can remember: husbands, in-laws, gardens, church, feminism, journalism, various laws, politics, drugs, language, college majors, weddings, knitting, yarn, illness, death, pain, wellness, other friends, work, co-workers, books, and our big favorite – schools.

Elizabeth always listened. She did this with a concentrated and attentive air. Then, when she gave advice, she would usually preface it with something like, “Do you want my advice, or do you just want me to listen?” I loved this. She said she learned it from another friend, and we agreed that it was a fine thing just to be listened to, a gift. But I trusted and loved her so much that I always wanted her advice. I’ve heard since she died that she could be a tough cookie. I knew that, but never feared that she would be harsh or unkind.

What she did best besides listening was to show me another perspective. I told her that it reminded me of looking through a kaleidoscope, that you’d see the situation from your own (often stuck) point of view – that would be the first look through the scope. Then her version would help you turn the kaleidoscope one notch to the left. Voila! A completely different picture.

We did give each other a lot of advice – and hers was *always* good – but mostly what we did was support each other. We went along as casual friends for a while – having coffee or lunch, catching up on each other’s lives, and then realized that the relationship had deepened tremendously. She was one of my rocks, and I one of hers. We couldn’t do without each other after that, and right up to the end, when her advice was only inside her and couldn’t come out, she was still watching my back.

*Elizabeth Ann Hurley
June 17, 1961 – April 29, 2008*

**PAX Feelings and Memories
Judy Hushon**

PAX has been one of the real stabilizers in our family’s life. We happened on PAX by chance one morning in January 1975 when our kids were sick and we couldn’t drive out to Reston for Mass. John went to PAX and I went to the regular service at St. Luke’s—over lunch, we compared notes and decided that we would all go back the next Sunday. After that, there was no looking back.

Our PAX family is closer to us than our blood family—maybe because we share more common hopes and beliefs. PAX is there in times of joy (weddings, births, baptisms, celebrations), as well as times of pain and sorrow. The women of PAX are my sisters and the men are my brothers.

PAX’s dedication to liturgical excellence has educated me as to what is possible. This is both a blessing and a curse because it is so hard to find in other locations. I truly feel that churches like PAX are where God is and works best. PAX has been blessed with many gifted and loving celebrants who regularly share their insights with us. They too become part of the “PAX family.” Many of the sermons that I count as truly meaningful and that have stayed with me were delivered by our celebrants.

Communities like PAX were what Paul tried to form to become the early church. They were there for education, celebration, and socialization of the local populace. Somehow, our Church has lost that focus and it only lives on in groups like PAX.

**Coming to PAX
Chris Johnston**

I decided to come to PAX after both reading about it in the National Catholic Reporter and having a friend mention it to me. The friend said she had a very good friend named Amanda Messinger who spoke highly of the group.

With those good references, I gathered myself and came one Sunday in July about 10 years ago. The first person I met at the door was Carl Siebentritt, who couldn’t have been nicer or more welcoming. He even said Mass would be special that day because the celebrant was Ken Himes. Carl was right and I’ve been coming ever since.

My favorite recollection of the care that PAX feels for its members happened about 6 months later. My son CJ was in the hospital with osteomyelitis and was a scared 7-year-old. On Sunday, Ann Brown brought him a bouquet of balloons from a PAX party the night before. I have never forgotten that kindness and have seen so many more over the years that make me glad I’m part of this community.

Sunrise Easter Service at PAX
Anne (Chomeau) Kifer

Having grown up in PAX, I have many wonderful memories of PAX. The most meaningful were always related to the Sunrise Easter Service. We would arrive in the cold dark night, flashlights and blankets in hand. As the service progressed, the sky would begin to lighten and then, just as we would receive the Eucharist, the sun would appear. The music, the homilies, and the extra special Mass planning always made Sunrise Easter Service a highlight of my year.

I live in Wisconsin now and miss PAX more than I can describe.

Personal Thoughts of PAX
Winifred Kutz

My family and I were some of the first to join PAX. Aside from the wonderful friends we made, the enjoyment of Mass planning, and teaching the children, there are three events that stand out most in my mind.

The first being helping Rosa prepare for her beautiful wedding. What a lovely bride she was and still is.

Cooking for the Seder meal that was held either in the church or the homes of other families. My children loved the Maror, the lamb, and grape juice/wine the best. They're adults now and *still* like those the best.

Saving empty eggs for a year, and filling them with colorful confetti in preparation for Easter Sunday. Children and adults alike loved running around to crack the eggs on each other. We had confetti in our hair, down our shirts, pants, and shoes; our homes had sprinkles of confetti for days – or should I say weeks – afterward. My family has always carried on this tradition, and now my grandchildren look forward each year to this happy event. Our thanks go to Margaret Schellenberg for starting this fun-filled time in our life.

My PAX Experience
Marian Klymkowsky

In my late twenties, I had a friend whose church was involved in the Sanctuary movement (providing a safe haven for U.S. residents without documents). My friend was very involved in her church and the movement. I admired her faith, passion, and activism. I was particularly enthralled with the sense of a church community which nourished these values.

Finding PAX in 1991 (or thereabouts) was an answer to a prayer for such a faith community in my own life. We are indeed Pilgrims on a Journey and I'd like to share some of the "signposts" I've experienced in PAX:

- One member told me she didn't believe in Hell. She couldn't imagine a loving God who would have a need for it. It had never occurred to me to question (or that I could or should question) conventional "wisdom" in this or other matters of faith.
- Salvation is a team sport. We are either all saved or no one is saved. We cannot neglect others in our concern for our individual souls.
- Several members enlightened me about proclaiming God's word: to speak slowly, clearly, and passionately – from our very hearts and souls – when we delivered readings.
- Members shared that PAX's mission starts with liturgy but is really about sending us forth to mission in the world.
- Conscience is the core of faith. We who disagree with some of the Vatican's views are not "cafeteria Catholics," but rather adult believers who will not be spoon-fed. Faith is active; it requires diligence as well as devotion and discipline.
- The Preferential Option for the Poor – not just giving handouts to those in need, but challenging the structural and cultural underpinnings that make or keep people impoverished.
- Inclusivity. Everyone deserves a seat at the table. We must have the courage to ask one another what makes them feel welcome and then strive to make it so.
- The power of prayer. Sometimes the best prayer is "Thank You" or "Please." We may not always get what we want, but inevitably God grants us what we need and trusts that we understand the difference.
- The Communion of Saints. Past, present, and future. What a gift to be part of something that transcends time and place – the eternal now.
- Respect the mystery. Nothing in this life is an open book.

I am grateful for this journey. Members come and go, but the spirit of PAX remains one of comfort, challenge, and celebration. Thank you!

PAX: A Praying Community
Kay Larrieu

“What gifts are you willing to offer this community?” This question was the theme of the homily on Pentecost of my first liturgy at PAX twelve years ago. I was immediately struck by the reframing of the question which I had been defiantly asking after each of the liturgies Barbara Fischi and I had attended over some months in an effort to find a spiritual “home”: “Who *wants* my gifts?”

The re-framed Pentecost question posed at PAX has offered me an ongoing challenge these many years. But PAX has given me something more than a format for exploring my place in community. In my years of searching, I recognized that I needed to be in an inclusive community that was not hierarchically oriented. I didn’t want to hear endless sermons about money or how bad I was and always would be. I didn’t want to experience warehouse religion, where I rushed in unnoticed, did whatever I had to do to assuage my guilt, then dashed to be the first out of the parking lot.

