

St. Matthew Church Biography: Tom and Judy Peterson
by Kathleen Monahan
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After a long career with International Paper, Tom Peterson found himself working for McFarland Cascade as the sales manager in Tacoma. He and his wife Judy settled in Federal Way where they initially began attending the Church of the Good Shepherd (Episcopal). After a short while, Judy happened to be driving through Browns Point when she saw St. Matthew Church nestled below Eastside Drive. Being still new to the area, she resolved to give it a try. They went on a Sunday in October of 1982 where they were warmly greeted before and after the service. Dave and Carol Hopkins sat in front of them. Before the service started, the Hopkins's turned around and invited them to breakfast. At Coffee Hour, they were again warmly received. When Tom and Judy walked out of the church that first Sunday, Judy said, "I don't care where you are going, but I am coming here!" She got no argument from Tom. They were hooked, line and sinker! Tom added, "When I first walked into St. Matthew, I had never felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in any other parish as I did here!"

A few months later Judy was asked to join the Vestry and some months after that, the Rector, Fr. Doug Hadley, asked her to be Senior Warden! This started a long succession of Vestry positions including Junior and Senior Wardens for both of them, many times over. Tom has also been very active in the Stewardship/Pledging programs. He served as co-chair of the Building Expansion Team when St. Matthew grew from a small Parish Mission building to the beautiful building that we enjoy today. Judy started the St. Matthew Adult Dining Group (SMADG). Judy and Tom also started the Thanksgiving Breakfasts, cooking breakfast in the church kitchen after the Thanksgiving service. (See the November 2020 flyer for more history.)

Judy and Tom were high school sweethearts in Longview, Washington. Tom attended the University of Washington and they were married two weeks after his graduation. He started a career at International Paper and from there they lived all over the country. Tom was raised Episcopalian and Judy was raised as a Roman Catholic. While living in East Lansing, Michigan Judy took the children to the Roman Church. One Sunday she came home to Tom who was dutifully reading his paper and said, "I don't care where we go, but we are going to church as a family!" And that's when Judy and their children became Episcopalians.

Tom and Judy raised three children: Michelle, who died at the age of 17; Stephen, who with his wife Shawna, currently lives with Tom in Federal Way; and Karen, who lives in California. Stephen's son, Cody, has a son, which makes Tom a great grandfather. And Karen has three children, Tyler (who was married in August), Maxwell, and Emma. (His granddaughter runs a tight COVID ship over him!)

After 59 years and nine months of marriage, Judy died on March 29, 2017. From boyfriend/girlfriend through their marriage, they were together for 64 years. Judy is buried in St. Matthew's Memorial Garden along with their daughter Michelle. Tom plans to be buried there, too, but not any time soon.

Tom reflected that St. Matthew has been a blessing to him and his family and has been their wonderful church home. Tom also participates as a worship leader. How many of us have enjoyed his rich, booming voice as he reads the lessons? Let's pray that the pandemic will end soon at which time we will be able to attend services together and listen to Tom once again.

