



The Epistle

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Being Hungry

There's a sixty something immigrant from India who works as a nanny in Boonton. There's also an elderly couple on a fixed income with a love story worth hearing set in WWII era England. An older man, who lives alone in public housing and is extremely hard of hearing, waves enthusiastically to the kitchen crew and takes a seat. He has a friend who chastises him every fifteen minutes for how loudly he speaks. Even so, she always sits right beside him, making sure he doesn't miss out on cake or a really good stew or ice cream. A guy, who used to be the organist at a big church in Manhattan, usually plays our little upright piano while the food is being set out—everything from “Melancholy Baby” to “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” and even “Happy Birthday” when someone is discovered to have a birthday that week. A single mom makes sure her three kids eat everything on their plates, and a woman, sometimes homeless and sometimes not, usually arrives late. The people at her table welcome her lavishly. My guess is that greeting is a highlight in her week.

These are some of the regulars at St John's Saturday Luncheon Social (SLS) -- a program which has been led and sustained by lay ministers at St. John's and supported by the laity of several local churches for many years. Kids going through confirmation class at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel fill plates with string beans, turkey and stuffing. Is this the first afternoon some of them have ever spent doing something kind for a stranger? Rev. Jen at the First Presbyterian Church next door reports that SLS is her congregation's most cherished, local ministry. I understand why. I love it too.

I especially love that when St. John's prepares a meal for SLS we always grab plates of food ourselves and sit down with our guests. Kathleen Kriegman leans in across the table to listen deeply to a lady who hasn't been “heard” for a while. Joanne shares a laugh with someone she's just met about losing track of time. I learn about what it's like to raise toddlers in Boonton when you don't have a car.