I wanted instead to be recognized and valued as a member of the community. Most crucially, though, I recognized my need for a praying community. I quickly discovered that PAX prays big time for EVERYTHING. There is a moving and appealing intimacy about the way we gather around the altar and state our petitions. In this circle we symbolize our shared responsibility for the community.

Central to our communal prayer is our weekly liturgy. From my very first liturgy planning, I experienced with delight the joy of breaking open the Word together. These discussions are sometimes edgy, often provocative, and unfailingly interesting. Aside from coming up with enough of a consensus to build a Mass sheet, we commonly end with more questions than answers.

The dialogue homily seems a natural extension of those planning sessions. I am always encouraged by those in the community who are willing to share in this way during the liturgy. It seems to me an immediate way to live our mission statement.

Every report of the Social Needs Disbursement Committee reminds me that PAX prays in a very visible way through its social outreach. Moreover, there is no anonymity in PAX. Not only was I warmly greeted (by Carl Siebentritt) at the first liturgy I attended, but that same code of hospitality characteristically permeates our gatherings and activities. I was touched beyond words when, shortly after I had joined PAX, my husband became gravely ill and Terri Tarnoff, representing the community, approached me and asked how she could be of service.

Having found in PAX some answers, many more questions, much intellectual and spiritual stimulation, unending challenge, and boundless hope for myself as a member of the people of God, today I am no longer spiritually homeless. For that I am deeply grateful.

Wisps of Thought about My Pilgrimage in PAX
Marilu MacCarthy

“So much of spiritual life involves one’s interior journey, yet for most of us spirituality gets expressed even transformed – only in our relationship with others.” (Philip Simmons, *Learning To Fall: The Blessings of an Imperfect Life*)

For thirty years now, the Spirit of Life and Wisdom has invited me on a welcoming, nourishing yet challenging faith journey with PAX, my community. I have taken it and embraced it in joyful song – like “Song of the Soul”! I am so grateful for the people in this community who have walked with me. It is sacred – and it’s loads of fun too. You all, and many who have passed, embody for me the wonderful saying that I first heard Abbot Aidan Shea use in a homily, “I am because you are.” The saying is from Ubuntu, an African philosophy, and models relationship, community, compassion, generosity, harmony, humanity, inclusiveness, interconnectedness, shared humanity, stewardship, the other . . . the heart of Jesus’ message as I have heard it.

Thank you each and every one. I intend to keep on walkin’ it with you for a very long time.

Joan McQuaid

In 1973, Jim McQuaid came to the Pentagon to work for the Air National Guard Bureau. Four months later, the rest of the family (Joan, 4 sons, and a daughter) followed, kicking and screaming from Grand Island, NY (near Buffalo). We had lived there for 17 years and no one wanted to leave friends and family.

That first April of 1974, amid all the beautiful azaleas and dogwood (goodbye to snowy Buffalo), and after telling myself to “grow where you are planted,” Jim came home from Mass at St. Luke’s to tell me that he had discovered a wonderful PAX Community Mass. Well the rest, as they say, is history. On my first visit I met Joan Urbanczyk, also from Buffalo. What a coincidence!

Jim died very suddenly in December of 1979. By the time I arrived home from the hospital, several of my PAX friends were already there waiting. On the day of the funeral, my brother-in-law Charlie Chiappone, was heard to say, “It looks like the Marriott catering service has arrived.” PAX was such a great support for me during this time.

By then we had found a new home here, and finding PAX had been the beginning. Although I travel a great deal, I always come back to PAX and feel like I’m home again.

PAX Experiences
Mafalda Marrocco

What a spectacular life I have had in PAX, and I think I can say that about my whole family. I will tell a few of our stories.

First Encounter with PAX

Randy and I came to Mass at St. Luke's with our first child, Matthew, when he was three months old. We thought he would be very quiet during the Mass, but of course, he cried the whole time. Randy and I took turns standing with him out in the vestibule.

When I was out there, a lovely teenager happened to be back there and she asked me if she could hold this darling, crying baby. While she rocked with him on her shoulder, she made noises like an owl: u-u-uuuu, with the first two notes the same tone and the last note lilting up. It was beautiful, and Matthew quieted immediately.

"Where did you learn that?" I asked. She said, "My father used to sing that to me when I was a child." She was a 17-year-old Gretta Siebentritt speaking about her father, Carl.

Finding Our Spiritual Home

When I was pregnant with our second child, Elizabeth, I attended a meeting at St. Luke's as the church's representative to SHARE, an organization in the community that helped struggling people get food and clothing.

At that meeting, there were two women about my age who I met briefly. I was quite impressed with their contributions to the discussion. They were Myrtle Hendricks and Margaret Schellenberg, one a small blonde and the other tall with dark hair.

At Elizabeth's baptism I saw the blonde woman, whose son Peter also was being baptized. We recognized each other immediately and had a brief conversation. The week after, she called me and invited me to a PAX retreat at the Siebentritt's house. I said I couldn't go, as I had a baby and a toddler, and was completely overwhelmed. She offered to take care of my children so Randy and I could go to the retreat.

Well, my mother took care of the children, and Randy and I went to the retreat, only to meet a number of other PAX members who have helped us define our lives. Along with Myrtle and Bill Hendricks and Margaret and Fred Schellenberg, there were Carl and Elise Siebentritt, as well as Joe Nangle, our moderator, and Sister Kevin and Sister Caridad.

At one point, Joe asked everyone what "God" was to them. All of us proffered our best gathered-up response, and they were all over the map. I thought: If there is this much difference in the perception of God among these few people, maybe my belief isn't so "out there" after all.

We had found our spiritual home.

Tributes

I want to give tribute to two dear friends in our community, Bill Hendricks and Art Bisson. Both died far before we were ready to lose them.

Along with the Siebentritts (who were actually the parents of us all), the Schellenbergs, Bissons, MacCarthys, Spauldings, Galianis, Scotts, Degnans, and many more families all grew into mature adulthood in PAX, together. We raised our children together, went back to school together, shared our work and our pain (phone calls with these friends were a life saver for me). Basically grew up together.

Bill and Art were among those friends. I remember Art coming over and offering support to Randy when he was putting together the swing set that had been delivered to us in pieces. The Bissons would take us out to brunch (didn't have to, of course) when we did a little something for their family. We had dinners and picnics and just fun together. We were taken with how much Art loved his family.

Bill was a complicated character. He was a great resource for Randy and me on a number of occasions when we needed to ask a trusted friend's advice on a serious matter. He was the ultimate absent-minded professor who could never find his car keys. He would call for Myrtle's help as he bolted out the door, and in a minute she would produce the elusive keys.

Myrtle and I talked on the phone for extended periods in those days – our own support group. So many times I could hear Bill practicing the clarinet in the background. Bill and I were tied together by our love of music. He nurtured my understanding and appreciation of music over those many years. He played at our home, at my father's funeral, and at dozens of other important and memorable events. Bill's music was laced through our lives for all those years, and still is. When I now come face-to-face with the stunning tones of a clarinet, I feel like Bill's influence and his music are still very alive among us and will continue to nourish us throughout our lives.

The Community has lost many other members who were great friends. I can never forget the profound influence of Elise Siebentritt on my life and on the lives of all of us. And the loving contributions of Ben Scott will be with us forever through his art.

And to mention people present now in our lives. The Siebentritts have been, and Carl still is, the greatest of role models. Joe Nangle has walked with us on our journey and we share what a young priest once said of Joe, when Joe was about 60: He's "such a rebel."

Just not enough space to say everything I have in my heart.

