INTERVIEW WITH

EVIE ROONEY

Tom Birch: We're here with Evie Rooney at her house on Highland Place. This is Tom Birch. We're going to talk to Evie about her life at Christ Church. Evie, why don't you just begin by telling us what drew you to Christ Church. When did you start coming or coming on and off?

Evie Rooney: I went to St. John's on Lafayette Square for 30 years. I served on the Vestry, Outreach Committee and the search committee upon John Harper’s retirement. I was proud to be part of the electing the new rector; however, as the culture of the church changed, I decided it was time for a change. I visited many parishes but ultimately, Christ Church felt just right from many perspectives, including its leadership, community, mission, liturgy, and music program. Furthermore, my daughter and her new husband were members.

Tom: I think that we gained several members of Christ Church from St. John's Lafayette Square.

Evie: Quite a few.

Tom: Not just you.

Evie: Correct. When I first arrived in the Church, Jim Johnson, whom I adored, greeted me and later encouraged me to get involved in the Mission Committee, as he knew of my involvement on St. John’s Outreach Committee. Other familiar faces included John and Caroline Macomber and Ned and Merrielou Symes. There were others: Terry Parmelee, who had been on Outreach with me at St. John’s, as well as Molly and Fred Kellog and Kathe and Edwin Williamson.

Tom: Who was the rector when you came to Christ Church?

Evie: Stuart Kenworthy, who was a real draw, with his positive, welcoming spirit and spiritual presence.

Tom: It was suggested that you ought to get involved on the Mission Committee. Was that a go?

Evie: No, I volunteered for the Homeless Shelter and attempted to get involved but, I realized quickly that there were already many cooks in the kitchen, literally and figuratively, and so I looked elsewhere for areas in need of support.

Tom: Were there differences in the liturgy in the service at Christ Church from when you'd been at St. John's with John Harper? Did you have to adjust a little bit to how things were?

Evie: Actually I came to Christ Church because its liturgy was quite similar to that which John Harper offered. St. John’s had changed a great deal under its new Rector, and I missed the tradition and order with which John Harper led, whether a President were present or simply for an ordinary Sunday. He took very good care of volunteers and for me, as a longtime member of the Altar Guild, it meant a great deal to be invited for coffee at his house and offered thanks for
Tom: So I wondered in terms of feeling comfortable in the service and generally, at Christ Church, you felt at home again.

Evie: Yes, indeed, the formality of Christ Church, the liturgy, the music, the overall order and respect for tradition.

Tom: The tradition and formality. I think that’s what we all appreciate at Christ Church.

Evie: It’s wonderful.

Tom: Your daughter and her family are there, also. Did they follow you or did they precede you?

Evie: Martha was confirmed in the Catholic Church but attended St. John’s throughout her childhood, along with her brothers, Timothy and Gregory. When Martha married David, they decided to bring their children up in the Episcopal Church. They visited many churches and ultimately, joined Christ Church in 1998, with David converting from the Presbyterian Church to the Episcopal Church. At the time, they lived next door to Sanford and Mary Garner and were dear friends. Their three children were baptized at Christ Church, and Sanford and Mary attended that of their first born, Davis. We were grateful for the Garners, as we are the Kenworthys and the Coles. Their families welcome all of us as though we are their family.

Tom: Are you on the Altar Guild?

Evie: Yes.

Tom: You’ve spent some time on the mission committee?

Evie: Not much time. My primary focus is the Altar Guild, but I also enjoy serving as an usher and a lector. As a member of the Alter Guild, my primary responsibility is the Friday Healing Service.

Tom: What happens at the Friday Healing Service?

Evie: A short service of prayer and Eucharist is offered, including prayers for the sick. Elizabeth Keeler often leads the service, which is roughly thirty minutes. It’s a special service, and I wish more parishioners joined us. Charlie Rackley, Glenn, and Jonathan are our most loyal attendees.

Tom: It's a wonderful thing that we offer it.

Evie: Yes, it is.

Tom: One thing I think is so remarkable about Christ Church is there are multiple services every day.

Evie: Absolutely. My husband’s church, Immaculate Conception in the Shaw neighborhood has
very few services, and Fred always wished for more.

**Tom:** It's wonderful for the congregation. It's a nice thing for the community to know that there's always something going on there. Were you involved at all in the Capitol Campaign to fund the renovation of the sanctuary?

**Evie:** No. That's just about when I came, and it was finished. How long ago was that?

**Tom:** Stuart was there for 23 years. I'd say maybe about five years after he arrived, the campaign started. I'd say maybe 18 or 15 years ago.

**Evie:** When was it finished?

**Tom:** It only took a couple of years.

**Evie:** I've probably been here about 15 years.

**Tom:** Don't you think it's interesting the way our church, and of course, St. John’s celebrates a politically diverse congregation? We have members from all political parties and all areas of government and different realms of leadership.

**Evie:** Yes, Christ Church is a place for everybody.

**Tom:** Yeah. Which is good. I wanted to ask about some of the events that we have. How those all come about and what sort of planning goes into them. I know around the bicentennial now there have been a great many things happening. You've taken the lead on a lot of that.

**Evie:** As I mentioned before, I was looking for a place in the church that needed me, and as Glenn continued to cultivate me, I found a need, for better or worse, in event planning. Over the years, I have planned Altar Guild dinners, Vestry dinners and so on. I have had the help of fellow parishioners and wonderful, affordable, low key caterers like Tracy at Broad Branch Market. I have had the best time working with Page, Puffin, and Janice on the Bicentennial, and we have one final event to go - Epiphany.

