

## *The Elders of Grace Episcopal Church*

Michele Krakowski - Born January 20, 1949

Larry Krakowski - Born July 14, 1949

Michele and Larry Krakowski first met in the summer of 1969, working at Brant Lake Camp in New York's Adirondack Mountains. Michele hailed from Long Island and considered herself a fast-talking city girl. Larry, by contrast, spent his childhood having outdoor adventures in south Minneapolis, building forts and fishing in Lake Nokomis. As they readied themselves to return to college at the end of summer, they knew they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together.

In 1970, Michele and Larry were married at St. James Episcopal Church in Minneapolis. After a stint in New York City where Larry studied meteorology at City College of New York, the Krakowskis returned to Minneapolis to raise their family which included daughter Alyssa and son James.

Growing up, Larry had been one of five, and they had done everything together: playing, fighting, and getting into all sorts of mischief. "My parents believed you learned by making mistakes and living with the consequences," Larry says. They were the classic Roman Catholic family of the 50s, attending church every Sunday and going to catholic schools .

Michele, who was an only child of British-born parents, had a different type of childhood. It included two ocean journeys to the British Isles and even a year at school in England when she was 12. Her parents, who met and married after WW2, had very different war experiences. Michele's father had emigrated to the States in 1929 and served in the US Army Air Force as a tower operator. Her mother, on the other hand, was an ambulance driver in the UK's Auxiliary Territorial Service. "They were both politically astute and were forever processing their war experiences. I listened to a lot of stories." says Michele.

Although Michele's parents weren't interested in religion, they sent her to an Episcopal church for the culture. It became a central place for her wondering about the meaning of things. Eventually, Michele's journey led her to train as a spiritual director in 1989. Soon after, Michele began to work for the Ebenezer's Hands and Hearts Estate Sale Program. There Michele used her training in grief and loss to help families sell the belongings of loved ones who had died or moved into care. After her time at Hands and Hearts, Michele was called to be the Executive Director of Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality in 2007, where participants trained in the art of deep listening. Michele believes that her life experiences have always led her to the very next opportunity. As retirement approached she learned to be a EfM mentor (Education for Ministry) and co-facilitated a number of groups through St. Luke's.

The bulk of Larry's work career was in data processing at what is now Delta Airlines. After retirement in 2005, he worked as a handyman and then found a great part-time job with IKEA

as a cashier in the restaurant. It's been five years since leaving that gig and still customers call out to him when they see him around town.

Larry and Michele have always had a commitment to volunteering: teaching Sunday School, coaching teams, maintaining Grace's Memorial Garden, selling Haitian coffee, and helping at First Nations Kitchen to name a few. For 42 years, Larry volunteered with the Boy Scouts in every possible position. He assisted 80 boys to become Eagle Scouts. After being an Explorer Post advisor for the Wildlife Refuge in Bloomington, he was awarded the Silver Beaver Award, the highest recognition a local BSA council can bestow upon a registered volunteer leader.

Together, Larry and Michele dedicated years of service to the International Health Service of Minnesota (IHS), traveling to Honduras as part of teams that delivered medical care. Through his work with the IHS, Larry developed connections with the Burnsville Rotary Club, where he would go on to spend 18 years procuring low-cost, donated or recycled supplies for aid work in the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Tanzania, and Kenya.

Beyond this, the Krakowski's spent years opening their home to others: from hosting students and young business executives from Russia and Sri Lanka to assisting with the resettlement of refugees from Laos, Somalia, and Afghanistan, including months-long home stays. In 1988, St. Luke's and Lynhurst Church sponsored a family of nine children and their parents from Laos. Michele was the lead person for our church. Today, the Souvannasane family considers Michele and Larry honored elders and include them in important family gatherings.

Separately and as a couple, Michele and Larry's lives have been full of kindness and a commitment to others.

Written by Clare Boerigter June 2025