

THE RULE

THE SOCIETY OF SAINT ANNA THE PROPHET

I.1 INTRODUCTION

The document which follows is the Rule of a religious community without a rule in the traditional sense. There are no required common rhythms of worship, prayer, ministry, and community beyond those named in the Baptismal Covenant of the Book of Common Prayer.

The founding of our Society was inspired by St. Anna the Prophet in the story of the Presentation of our Lord in the Gospel of Luke. It is by means of the text itself that Part II of the Rule articulates the identity of the Annas and describes our life and mission. Most of the Rule, particularly this section, is intended to be read in brief segments, prayerfully and aloud.

The vows of simplicity, creativity, and balance are considered in Part III. These vows are particular to our Society and distinguish this religious community from religious orders in the church which have the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Members of the Society make no vow of obedience to this Rule, but all recognize and respect its vision and guidance.

Part IV offers more specific information about our community and ministry. Parts V and VI describe the way of becoming an Anna and the leadership of the Society. Our understanding of Godly aging is presented in Part VII.

The Constitution and the Customary of the Society, which delineate our organization, procedures, and practices, are companion documents to the Rule.

Table of Contents

I.1	Introduction	2
I.2	Beginnings.....	4
II.1	Holy Witness	5
II.2	Graced Aging	6
II.3	Claiming Kin	7
II.4	Orchard of Old Age.....	8
II.5	Alone before God	9
II.6	Hidden in Public.....	10
II.7	Particular Practice.....	11
II.8	Seeing in the Dark.....	12
II.9	Risk of the Moment.....	13
II.10	Reaching Gratitude.....	14
II.11	Old Stories.....	15
II.12	Tending to Hope.....	16
III.1	Living Within Vows	17
III.2	Simplicity.....	18
III.3	Creativity.....	19
III.4	Balance.....	20
IV.1	Community: Dispersed and Gathered.....	21
IV.2	Ministry: Individual and Corporate	22
IV.3	Symbols and Signs.....	23
V.1	Discernment	24
V.2	Provisionals.....	25
V.3	Novices.....	25
V.4	Regular Sisters	26
VI.1	Leadership.....	27
VI.2	The Superior	27
VII.1	Godly Aging.....	28
VII.2	Illness and Frailty	29
VII.3	A Holy Death.....	30

I.2 BEGINNINGS

In 1982, the Episcopal Chaplain to Emory University, the Reverend Nancy Baxter, was charged with ministry at the University and also with ministry in the Wesley Woods Geriatric Center, an affiliate of the University.

Over a period of twenty-five years, worshipping communities developed and flourished at Wesley Woods. The Chaplain, assisted by laity, deacons, and retired priests, celebrated the Holy Eucharist and provided pastoral care in three separate facilities. Both worship leaders and congregations began to understand the necessity of living in care as a new possibility for living in Christian community.

The gifts and graces of old age were received, offered, and celebrated in these congregations in such a way that the vocation of elder began to be rediscovered and embraced. In contrast to many Americans' dread of old age as a time of isolation and debility, these communities of elders began to define their experience of old age not as curse but as blessing.

In 2005, inspired by the congregations at Wesley Woods and by the example of Anna the Prophet in the Gospel of Luke, the Chaplain gathered a group of older Episcopal women, lay and ordained, some of whom were already active in the ministry at Wesley Woods. She invited them to form a society dedicated to Godly aging and elder ministry, with the vows of simplicity, creativity, and balance. The society was named The Society of Saint Anna the Prophet (SSAP), taking as its patron the only woman of advanced age named in the New Testament.

Seeking balance and desiring also to reflect St. Anna's recognition of the Christ in the infant Jesus, the group included ministry with the young, as well as the old, in the mission of the Society.

After a provisional year of prayer and discernment, fifteen women entered the novitiate in 2006. These novices created the Constitution and By-Laws. In 2007, with fourteen vowed sisters, or regulars, the Society was incorporated in the State of Georgia. That same year, the Bishop of Atlanta, the Right Reverend J. Neil Alexander, transferred responsibility for the three Wesley Woods congregations from Emory University's Episcopal campus ministry to the Society, and Nancy Baxter retired from the chaplaincy to lead the Society as its first Superior.