PAX
Fr. Joe McCloskey

In 1973, I came to live at St. Luke's. Shortly thereafter, I had my first chance to celebrate for PAX. In the first months of living there, I was just taking my turn at the Masses. I did not initially appreciate the difference it made to have a community of people that wanted to be together. What brought about the change in my attitude were the friendships that developed with different members of the community. They reached out to me. And I discovered a special family within the family of the parish. Friends shared life together, and even as some of the members joined me in my work for the Cursillo, I found a special meaning in preparing Eucharist that reached beyond the preparation for Eucharist in meals and activities shared together. PAX helped me to live through what is called reverse culture shock. It was hard to come back from working with the poor in Chile as a priest-worker truck driver.

While still working at St. Luke's, I went frequently to Loyola Retreat House to give weekend retreats. That made the connection to PAX a little more distant, since I was away many weekends. But the close lay friends I had were often members of PAX. I lost contact with PAX when I went to Samoa in the South Pacific to teach Scripture in the Seminary. This began a separation that lasted until I returned to the area. Occasionally I had some contact, but it was nothing like what is possible when one is a frequent celebrant.

Doing Spiritual Direction and working at the McKenna Center reestablished my connection with PAX. The social outreach of PAX closed the gap. I again became an occasional celebrant. Nowadays, the retreats I give around the East take many of the weekends away when I might once again have been a celebrant. I rejoice that you plan for celebrants several months ahead, since it makes it possible for me to be a celebrant again. Spiritual Direction is now the rest of my life's work. I see as many as 80 people once a month, as well as others less frequently.

Our preparation for celebrations is like spiritual direction as we share our love of Christ together. I will always have space in my life for the PAX Community. PAX is a wonderful fit to my priesthood. PAX is a taste of what Heaven will be all about as we celebrate our love of each other with God.

Reflection
Ken Melley

In the late 60s and early 70s there was, in general, a major upheaval going on in many sectors of our nation's economy and social fabric: the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy; Viet Nam; Richard Nixon and Watergate; and in the Catholic church, Vatican II. Vatican II was written about in newspapers and magazines but looking back now, not much information, guidance, or implementation was coming from the pulpit at St. John's Church in McLean, our local parish.

During that timeframe, my Catholicism – which originated in my first-generation Irish family and then in parochial education – had lost a lot of meaning for me. Our children were attending public schools at the time, so my wife, Mary Lou, enrolled them in the religious education program at St. John's and also volunteered to teach. However, a new pastor changed the program dramatically, removing valued teachers with no explanation and directing parents to step back from their engagement in religious ed. That was enough for Mary Lou. Over the next many Sundays, we attended Mass at the nearby St. Luke's parish, celebrated in the gymnasium of the church's elementary school. The 9 a.m. service was planned and participated in by the PAX Community, a community of parishioners encouraged and supported by the pastor, Father Al Pereira, to live out the tenets, as they were understood, of Vatican II.

What a shock to my traditional upbringing. There were men and women on the altar celebrating God's word through readings, dialogue, communion distribution, and the sharing of peace. Gathering around the altar at consecration was a new and different experience. One Sunday at communion distribution time, both bread and wine were offered, and the very young children were offered balloons to reflect the joy of the moment. I must admit the first months and years at PAX were so unusual for me that I was unprepared to accept the warm embrace, the likes of which I had never experienced in a church environment. It slowly dawned on me that "church" was not a building or structure, and Mass was not the province of a chosen few, ordained men; that "giving" really meant sharing far more than monetary contributions. Expressions of prayer took on a new and significant meaning, and the music, oh the music. Over the 40-year time span, PAX has been blessed with extraordinary musicians, vocal and instrumental. Singing has enhanced the Sunday liturgies and become an integral part of our prayer. I offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the 125 presiders and all the members of our community, living and dead, who helped restore the full meaning of my faith, the church, and Catholicism.

The Bamboo Stand
Mary Lou Melley

The time: years in the 70s and 80s, maybe even some of the 90s.

Place: Northern Virginia maybe, really another world completely, a place of faith.

During this once-a-year occasion, I set the alarm for about 3 a.m. but like so many, I slept lightly in fear of sleeping through. That would be a disaster. In the dark of night and in the fog of sleepiness, I gathered the last minute items – goodies, of course, flashlight, white cloth. After donning the white garment, I put on the heavy winter coat and completed the outfit with white sneakers. Then set off in the car for Missionhurst.

It appeared that no one was stirring, until I reached the destination, where hardy souls with cheerful smiles went about their chores.

Finding the way down the stairs and the dark path, walking into a clearing, my feet became damp with the heavy dew. No moon to light the way, but I found the stand of bamboo and placed the white cloth on a branch, easily reachable by 'Peter.' Some of the time Jim Hug was there with me. The air was white with our breath as we spoke briefly, but we each returned to our meditation of the reenactment so essential and at the core of our faith.

Slowly a few birds started speaking and fluttering. And I heard from afar the community singing. The sound came closer. As I waited in the bamboo stand, they came even closer and I removed my heavy coat. Suddenly I was not cold or damp at all. I remember vividly Mariano Gowland taking part in the drama, reaching into the place where I stood, removing the white cloth and holding it high, announcing to those gathered that 'He is not here.' Then I emerged from the bamboo stand, taking the cloth, speaking words that express our mutual faith. Looking at those faces inspired me for all time, the faces of a true faith community, who then joyfully moved with me toward the altar for the liturgy. The musicians were 'instrumental' through the years, Paul Scott, Mack Wood, Bill Hendricks, and others, truly giving of their spirit and sharing their faith. The tradition of Brinton Brown carrying the Baptismal candle, the struggle always to ensure that the fire would be lit promptly, the eventual dampness that pervaded our bodies as the sun rose in the sky, and always the communal transport of liturgical items back up the hill to leave the meadow clear again – no sign of the miracle that had taken place.

Dan Mulholland

I first heard about PAX from Sarah, who decided after the Ribbon Experience to start taking "Catholic lessons" from Kevin Queally, TOR, who had also been part of the Ribbon, and she had started going to this small Catholic community in McLean called PAX. My first reaction was "At least they're not 'Baptist Lessons'"; I knew where the Catholics were coming from, as I was a cradle Catholic and had gone through Catholic grade school and high school but I stopped going before Vatican II.

When Sarah told me she might become a nun, I said, "I think that will change our relationship," but it got me thinking that if we did get married and Sarah became Catholic, how would that work. I didn't feel it was good if one partner was religious and the other wasn't, but then how would I feel about going back to Church after 24 years? The only way to find out was to try it; I had heard some good things had come out of Vatican II.

After asking Sarah to take me along to PAX with her, she refused as it was "her thing." But I persisted and on December 8, 1985 I went to PAX. They met in a school cafeteria with pandas on one wall and hot dogs on the other, and the chairs were in a semi-circle around a makeshift altar with backdrops. I thought, "this was cool," a sort of "Lilies of the Field" type Church. Jim Hug, SJ was the celebrant and gave a nice homily (or sermon as I was used to calling them).

At the Offertory, I found I still knew the words to the Creed by heart but started getting choked up saying them, and I didn't know why. Then people got out of their chairs and gathered around the altar, but as I joined the crowd, I started crying, and I didn't know why. I remember at the Sign of Peace, Lou Rosso was the first person I saw and looking around I realized that these people were here to celebrate the Mass; they weren't here because they had to be, which was one of the reasons I had left the Church years ago.

I left that day and my world was different, brighter, like looking through new glasses. I had a week of having different revelations about myself and having my life fall in place. I remember being at a stop light as the sun was going down and thinking "You dummy, all these years you argued about the existence of God; you can't know God in your head, only in your heart!" I understood why community was so important as each of us has an understanding of God that we all need to hear about and fit in with our understandings; this was brought home the first time I Mass planned and realized that other people had a very different interpretation of the readings than I did, but I couldn't say theirs was wrong; their views broadened my understanding of those readings.