**Tom:** In January? The last thing?

**Evie:** January 6th. Janice Buchanan and I are the head of the Events Committee for the Bicentennial. We have our events meeting at Janice's.

**Tom:** You have some advance planning on this one?

**Evie:** Yes.

**Tom:** I thought the first event that we had for the bicentennial in the garden was very imaginative in the menu.

**Evie:** It was.
Tom: It was historic.

Evie: It was.

Tom: I can't remember what the menu was…

Evie: It was Brunswick stew. Now this time, we're going to have a king's cake.

Tom: Perfect. For Epiphany.

Evie: Mm-hmm.

Tom: Will there be little prizes in the cake?

Evie: Mm-hmm.

Tom: What fun! That will be great.

Evie: I think it'll be great, too.

Tom: People bring their kids.

Evie: I don't know that the kids will want to sit through the five o'clock.

Tom: That's right. Then we have the fun with cake all to ourselves. [laughs]

Evie: Exactly. It'll be nice. We're just going to have it low key.

Tom: Are there things that you think Christ Church ought to be doing that we're not doing? Things we ought to be addressing that we're not or directions we ought to be taking that when you came there, you thought, "Gee, I wish they'd do this," and we still haven't? I'm thinking something about…to go back to outreach and how we focus the mission work that we do. Certainly what we do for Bishop Walker School is a big piece of that.

Evie: I don't know what's going to happen because we're coming to the last year of Christ Church's pledge, and I hope the Church continues to make the School a priority.

Tom: What do you mean by "the last year"?

Evie: This is the final year of a significant commitment made to the Walker School from Christ Church.

Tom: That's interesting because there's this subcommittee working group that was pulled together. There were four of us. It was myself, Tim Carrington, Claudia, and Kathy Carmean. We are looking at what entities do we support.

Evie: Oh, you're talking about the mission committee.
Tom: The mission committee.

Evie: Do you want more tea?

Tom: No, I'm fine, thanks. One of our organizing concepts was that there were two organizations that we considered foundational in terms of our giving. We would always provide a substantial piece of support to them. One was Bishop Walker School and the other one was Georgetown Ministry Center.

Not just because of what they are, what they do and that [laughs] we love them. Christ Church was also a player in establishing those two entities.

Evie: The Bishop Walker School really, for quite a while, Christ Church was the biggest giver...

Tom: There you are.

Evie: ...until this Capital Fund Drive at the school. I'm glad to hear that because it's going to go on no matter what.

Tom: It might be something that one should keep an eye on. To make sure that concept which I felt was very much etched in... here's how we're going to go forward with our mission outreach.

Evie: I stayed on the board of the Bishop Walker School this past year, after over a decade of service, in hopes I could advocate for Christ Church’s continuance of support. Certainly, the Georgetown Ministry is also wonderful.

Tom: Their annual fundraiser's Thursday night.

Evie: I know. I haven't been involved with the Georgetown Ministries. Although I really feel like I should. Maybe when I go off the Bishop Walker School board.

Tom: They'd be happy to have you.

[laughter]

Tom: We're happy to have you at Christ Church.

Evie: Oh, thank you, Tom. [laughs]

Tom: Anything else you want to add, Evie?

Evie: A hope that I share with my daughter, Martha, that Christ Church and its most active volunteer community will continue to find ways to be inclusive and recruit its quietest members in its ministry. Glenn held my hand, and I hope every member feels that pull and welcoming. It’s important in any community but especially a church one.

Tom: One should hope that we spread our arms wide. Engage more and more people at any given moment - to be readers, chalice bearers, teachers, ushers and more.
Evie: I remember I got involved because Glenn said to me on one of those Homecomings, "You have to sign up." I said, "For what?" He said, "Just sign up for everything." I said, "OK, Glenn." [laughter]

Evie: I miss Glenn. He's going to be really missed in this church.

Tom: He will be. Will he still come as a parishioner?

Evie: I think so.

Tom: I do, too.

Evie: He's been helping Paul Barkett, who was hired to take on his former duties, as COO.

Tom: Oh, that's good.

Evie: Paul is coincidently the Junior Warden at St. John's Lafayette Square. He is also the treasurer of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, a volunteer position.

Tom: We're fortunate to have him.

Evie: I'll say. He'll be good.

Tom: Excellent.

Evie: I haven't met him. I've just talked to him on the phone. I thought of when to do the party for Glenn. If Glenn had been there, [laughs] it would have been easier. Every single one of those events that I was involved in, Glenn and I tasted the wine. [laughs]

Tom: He always knew just how to make things go along smoothly.

Evie: He would always say, in a funny little way, what he thought. [laughs]

Tom: Which was helpful and never hurtful.

Evie: Exactly. You're right. He'll be missed. Stuart hired him, didn’t he?

Tom: I believe so.

Evie: It was so smart because I don't think many churches have such a manager. They only have a secretary and a receptionist.

Tom: We're set up well.

Evie: Tim Cole, Elizabeth Keeler, and Elizabeth Gardner are terrific. We are fortunate.

Tom: Let's hope we're on a good course.
Evie: I hope so. [laughs]

Tom: Thank you, Evie.

Evie: You're very welcome.

Tom: This has been good.

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