At the Feast of the Presentation, 2008, fifteen regulars, two novices, and eight new provisionals gathered in celebration. The Rule took shape during the course of that year and was adopted at the Annual Convocation, Feast of the Presentation, 2009. In March, 2009, the House of Bishops Commission on Orders and Communities granted official recognition to the SSAP as a religious community of the Episcopal Church, and on January 1, 2010, the Bishop of Atlanta gave the SSAP permission to establish a house in the Diocese of Atlanta. The work of founding the Society was accomplished.

II.1 HOLY WITNESS Luke 2:22-38

The writer of Luke/Acts created a narrative in which Mary and Joseph journey with their newborn from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice in the temple. As they arrive, they are met by Simeon, an old man who has been blessed with a unique promise that before he dies he will see the Messiah. Now, nearing the end of his life, he has been inspired by the Spirit to go up to the temple just as the young family approaches. Meeting them, he takes the child and blesses him, revealing to the parents in prayer and in poetic prophecy the child's identity as the Messiah. Simeon gives voice to several themes in Luke/Acts, including Mary's importance and the universal scope of God's salvation in Jesus.

As the writer of Luke/Acts often did, he then balanced the narrative with a second encounter and with a woman. While Anna's part in the story is brief and often forgotten, it is by Anna that what was hidden and private becomes proclaimed in public.

Anna is called a prophet. Her meeting with Jesus arises not from a divine promise but rather from the daily exercise of her ministry and the spiritual disciplines which undergird that ministry. Hers is a public, prophetic ministry recognized by the community of faith. Her prophetic insight is not privately communicated to Mary and Joseph but announced to all the faithful.

Simeon's encounter with the Christ is the culminating event in a lifetime of longing, after which he welcomes and even prays for his death. Anna, in her extreme old age, does not focus on her death, but rather she is simply and faithfully following her calling to be open to the presence and power of the living God, even in the most unlikely of circumstances. Further, she is committed to the proclamation in public of what she is given by God to know.

It is Anna's example of faithfulness in old age which inspires the Society of Saint Anna the Prophet and which is reflected in the Society's motto: *percipere et proclamare* (to perceive and to proclaim).

II.2 GRACED AGING

“There was a prophet Anna...”

St. Anna, or Hannah (Hebrew: grace), shares her name with two other old women in the Jewish and early Christian traditions: Hannah, long childless and considered barren, whose tearful and trusting prayers moved the heart of God and resulted in the miraculous birth of Samuel; and Anna, mother of Mary and grandmother of Jesus.

Those who are called Anna bear witness in their name to the mystery of God’s everflowing, unconditional love, love which can transform barren old age into fertile elderhood. The Annas are grandmothers who cherish the young not for who they will be but for who they are. The Annas are women of prayer who dare over and over again to trust in God. Over long years, the tears of the Annas have cleared the eyes of their faith. Many times, they have made the journey through waterless places to discover springs of wisdom. The dreams of the Annas weave together past, present, and future, not with judgment, but with hope.

Annas are mothers practiced in raising up and in letting go. Annas are sisters and midwives of the dying, confident that death is birth to new life. Annas know the path through disappointment and failure to places of new beginnings. The pace of their aging is unhurried. In not resisting the passage of time, the Annas have an abundance of time. Theirs is a patient presence.

The lives of the Annas have moved beyond a need to achieve into a season of creative receptivity. In old age, the fruit of their humanity ripens into a sweet and nourishing witness to the God who creates and redeems all our days.

In taking the name of St. Anna, the sisters of the SSAP hope to show forth in their lives and in their life together the graced aging of the ancient Annas.

II.3 CLAIMING KIN

“...the daughter of Phaneel of the tribe of Asher...”

Anna’s identity is defined initially by the patriarchy. She is her father’s daughter and a member of a tribe descended from one of the twelve sons of Jacob (Israel). The patriarch, Asher, was a son of Zilpah, Leah’s maid. Anna lives within a culture which defines the roles of women in terms of their relationships with men. She lives and worships within a religious structure created and led by men.

Anna, however, has faith in the God who is doing new things in the hearts of women and men. Anna’s faith is such that in old age she is empowered to move beyond the limits of her culture and her religion into the freedom of a larger identity: *prophet*. It is an identity which is lived out in the context of temple worship and the religious establishment and yet is not bound by them. Her authority as a prophet is from God. Her concerns are no longer limited to the traditional concerns of women but expanded to what God is saying and doing in the world. Her kinship is no longer limited to her own tribe. She is related to everybody, even to strangers. She is grandmother to young ones, mother to those who seek God, sister to the aging.