I felt God had, for some reason I'll never know, yanked me back into the Church. I didn't want it and wasn't expecting much to come out of my visit to PAX that fateful day. But it was a day that changed my life forever. Thank you, PAX.

Peace and all good.

Sarah Mulholland

In the fall of 1984, I read an article in the Washington Post that literally changed my life. It was about an event being planned for August 1985 to tie a ribbon around the Pentagon as a “gentle reminder of things we do not want to see destroyed in a nuclear war.” The event was to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and was the brainchild of a Colorado grandmother, Justine Merritt. Since the Pentagon is in Arlington, the event was being coordinated by an entity I had never heard of – the Center for New Creation, which, it turned out, was right down the street from where I lived. So I went to an introductory meeting . . .

At that meeting, I met Joan Urbanczyk, Marie Dennis, and Margaret Schellenberg, the directors of the Center. As I got more involved with the planning for The Ribbon (as the event was called) I met others, including Elise Siebentritt, Marilu MacCarthy, and Joe Nangle, and gradually began to hear about PAX. I think it was Elise who first said, well why don't you come and check it out? So I did.

I could go on for pages, but the short version is that the results of being introduced to PAX included my becoming Catholic (Justine became my Godmother), marrying Dan, and getting deeply involved with the Secular Franciscan Order. Not to mention getting to know so many people who are actively living their faith, and serving as amazing examples to the world of what being Christian means.

Now that we live in central Oregon, I think I appreciate PAX even more. Our parish out here is far from the nurturing model of church that PAX is. But that is OK. I know PAX exists. And I know that PAX people are not alone in the struggle to be faithful (as Mother Teresa is credited with saying, “we are called to be faithful, not successful”). I am grateful beyond words for PAX and look forward to celebrating many more anniversaries.

PAX and I – 34 Years of Golden Memories Joe Nangle OFM

In the great novel *The Last Hurrah*, author Edwin O'Connor tells the colorful tale of a typical Boston-Irish politician, Frank Skeffington, and his last run at public office. The stress of the campaign proves too much for Skeffington and he succumbs to a heart attack the night he is defeated by a younger, inferior rival. On his death bed, the old man insists on one last audience with his cronies, and they troop into the sickroom one by one. When "Ditto" Bolan (known throughout the years for repeating verbatim Skeffington's political lines – hence the nickname) comes in, the dying politician smiles at him and speaks the memorable line, "How do you thank a guy for a thousand laughs?"

I find myself thinking of that imaginary scene as we come up on the PAX 40th Anniversary. How do I thank a wonderful group of people for a thousand memories: overwhelmingly joyous, many challenging, sometimes sad, always inspiring, occasionally tragic, and always, always purely Golden? They include hundreds of deeply spiritual and profound Eucharistic liturgies, peak moments of baptisms, first Holy Communion, weddings, visits to sick and dying PAX members and subsequent funerals – done as only PAX can do them, counseling and receiving counsel – and in, around, and through all of these events, deep and enduring friendships.

We'll continue together into eternity, I know, where Pilgrims After Christ will no longer be pilgrims but sharers in the everlasting Paschal Mystery which we have lived so intensely these four decades.

Faith and Caring
Stephanie Niedringhaus

Lillian Bisson first told me about PAX in the mid-1990s, when I was taking graduate classes at Marymount. At the time, I served as a CCD teacher at St. John's in McLean and was reluctant to leave. I wanted the children in our conservative parish to hear an alternative view of our faith, one that featured social justice elements of the Gospel message.

And then, a year or two later I heard about PAX again as I waited in line at a bookstore to have Lillian (Dr. Bisson to me at the time!) autograph a copy of her book on Chaucer. This time, I decided to give it a try, feeling that I needed more spiritual nourishment than I was receiving at St. John's. I also wanted a fuller faith experience for Eric and Mark.

We were warmly welcomed the day we arrived, and I was immediately drawn by the strength of the homilies and authentic sense that WE are Church. But it was not until a few months later that I truly understood the beauty of PAX and the power of community. It happened when Eric was admitted to Fairfax Hospital for emergency surgery. He was strong and brave – as he always is – but it was a difficult operation. I will never forget how deeply touched I was when Joan Urbanczyk handed me a sheet of paper with a long list of PAX members who were praying for Eric on an hourly basis. Only then did I fully understand that Eric would be OK and that we had found a spiritual home.

All my life, I had been a member of large, impersonal parishes. Rarely did the people in my pew on Sundays even know who I was. PAX members not only knew, they cared. Since those first few months, PAX members have cried and prayed with me when my family went through difficult times. Last year, Patty Spaulding and Joe Nangle sat with me on my birthday as we planned my mother's funeral. And Mary Lou Melley, Ron Novak, Marilu MacCarthy, the wonderful music group, and other community members also helped make the funeral both moving and a source of comfort.

But I want to end this on a happy note. PAX has taught me much about the joy of faith combined with caring. This was evident just yesterday, when Joan got up during announcements to tell the community how well Eric had performed in his play – and everyone applauded. Now THAT is the meaning of community!

Robert (Ahearne) O'Hearne

My parents, John and Barbara Ahearne, joined PAX in 1969, when I was two. PAX was our spiritual home until we moved away in 1991.

Some of my PAX memories are:

The occasional Family Religious Ed. event: marvelous, rowdy gatherings of kids and parents, spilling out all over the gymnasium, classrooms, and halls. I remember constructing with felt, and thinking Chris Galiani was REALLY pretty.

Listening to the folk group, which was then nearly all teen-agers, very talented, and full of life. I remember watching my elder siblings and wishing I could be like them.

PAX celebrations at many homes, most especially the Siebentritt's old house – with their amazing, sprawling back yard, a cascading hill surrounded by forest, with a swimming pool at the bottom. For me, this was an enchanted place.

Many dawn sunrise Easter services: fretting guitar strings with chilly fingers, hearing the notes of Matt's trumpet piercing the clear morning air, seeing Jean Delker and others walking the road to Emmaus, and witnessing Mary Lou Melley announce that Jesus had risen.

The attacks on PAX by the pastor of St. Luke's (the Catholic one), and the long, agonizing decision to leave the parish after the pastor's continued efforts to make our liturgical life unbearable.

Many lessons about the social gospel, given in the Mass and elsewhere. I learned Jesus calls us to act with compassion to aid those who suffer, whoever they are, wherever they are.

My favorite part of Sunday morning was the boisterous foyer after Mass, with everyone talking, laughing, making plans, and exchanging stories. This was the fruit of many, many Mass plannings and honest, unaffected, genuinely warm relationships. We, the children, basked in this warmth, and were nourished. Healed, even.

I knew these people. I trusted them. Because of them, for me church was a fun place. Warm, vibrant, good, and alive. A loving place.

This was a true experience of community – a blessed experience, as community is a reality which, if you haven't experienced it, you really cannot know what it is. (As is also true of...God.)

This didn't stop me from deciding that Christians were deluded nice people when I went off to college. But it did give me a basis when I was ready to begin anew my spiritual search.

What a Wonderful World
Nellie Hauke Ohr

I am eternally grateful to my sister, Katy DuGarm, for bringing me to PAX and welcoming me to sing with the Folk Group whenever I would visit her. So I already had a church family when I moved here in 1999.

