

Where I Came From and How I Got Here: Anne Cvicker

I grew up in lower Manhattan. Most of the people who lived here were immigrants from Eastern Europe with others from Ireland, Greece and Syria.

Not only did I know many different people, I also got to know about their religions. My Greek friend took me to her tiny church, St. George, on Cedar Street (It fell on 9/11). The priest wore golden robes and a high gold hat. He would appear and disappear in the incense smoke. I sat in the cramped balcony where I lit candles that were stuck in a large tub of sand and kissed the icons lining the wall. I marched in their Epiphany Day parade when a cross was tossed into the Hudson River and men jumped in to retrieve it.



Once a week the sisters from Trinity Church on Wall Street took the Protestant girls to their house on Fulton Street where there was a short service and then arts and crafts projects. (This is where I first heard the Nicene Creed). In the summer they took us to a camp bequeath to the Episcopal church by the Vanderbilt family.

Another friend's dad had a laundry shop where he washed and ironed the business men's shirts with a large iron that didn't have an electric cord took me to the "True Light Lutheran Church" in Chinatown where I had to stifle giggles as I listened to the sermon spoken in Chinese.

The Polish, Irish and Czech friends were all Roman Catholic. Their books about saints intrigued me, especially how these saints met their demise. They taught me the "Hail Mary" and where to say it on the rosary. I helped them think up new "sins" for when they went to confession.

Sunday mornings would find me walking the deserted streets, through the Trinity Graveyard to get to the Wall Street IRT subway which would take me to 14th Street and then a long walk to 20th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues to Holy Trinity Slovak Lutheran Church. (John and I got married here and with encouragement from the pastor, my brother, went on to become a bilingual Lutheran minister.) I went to the English service. My parents came later for the Slovak one.

When John and I and our family moved to this area, we wanted to be near a Lutheran Church. We were members of St. Mark's for many years until a friend urged us to visit Gloria Dei. Pastor Kriesat won us over with his sermon delivery and I liked the "high church" type of service he presented.

Many of the most important family events in my life have occurred at Gloria Dei Church. My three daughters were all married here. All six grand babies were christened here and confirmation for all six grandchildren will happen soon. John's memorial service happened here and his ashes are in the Memorial Garden outside. That's why Gloria Dei Lutheran Church feels like home to me.