The sisters of the SSAP have been formed as Christians within the Episcopal/Anglican tradition. We fully embrace our baptismal covenant. We worship and minister in Episcopal parishes, and we support our parishes with our personal and financial resources. We are committed to the ministry of the Episcopal Church at the diocesan, provincial, national, and international levels.

In our identity as Annas, we claim freedom to move beyond the structures of the Episcopal tradition and the Christian faith into a deeper involvement with those who are outside and vulnerable, particularly the very old and the very young. We claim kinship with those who are hidden, living in institutional care. We are free to create new structures for ministry with them. We understand that freedom to be in harmony with the promises made at our baptism. We understand our calling as Annas to be a particular expression of the call to follow Christ.

At times, we find ourselves in a prophetic stance pointing to what God is doing beyond the institutional church. We raise awareness of the church’s failure to be present and involved with elders and youth in need. We serve as advocates for the old and frail who are confined to the margins of the church and whose voices are rarely heard. We challenge the church to create responsive structures and resources for ministry with the faithful living in care and for those whose participation in the church is limited because of their physical or mental condition. As women, we continue to call the church to full inclusion of women and ongoing expansion of language and imagery which express the feminine. We call the institutional church to a greater awareness of the season of old age as a source of blessing both to individuals and to the whole community.

In our freedom as old women and as Annas, we embrace our kinship with all God’s children and our calling to prophetic witness in the church.

II.4 ORCHARD OF OLD AGE

“...she was of great age...she was eighty-four...”

Anna is old, even by modern standards. She has lived fourteen years beyond the Biblical threescore and ten. Her age, cited with respect and awe, reveals the Lord's favor and lends credibility to her words as a prophet. It is her old age which silences the deep suspicion in the patriarchy of her feminine spirituality and allows her voice to be heard. Anna's age is a gift, to her and to her community.

Old age is fraught with challenges and tends in our time to be defined by diminishment and loss, not only of physical and mental abilities, but also of much which has sustained life and given life meaning: family, friends, health, work. In a culture which worships youth, aging is not just considered an unfortunate eventuality but an obscene prelude to death. Many believe that the signs of aging must be avoided or hidden for as long as possible and then endured in private, even in secret, until death's release.

For many Christians, the only theological meaning of frail old age is found in the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. The experiences of body-betrayal, stripping and exposure, medical assaults, humiliations and physical pain, loss of relationships, experiences of abandonment and isolation, all leading inexorably to death, offer the consolation of participation in the suffering of Christ. Anna's old age, however, is not understood by her or by her community primarily in terms of suffering. Whatever challenges her age presents, she openly embraces them and lives them as a witness to God's goodness. In Anna can be seen not a prelude to death but Godliness in old age. In Anna, old age in the created order of human life is a season of ripening spiritual fruits.

The sisters of the SSAP are called, as Anna was, to an abundant harvest in the orchard of old age.

II.5 ALONE BEFORE GOD

“..having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity and as a widow..”

The outline of Anna’s relational life reveals that by the time she was twenty, the life she had expected to live was over. Three quarters of her days she has now lived alone before God. For sixty-four years, she has been discovering that human relationships, while important and life giving, can never obscure the truth that we are all ultimately alone before God.

Living into old age is inevitably the experience of being emotionally widowed. The loneliness of Anna the young widow was transformed over time into a spacious solitude in which Anna’s relationship with God could deepen and grow.

Anna became practiced in prayer and in other spiritual disciplines. Her relational life became firmly centered in the religious community where she makes herself available to others as a person of care and insight. Over long years, she has come to trust herself as she has submitted the obscure corners of her life to divine light. She has experienced herself as cherished by God and so she is quick to cherish those she encounters in the course of her days, even the crying child of strangers intruding on pilgrims’ prayers in the temple.

The sisters of the SSAP are single, married, partnered, divorced, and widowed. We are daughters, mothers, sisters, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, godmothers, aunts, great-aunts, and mothers-in-law. We are also alone before God. We understand that solitude in God’s presence to be an important experience in our vocation as Annas. While some of us are more drawn to the contemplative life than others, we all acknowledge the primacy of our relationship with God and the call to move through loneliness to the practice of solitude as a crucial spiritual discipline of Godly aging. We also embrace the paradox that our community is strengthened by our willingness to be alone before God.