One of my most beautiful memories is of the first Mass after September 11, 2001. We were scheduled to baptize Sally Thurin Rollin's baby. The Mass planners met on the night of 9/11, debated whether it was appropriate to hold a joyful celebration in the wake of that horrible event, and decided that it was. Chris Johnston sang "What a Wonderful World." Birth and death, sadness and hope were all summed up in that celebration and in that song.

Indeed, PAX members walk with each other through illnesses, deaths, births, weddings, and all the other delights and aches of life. Memorable scenes of community support include the six or seven godparents who witnessed the baptism of Jenny McIntosh; John Chomeau mobilizing the troops to clean and spruce up Margaret Schwartz' house when she was in Ukraine adopting her boys; or Joan and others making sure there's plenty of food after a funeral. When I receive Communion from the hands of a brother or sister who has been scarred by a loss, illness, or other suffering, I really feel I am receiving Christ.

Our presiders enlighten, inspire and comfort. I cherish the memory of when Joe Nangle, instead of enjoying the dinner he had cooked for his community, rushed over to Arlington Hospital to anoint my mother in her last days. Ted Keating, Aidan Shea, and Leon Hooper break open the Sunday scriptures for us, each in his own way, and Joe McCloskey always reminds us of that basic truth, "You can't deserve love." And who can forget the Christmas Eve when Jim Hug evangelized a stuffed camel?

Kay and Mike O'Keefe
Minneapolis, Minnesota

"Dresses must have sleeves that cover women's elbows." That homily was our first and last experience with our local D.C. area parish. It was 1977. We had just moved to Maryland from the Midwest. That experience started our search for a church community focused on spiritual sustenance more than the morality of women's elbows. About a year later, we discovered PAX. What a delight to find a liturgical celebration within a parish where faith mattered and was discussed and applied to everyday living.

Several years later being "within a parish" became a problem for PAX. We remember so well the difficult discussions that led PAX to separate from St. Luke's. There were the rational arguments, especially from those raised in the Jesuit tradition. There were deep emotional conflicts. And, in the end, those who chose to go with PAX, and those who felt they could not, equally bore testimony to the importance of a spiritual life within the Church. The acceptance, even if not complete understanding, of differences of viewpoints has been at the core of the PAX community as it embraces its members and reaches out to others.

Memories of PAX celebrations, parties, and social outreach are many. One that stands out for us is the Christmas Eve Mass that began with a candle light procession, with the celebrant, Jim Hug, reciting a litany of major historical events leading up to the birth of Christ and continuing on with events of modern times that witnessed through the ages the presence of Christ in our world. As the procession moved toward the altar, there were Mafalda and Randy French with their newborn son, offering a vision of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. A moving experience, giving immediate meaning to the Christmas season.

It's been nearly 20 years since we moved to Minneapolis. On the few times we've been in D.C. on a weekend, we've come to PAX. We come to reconnect and to experience in its fullness liturgy grounded in theology, liturgy that recognizes that "gospel time" is now, liturgy shaped by both our beliefs and our humanness. We are welcomed warmly by old friends and new as we gather around the altar and pray with PAX. And we return to our Midwestern Diaspora, renewed and refreshed in oneness with the Body of Christ.

Mary Linda Sara

I came to PAX with a friend who knew Elise. She hasn't come back; I have been here 6 years. At first I came alone, and then Brian joined me. As a non-church goer, he was touched by the loving community he walked into. He was a faithful attendee until his health dictated otherwise.

Brian continued to enjoy the PAX Community when he was homebound through the generosity of the many who came to have lunch with him. His memory was so bad he could never remember the conversations to tell me about them, but his face always lit up when I asked about lunch!

The most meaningful recollection of PAX that I have is Brian's Memorial Service. I had been worrying about where I was going to have the service. Members of PAX stepped right in and relieved my anxiety. The service came off in typical PAX Style. I will never forget looking up and seeing all the members of the folk group and the many PAX friends in the congregation; the refreshments that were set up for friends and family. The table with the pictures of Brian's life was so beautiful. My sisters kept commenting on how the community was so caring and concerned. They continue to speak of it today.

The next Easter was a special service as we processed with the bamboo outside with the lovely origami doves and celebrated all PAX members who had joined the Communion of Saints. Joan Urbanczyk's voice as she read the members – including Brian's – will always be in my heart. Jim Hug mentioned Brian in his homily that day in a very touching way.

I also remember becoming a Eucharistic Minister and the many times since then that I have been invited to distribute communion. Each time seems so special.

For me, PAX is the embodiment of the early Pauline Church. Its vibrancy makes my faith vibrant. Its loving caring community makes my life a little fuller, and for that I am grateful.

Gene and Marilyn Scapanski

Dear PAX Community Members,

Sorry that Marilyn and I cannot join you for the 40th anniversary. (We were privileged to have been there for the 25th!) Ironically, we will have houseguests that weekend – from D.C.

I was on the parish staff of St. Luke's Church from 1968-1972 and remember the conversations with Father Albert Pereira and other staff regarding the founding of the PAX Community. Father Pereira, as some of you may remember, had taken three months off after the Second Vatican Council to read and absorb the spirit of the documents. He talked about the importance of community as a Council theme and his desire to provide for smaller, intentional community experiences within the larger parish of St. Luke's. He felt that it was too easy for Catholics to get "lost" in our large, often impersonal suburban parishes. Out of that vision, he initiated the PAX and Great Falls communities.

Marilyn and I have fond memories of those early days and of the people who caught Al's vision and ran with it: the Siebentritts, Duncans, Ahearnes, and many others. The commitment to worship, adult and family education, and service were remarkable and inspirational. In 1971, we had the amazing experience of being married at St. Luke's and celebrating that event within the loving embrace of both the PAX and Great Falls communities.

We remember you fondly and will join you in your celebration from afar!
Congratulations PAX!

Judy Schaeffer

Once upon a time there were two mad scientists, Carl and Mike. They had worked together for more than 25 years when suddenly their mutual friendship with Fr. Gerry Creedon came up. This was in late 1996. (Mike and his wife had met Gerry at Blessed Sacrament in the early 70s. He had baptized their daughter Jennifer and had been instrumental in Mike becoming one of the first Eucharistic Ministers there.) Mike spoke to Carl about his and Judy's difficulty in finding a spiritual home. They had tried all of the parishes in the Springfield area and had been met with coldness and rote religion. The more searching they did, the more frustrated they became. At this point Carl, the older and wiser scientist, mentioned a wonderful place with warm, loving, prayerful people. PAX!!!!

As it turned out, the Spirit had been involved in this discussion. Mike and his wife Judy attended their first PAX Mass in November, 1996 at St. Aloysius in D.C. Mike was a little put off by the early time of the regular Masses (he's not a morning person), so Judy, being the early bird, attended alone – but for only a short time. You see, on December 31, 1996, Mike was diagnosed with a small non-malignant brain tumor (acoustic neuroma) which required surgery. While Mike stayed home, Judy went to PAX and asked the Community's prayers for Mike. The surgery went very well and Mike attended PAX twelve days after brain surgery (with six inches of thick black stitches going down the back of his head). He felt compelled to go to thank this wonderful community, whose prayers had led to an exceptional recovery. Since then, despite a total loss of hearing in one ear as a result of the surgery, he has been able to continue to pursue his passion – his music.

Then in 2009, Judy needed surgery and Mike prayed for *her* recovery. She also returned to PAX in only twelve days to thank the wonderful community that has a direct line to God's ear.

They are both astounded by the Community's love for each other in good times and in bad. The outreach to other communities, both here and abroad, have opened their eyes to a larger world in great need of love and help, and to the concrete things that can be done to assist in some way. The example set by the members of PAX has served to strengthen their faith and has challenged them to live more as Christ would have them live.

