



Dear St. John's,

On March 21, 2010 my world changed with a single heartbeat. On a beautiful Sunday morning, I raised the bread and wine and noticed my hands trembling. My arm went numb, my chest felt tight, and I struggled to take a breath. Two hours later, I was being rushed to the hospital by an orthopedic surgeon in my congregation. Unbeknownst to me, I was suffering from a massive heart attack known as the widow maker. Married for just a year, John and I came face to face with our mortality. Life as we knew it ended, yet a new life and a new perspective emerged. Thanks be to God that fateful day would not be my last. I was given a second chance, but with that second chance came responsibilities that we had never considered before.

I tell you this deeply personal and transforming experience because that event revealed to John and me the need to prepare. Our Ash Wednesday liturgy took on a whole new meaning that year, "we are dust and to dust we shall return." Death shows no discrimination. As we began healing from this holy experience, we began having the difficult conversations about end-of-life planning. Dinner conversations included where we wanted to be laid to rest, do we have life insurance policies that would alleviate the financial burdens of losing a spouse, what kind of celebration would we want that would provide comfort for those we've left behind.

These are difficult, yet necessary conversations to have as God's beloved. Our future is secure because our hope lies in the resurrection – thanks be to God! Yet, we have a responsibility to our families and friends to prepare. There is no holier time to have these conversations than the present while we still have the chance. I have spent the past 12 years of ministry sitting with families who are mourning the loss of their loved ones while questioning what comes next. Families trying to piece together services, purchase burial plots and niches, figure out the finances, and discern how to live without someone they love. We have before us the gift of ministering to one another even after death. We can compose our wills, discern where we want to be laid to rest, and begin the sacred work of preparing for the world to come. I can think of no greater gift to those we love.

Fortunately, we have the tools and resources at our fingertips at St. John's to do this holy work. We have service plans, brochures to help you navigate writing wills, a beautiful columbarium with space for you and your loved ones, and professionals in our congregation that can help. If this is an opportunity you would like to explore, we will walk with you. Please join us for a special forum on **Saturday, May 1 at 10:00 a.m.** here at St. John's as we consider the gift of "End-of-Life Planning." RSVP to the church office at equilla@stjohns-lancaster.org or call (717) 299-1188, so we can plan accordingly.

As we prepare, may we cling to the words of Paul, "*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

I remain faithfully yours,

Amanda

GROW IN GOD, ACT IN SERVICE, WITNESS IN LOVE

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Presenters for our End-of-Life Planning Forum include:

Brad Zuke

Brad is an estate and business law attorney with the longtime Lancaster firm of Herr & Low, PC. He's practiced in these areas since 2003 when he moved here from Oregon, where he was general counsel for a company that owns and operates assisted living and skilled nursing facilities. Brad's focus is on helping clients plan for the future and, in some cases, anticipate worst case scenarios and be prepared to work through them. His personal outlook is that death, while being one of the great unknowns, is a natural part of life. Let's talk about it.

Jeremy R. DeBord

Licensed Funeral Director, President & CEO of DeBord Snyder Funeral Home & Crematory



Jeremy grew up around the funeral industry as he lived above the family's funeral home on East Orange Street for most of his childhood. Following high school, Jeremy attended Millersville University and graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration. He continued his education by graduating from the University of Phoenix with a master's degree in business. Jeremy began his professional career with Volvo Construction Equipment where he held various positions within the organization, ranging from Product Marketing Manager to Regional Sales Manager. Jeremy then decided to follow in his parents', grandfather's, and great-grandfather's footsteps by attending mortuary school.

Jeremy is now a licensed funeral director, President & CEO and the 4th generation owner of DeBord Snyder Funeral Home & Crematory. He also owns Cremation Services of Lancaster. He and his sons, Ethan and Austin, currently reside in East Hempfield Township. In what little free time he has, Jeremy enjoys going to the gym and spending time with his two sons.

Penn Glazier

Penn Glazier graduated from Yale College with a B.A. in economics, and from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. He is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States, and other state and federal courts. He has practiced law for fifty years in a wide variety of cases. He is currently working in conflict resolution on behalf of the Lancaster Court.

The Rev. Amanda Knouse



Amanda has served as the rector of St. John's since the summer of 2019 and has been an ordained priest for over 12 years. She describes walking with people through end-of-life planning as a thin place where the veil between heaven and earth opens briefly. It is a gift to be invited into that holy space where difficult, yet life-giving decisions are made.

End-of-life planning is a sacred and profound way of easing the burden for loved ones left behind and a gift meant to be shared.