So, thanks to Carl, they lived happily ever after!

Charles and Pat Schehl

The PAX Community has been a very important part of our lives for 30 years. A concern with one of our youngest children's school progress was the catalyst for our joining PAX, but the 30 years of our belonging to the community has really been the period after our children left home.

We came to McLean in 1964 with our ninth child on the way. We joined the local parish. Our religious and political convictions had always been to the left. We followed Vatican II developments with enthusiasm. We found multiple areas of disappointment in the parish. For various reasons, the children's school experience was not great. Also, there seemed no openness to initiate Vatican II liturgy reforms and no inclinations to discuss the new directions coming out of the counsel. There was a closed or negative attitude toward possible social justice activities that could be considered for the parish.

A group of Catholics in the district, acting on similar disappointments, began "The People" or "People's Action Mass." There was a liturgy every Sunday, quite like the current PAX liturgy with priests of various orders (perhaps diocesan as well?), guitar-led music, and moving venues. There was a social action commitment and an evolving project to take over and operate a declining home for the homeless. Before long, however, the local ordinary effectively suppressed the People's Action Mass by denying privileges within the diocese to any priest participating in their liturgies.

So we found ourselves meeting with a northern Virginia group (from the People's Action Mass) from which the Nova community eventually evolved; for the next 10 years, that was our faith community. We remain indebted for the support in faith and friendship of the members and priest presiders so important to us there during the tumultuous 60s/70s.

Thirty years ago, we thought we wanted to send our second youngest son to O'Connell High School, so we made our move to PAX because it carried the parish connection necessary for him to be accepted. Living and working in McLean, we already had a number of friends in the PAX community and had been in touch with its progress over the years. Our son never did go to O'Connell, but by then we were happily and conveniently members of PAX, feeling a tinge of guilt about leaving our Nova friends.

So we are most grateful to PAX for giving us a faith community that is wonderfully supportive of each and every member, and affirming of a faith that strives to embrace and love all people seeking the ways to serve in justice, and when we get there, in charity.

Rosa Scott

PAX for me is more than a church; it's my spiritual family, and more. If I go to another church, I go in, I go out. I don't know anyone, and nobody knows me. And here we all are children of God. In PAX, you are taken under the wings of others. The PAX family took me in all those years ago when I was a nanny with a family in McLean. The Coates and the Schnibbes picked me up and took me to Mass every Sunday, and sometimes on Friday evenings for home Masses or meetings. This was in 1969. I was alone, so that's why I call PAX family.

Later I met Ben, and PAX had its first ecumenical wedding!

I witnessed a meeting at PAX when we discussed the name of this new group. Thus, "PAX" was born. All the meetings seemed very intellectual to me – there I was a country girl, a nanny, and my English was very bad. But I liked it, and I learned a lot of things there, how things worked. Even though I was not participating, I was listening. I witnessed how PAX was forming, how it chose its name, and how it was continually growing.

PAX has walked with me in many events. My courtship. My wedding. Paul's birth. His baptism and First Communion. All of our illnesses, and of course Ben's death.

I believe so much in the power of prayer. During a tough time, I started praying once a week with Joan, one of my sisters in PAX. She came to stay with me every night when I was in the hospital one time.

I pray now that I will walk with PAX as the people have so often walked with me.

Yutao Shen and June Zhu

We came to the states in 1986 as graduate students, and both earned our degrees from Notre Dame in 1990. Father David Burrell and Tao's advisor Lloyd and his wife Shelley introduced us to the Catholic Church and the concept of social network. We met Catholic social workers helping the mentally and physically challenged, and a nun who arranged adoptions of hundreds of babies. After graduation, we joined various Chinese Christian churches, but never felt quite at home spiritually. In general, the Chinese Christian community was much more politically and socially conservative than we were. We wrote to David Burrell in summer 2005 for advice on finding a "liberal Catholic Church." He introduced us to Joan U. and PAX. The first time we came to PAX was in September 2005, and felt at home right away. We like the community and the messages delivered by the priests. It reminded us of the days when we were at school and the Sunday Mass at the Married Student Housing.

Our son David was 14 at the time. He became a member of J2A, and was baptized during the early morning celebration of Easter at Missionhurst by Joe Nangle. David was very socially progressive at heart. He went to Florida for a swimming meet that spring break. June and I picked him up at 1 a.m. from the airport, four hours before his baptism. *He was struggling in his circle of friends in the club swimming team at the time because of his religious, social, and political views. Most kids on his team were more conservative than he at the time.* PAX gave him a sense of belonging at the time. His views changed in high school. He became more progressive religiously, socially, and politically. He has not come to PAX since his senior year in high school. We hope that he will come back to PAX when he matures.

We participated in many PAX activities and events: OXFAM, the soup kitchen in DC, Table of 8, and others. I went to the soup kitchen on Saturdays with my daughter Katie when she was home for summer from college. I remember that she had a quite interesting conversation with Dennis. Katie is more progressive in many views than both of us. She really enjoyed her conversations during the two hours serving sandwiches. This might have been her first time ever face-to-face with the poor and hungry.

PAX is the place where we feel closer to God and closer to the teachings of the Bible. We like the closeness of the small community and the progressive views of so many folks here. We found our faith home at PAX.

Forty Years with PAX
Carl Siebentritt

It's hard to believe – 40 years with PAX – nearly half of my lifetime!

Really, PAX made my life, *is* my life.

It is among my greatest of gifts, along with Elise and family. As a family, PAX helped us define our values around Peace and Justice.

PAX also directly or indirectly had a hand in:

- Finding us a home – Diane Stevens
- Keeping me fit – Fred Schellenberg, Dave Sanford
- Enhancing our careers:
 - Carl creating a dosimeter plant in ND, employing Native Americans
 - Elise becoming a pastoral counselor, affecting many lives
 - Tres expanding his worldwide outlook, bringing Irida (Ira) home from Albania
 - Gretta serving the refugees in El Salvador
 - Peter's outspoken promotion of PAX-inspired values
 - Joel's pastoral and musical gifts
 - Heidi being the essence of love
 - Krista as a champion of family life

PAX also provided us as a family with opportunities to grow spiritually through religious education and to pray, celebrate, mourn, greet, depart, journey, retreat, heal, and, as a community, experience all those things a family experiences. In other words, I tend to think of all PAX members as part of my family. This was evident when Elise died in the arms of PAX.

I was present at the birth of PAX – the first meeting to conceptualize it was in our living room. I remember Anne and Carol leading the pack, along with Buck Hennigan and Elise. There was the moon walk recording for Easter and so many other Spirit-filled occasions – so numerous that they choke my memory.

The PAX experience made it possible for me to be alive to write this today and to enjoy my marriage of 50 years. Elise drew so many beautiful people to our family of close friends that I now wallow in the company of the most beautiful Holy Spirit-filled people in the world – you PAX, are all mine!

Halleluiah!

Elise Siebentritt

What would Elise say about PAX in her life story? Perhaps the following:

Dear PAX,

You gave me my Savior Jesus and my God. They came to me in the form of your people out of the pews of St. Luke's and elsewhere.

They came as Virginia, Margaret, Marie, Myrtle, Marilu, Sally, Rosa, Elaine – so many to recall and recount.

They came to me as my family – as moments of love and pride, sorrow, tears – so many emotions shared.

They came to me as places like Washington, Canada, Israel, El Salvador, Guatemala, Vienna – all part of their beautiful creation.

They came as spiritual leaders and colleagues like Albert, Glynn, Joe, Jim, Anne, Judy – Christ-like all.

All of these gifts, so abundant, made it possible to share my time, my home, my family, and community in the course of my attempts to respond to the Spirit. You made me your pastoral counselor. Such an honor!

PAX, you enriched my life with friendship, music, and prayer and you brought the same to me at the end of my life. Thank you. I love you all.

Lovingly submitted by Carl.

Gretta Siebentritt

The PAX community raised me, packed me off to El Salvador as a young adult, supported my causes, challenged my beliefs, and sent “delegates” down to Central America to check up on me from time to time. Later, the community presided over my wedding and accompanied me in the birth of my two daughters, Irena and Lila, as well as in the many good, and some hard, things life has brought to me and my family over the ensuing years. Whenever I run into any of our beloved PAX friends, they always know exactly what I've been up to (which can be a little scary!). I don't go back much anymore, but when I do, it's always going home.

Mary Lou Sleevi

“Yes, and thank you” is my morning prayer. Daily for 40 years.

Your Will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. I did the word Yes as an abstract painting for my first one-person art show in 1971. It didn't sell. For 20-some years it abided in daughter Lisa's laundry room. Present.

For the 30th Anniversary of PAX in 1999, Ken Melley invited us to present my art and story of “Lydia” celebrating at her Table. Yes, of course! (I had done more than 50 paintings with poetry of Sophia and her biblical Daughters.)

Inclusivity, lay leadership, Vatican II, and a rented ground floor found us at PAX. Gene and I were leaders in church Renewal Movements throughout our marriage, since 1949...Movements always connected with parish “super-vision.” His immensity, my intensity.

Our lay ministry went forward, transforming a cobwebby storeroom under the water tower at Missionhurst into The Shepherd's Door. Sisters of Canacle Pat and Marian, our lasting friends there, taught “We are capable of God, suggesting (again) PAX:
Freedom to color “outside the lines.”

Its centeredness on Eucharist drew us and grew us and knew us.

Jesus said, “Do this in memory of me.” Priestly people: joining the Body of Christ breathing His Spirit.

Granddaughter Michelle died tragically on Thanksgiving Day, 2003. PAX treasured our cerebral-palsied 9-year-old. Hospitality surrounded her beautiful funeral. Crowds of folks from all over.

Illness kept Gene and me home together during Christmastime. On Christmas morn I said: “Welcome, Jesus. That's all I can pray.” It is my most memorable short prayer ever.

Came the New Year and the most traumatic event of my life – Gene's very sudden death, Jan. 18, 2004. Graced numb, I was never abandoned.

Who can forget that funeral?? For the first time, an open casket in our community room (all drenched in holy waters)! Chris Egbulem spontaneously singing all over the scale. Winds!

For the first time ever, I live alone.

Needing a ride to church – and anywhere – is still humbling. Early Sunday mornings, a driver's at my door. Bob said, “Someone will always get you home.” A favorite metaphor.

I value insight and foresight. More than hindsight.
Going beyond the status quo,
Holding on and letting go.
Creatively.

I have no doubt about life after living. The dance goes on.

High Lights:

“We are literally touched by the Spirit's healing, especially around our altar. Physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. My eyes, after emergency surgeries, are better than ever, says my doctor (since 1992), adding, “Way beyond me. That's God!!”

*Challenging preaching: inward, onward.

(The Body of Christ, breaking open The Word – even at breakfast.)

*Relationships: increasingly trusting God's very humanity.

I meet regularly with soul-friends and our Teacher. Listening. Retreats under stars, grounded 'round a bonfire.

PAX upholds my daughter Lisa through breast surgery, elective chemo and radiation; difficult divorce, custody of minor children – and saving her job, threatened with loss.

I believe wholeheartedly in creative Gifts, underscoring my own – in Living Color. “I (too) am doing something new. Even now it springs forth. Do you not perceive it?” Yes, Isaiah (43). I'm inclined to believe the best is yet to come.

Solitude is an artist's Gift. I feel lonely. And serene. Yes, the laundry room painting hangs directly inside my front door.

Thank you, PAX, for being here. Leading the singing.

Bob Smith

My family was blessed by multiple decades of deep involvement in a vibrant Vatican II parish. With a diverse membership, a succession of excellent pastors, and an empowered Parish Council, we anticipated that our funerals would be celebrated in this parish after several additional decades of parish life. Then in the late 1990s, an ill wind blew in new clergy and everything changed. The new pastor came to govern with no concern for the opinion of the laity. One of his assistants was convinced that Mother's Day was an ideal occasion to preach a sermon on why women could not be priests. Another of his assistants stated publicly that the bishop had instructed them to turn the place into a "regular parish." We came to understand that what this crew viewed as a "regular parish" was something that we viewed as an occasion of sin. After several fruitless years of trying to find a way to work with these clerics, the parish began to hemorrhage in various ways. Many people departed for other parishes, other dioceses, and other faith traditions. It was a very painful time.

In response to this turmoil, I found myself driven to re-examine my faith. I started reading the books of Raymond E. Brown, William D'Antonio, Dean Hoge, Eugene Kennedy, Hans Kung, Thomas Merton, Richard Rohr, Gary Wills, Walter Wink, and many others. Through this long process, still ongoing, I began to realize that I had a childish understanding of the Catholic faith. Looking back on Catholic grade school, Catholic high school, and the teaching contained in a thousand sermons, it strikes me as a simplistic diet of piety and pabulum, suitable perhaps for children but inadequate and misleading for adults. I am thankful to have found in PAX a community of serious Christians looking to follow Christ, committed to planning and celebrating meaningful liturgies, developing community, and responding to the needs of our world in justice, as those needs are revealed to us in liturgy, prayer, and community dialogue.

What PAX Has Meant to Me! Valerie Schnibbe Smith

I loved growing up in PAX. I have so many fun memories: from meeting in the church/gym of old St. Luke's and gathering around the altar that most people only looked at from a distance, to celebrating the huge Passover Seder at the parish rectory, to meeting at Westgate Elementary School and in the community room of Tysons Corner before the lower level was developed!

PAX was a wonderful family to grow up in! I remember laughing, chasing, and running, singing those 60s and 70s folk songs with other kids from other families, such as the Siebentritts, Campbells, Foleys, Melleys, and Chomeaus. What fun we had!

The smaller size of PAX allowed my confidence to be built up whenever my family planned a Mass and I gave a reading, shared a testimony, or signed the "Our Father" in front of people I could trust. It made me feel part of the church service, too by helping to set up the chairs or tear down each Sunday. To this day, I have a big need to participate wholly in the liturgy and to belong to a smaller (more manageable) part of a big church.

More importantly, I remember the women of PAX coming to my house to care for my ill mother while we were in school. And then I remember Joan U. coming to the hospital the night my mother died 9/11, 1975 to help us make funeral plans, etc. It's no wonder she was the first person I turned to when I found out my father was dying in 2002.

And then the community was there when I became pregnant and had no mother to which to turn. The women showered me with fabulous gifts and wisdom and then fed us during those first few days of Caroline's life.

The community gave me a foundation for trusting a smaller group of a big church family to be the hands, feet, eyes, and ears of the Lord. I find I need to be in a church community where I can know everyone and love up on them the way PAX loved up on me!

**What PAX Has Meant to Our Family
Doug and Patty Spaulding**

The morning of April 16, 2000 was a turning point for our family. By that time, we had 23 years of PAX experience under our belts and we had seen over the years the generosity of PAX to members who faced trials and tragedies. Our three kids, who had grown up in PAX, were out of the nest, with our youngest, Mike, in his third year at UVA. The call that came in at 6:32 that Palm Sunday morning was the embodiment of all the fears that parents have from the day their children are born. The doctor on the other end of the line told us that Mike had been in a serious car accident and that it was doubtful that he would live. He asked for our permission to conduct emergency brain surgery in a desperate effort to save Mike's life. We were literally in a state of shock as we packed a few items and drove south to Lynchburg. In these nine years since, we have experienced so dramatically the love and generosity of PAX's warm embrace. PAX members were among the first to visit and comfort us in the weeks in Lynchburg while Mike lay in a coma, fighting for his life. PAX was there when we returned to Northern Va. to continue his recovery and rehab at Mt. Vernon Hospital. The thrice-weekly meals provided by the special needs committee continued for months, but equally important were the prayers and concern expressed by so many of our PAX family.

Mike's recovery is an unfathomable blessing for our family, and it is heartwarming for us to see his efforts to give back to this group that has supported him in prayer and nurturing for nine years. Mike and we are convinced that a significant key to his recovery has been the continual prayers and the weekly support he receives from our PAX community. As he lives so much of his life now in service to those with special needs, we see reflected in him the character of PAX that has sustained it for the past 40 years.

**PAX in My Life
Mike Spaulding**

For our Good Friday service in 2002, two years after my life-changing accident, I wrote the following prayer for the seventh station of our Stations of the Cross to reflect on Jesus' second fall. Now, seven years later, it still has great relevance in my life.



**Station 7
Jesus Falls the Second
Time**

*As you fall for the second
time, I am aware of the many
times I have fallen due to my
sins.*

We all know what it's like to fall, misstep, or stumble. The same went for Jesus. In our case, we may have therapies, support, doctors, and family to help pick us back up again. On top of all of that we also have God's never-ending love. Through the experience of Jesus' second fall we can now be confident that God's love is behind us in every situation. Jesus fell and then got back up to continue his journey to the cross. Jesus, give us the strength to always get back up and continue our journey to you.

– Mike, Lent 2002

As PAX celebrates its fortieth anniversary, I am very thankful for the continued support that has enabled me to get back up and live a fulfilling and productive life.

Joan Urbanczyk

I am grateful to Diana Keenan and Nancy McIntosh, who invited my family to worship with a newly formed community even though we lived outside the St. Luke's parish boundaries. The welcome was warm and our two teenagers declared that they liked the liturgy! When teenagers want to return, parents can only rejoice.

How can I tell the story of a nearly 40-year journey that followed? I can touch only highlights! I remember:

...Retreats...the silence, the challenges, the fun, and the vision of Paul Delker doing Tai Chi outside my window at dawn.

...Parties...celebrating anything and everything. Crazy, but building friendships and community. Some of my closest friends are from those days.

...Corn Picking, hog slaughtering, barn dancing, Baptism at the Grosso farm in Lovettsville.

...The Center for New Creation...being asked by Marie Dennis and Margaret Schellenberg to join them in birthing the CNC was a blessing. Many PAX supporters volunteered and staffed the Center.

The Generosity of the community in caring for the sick...countless dinners, transportation, patient care, and prayers.

...The Power of PAX prayers...evidenced by many major and mini miracles.

...The PAX Fund...through the years, the grants and loans given to PAX members by the fund, always preserving the anonymity of the grantee.

...The Altruism of PAX shown by their early support of the struggling Zaccheus Soup Kitchen, Rachael's Women Center, S.O.M.E., and the continuing financial and hands-on engagement with social justice groups.

...Monday prayer with my sister Rosa has been an incredible gift.

In 1976, along with 13 others (3 PAX members), I was elected by the St. Luke's Catholic community to be a communion distributor. PAX then offered me the opportunity to give communion to my parents and my children, and First Communion to my granddaughter.

In 1994, my husband Lou received word that he had terminal cancer. Our world changed. As he began his "wasting away," more than three home Masses were held with PAX priests presiding, the folk group entertained him, and Charles Schehl made house calls. Lou truly came to know how much he was loved. When he died in peace at home, PAX went into action. They arranged the Mass, brought meals, and prepared a feast for our many relatives. Perhaps other church communities do those things, but I believe only PAX folks could arrive at the back door with scrub pails and vacuums to clean my house. Sr. Kevin even refinished my kitchen table!

As the present universal church exists, I am grateful for PAX. Were it not for this Spirit-led community and the nourishing, challenging liturgies, I'm not sure where I would be today. The "Hound of Heaven" has continued to lead me. Praise God!

My PAX Experience CeCe Vernaci

I still remember my first visit to PAX. Someone introduced me and people clapped a welcome. Wow! What a friendly place. Needless to say, I came back. And to think I was just about to walk out of the church altogether.

I remember my first Mass planning. Someone told me that it was a good way to get to know other people. I was going to see if I could sit in the same room with a priest and not do him any harm. I was still a very angry unhappy catholic. Poor Leon, he did not know what he was getting into. I made sure I sat all the way across the room just in case. Mass planning was great. It is one of the things I like best about PAX. I have learned so much and am not so angry anymore. I've learned a lot from our presidors and enjoy their company and the sometimes lively discussions during Mass planning.

I had a lot of fun doing the newsletter. The funny stuff was the best part. I acquired quite a collection of funny and sometimes slightly risqué jokes and sayings from PAX-ers, friends, and family. Mary Lou Melley introduced me to the wisdom of William Sloan Coffin, which appeared in the newsletter on numerous occasions. Marilu MacCarthy acquainted me with the poetry of Julia Esquivel V, which appeared in the newsletter in both English and Spanish. What a challenge it was to type the Spanish version!

I love the prayer shawls the PAX Purls make and the way that the community blesses them before the recipient receives them. PAX gives church a new meaning. I really love this caring community and hope it enjoys a great future.

PAX Chant

Carl Siebentritt (revised April 2009)

Chorus:

NOW WE WALK THROUGH THE PARKING LOT WITH FEAR AND TREPIDATION,
FOR WE MUST CLEAR THE AREA FOR THE 10:30 CELEBRATION.

Big Al is our pastor; we shall not want.
At the PAX Mass he bade us repose.
Beside restless children we sit and doze.
Big Al's sermon is another one of those.

Jerry Creedon takes over; he's quite a rogue.
He gives us the word in a fine Irish brogue.
Beside restless children we still sit and doze.
Despite Jerry's skills with ecclesiastical prose.

Nangle is next. Fresh out of Peru.
He talks peace and justice; it's all kind of new.
Beside restless children we still sit and doze.
Hypnotized by the sight of Nangle's fine nose.

With Breslin, Hug, Himes, DuPont, and the others, we'll never more want,
At the PAX Masses we're glad to repose,
Despite restless children, we get the good news.
We share it with others, including Jack Hughes.

The 1980s got down and dirty.
PAX was forced to meet Saturday 6:30.
We left to worship in a place with no steeple.
Alas! We left many good people.

New Chorus:

NO MORE DO WE PARK OUR CARS WITH FEAR AND TREPIDATION.
WE HAVE MOVED THE PLACE OF OUR PAX CELEBRATION.

Third generation PAX-ers keep on comin'
But like us, are tunelessly hummin'.
Beside restless children, we still sit and doze.
As the Spirit above us gracefully rose.

Our restless children, themselves adults all
Now come to PAX in droves.
New celebrants help us discern.
Their homilies help us not to doze.

Despite being homeless, we thrived – did so well, we survived.
Beside restless children we still sit and doze.
But we've grown in number and we've grown in Spirit.
Now we shout from the rooftops and we want you to hear it!