II.6 HIDDEN IN PUBLIC

“...she did not depart from the temple...”

The temple in Jerusalem was the religious, economic, cultural, legal, political, intellectual, and aesthetic center of life for the Jews. The temple was the dwelling place of God and the place where human longing for God found expression. With the daily and seasonal rounds of prayer, worship, and sacrifice, with its priests and teachers, worshippers and pilgrims, the temple was always teeming with the faithful. It was the most public of places.

The temple was constructed in a series of ascending courts which mirrored the patriarchal hierarchy. At the center and summit, God's Presence in the Holy of Holies could be approached only once a year by the high priest. Priests and ritually clean Jewish males enjoyed access to other areas, but women could pass only as far as the court of women. For Anna never to depart from the temple suggests that she discovers there all the opportunity and support she needs to fulfill her calling.

Anna's faith is in a God who is as fully present in the lower courts as in the Holy of Holies. At some remove from the heart of power and ritual activity, Anna dwells very close to the heart of God. She chooses to be constant in her availability to God. She gives up privacy, possessions, and home, including the traditional ritual role of women, in order to embrace her ministry as elder and prophet.

Old age is lived today, for most, in the courts of women. Women far outnumber men among the aging population, and women, with few exceptions, are the caregivers of elders. Predominantly female residents of elder care facilities have experienced the loss of home, privacy, possessions, and roles in the family and in the community. They no longer come and go. They live among many strangers in hidden places where others visit briefly and then leave.

Yet, God is as present at the nursing home table as at the altar of a great cathedral. Anna reveals that the hidden spiritual lives of elders can be a source of grace and wisdom and unexpected revelation for the whole community.

The sisters of the SSAP are committed to dwelling in the temple of God's Presence in the courts of women where strangers are the bearers of Christ and where God's love transforms and empowers lives hidden in public.

II.7 PARTICULAR PRACTICE

“...worshipping with fasting and prayer...”

The ministry of Anna grows out of spiritual disciplines which form her and nourish her as a servant of God. She does not follow a daily rule devised by others; rather, in coming to know herself over many years, she herself identifies the experiences and the practices she needs. Fasting and prayer, traditional practices within her community of faith, are named as part of her discipline. As a worshipper in the temple, she participates in the festivals and observes the seasons. She says her prayers in community, and she prays in solitude.

Anna also practices individual spiritual disciplines known only to her, disciplines not so obvious. These no doubt have changed as she has changed. She is willing to nurture the “pleasant planting” of her old age as a gardener, over time assessing and providing for particular needs in different seasons. In order to do this, it became necessary for Anna to be keenly self observant and deeply respectful of her unique physical, mental, and emotional self.

The sisters of the SSAP, in our yearly creation of an individual *regula* or rule, take responsibility for choosing the disciplines and practices which will be most helpful to our spiritual growth. Each sister develops her *regula* with attention to the expression of the Society’s vows of simplicity, creativity, and balance. In our identity as Christian and Episcopalian, we embrace the centrality of the Holy Eucharist and the observance of the feasts and fasts of the Christian year. We are sustained by the living of Christian seasons in the context of our parishes and by the traditional spiritual practices of the church.

Each Anna commits to an ongoing relationship with a spiritual director, soul friend, therapist, or small group in order to know and be true to her unique self. This relationship and other resources inform the creation of the *regula*.

We claim the freedom in our *regula* to include helpful practices from other faiths. We reject the notion that some experiences are spiritual and others are not, freeing us to include in our *regula* any experience or practice which draws us close to the loving heart of God. We understand that falling short or failing to fully keep our *regula* is also an important aspect of our calling, one which reminds us of our humanity and our need for God’s grace.

As Anna came to do, we sisters of the SSAP trust that in discerning and respecting the particular needs of our aging selves, we are co-operating with the Holy Spirit and participating in the purposes of God.

II.8 SEEING IN THE DARK

“...night and day...”

Newborn babes and the very old hardly know any difference between night and day. Anna in her old age is not in the least deterred by the passing of the light. She continues living fully her life of prayer and service. This is not to say that she made no accommodation for the challenges of darkness. She must have adjusted and discovered that the night offers rich communion with the divine mystery, with those who are suffering around the world, and even with joyous revelers.

Reflection and holy rest in the hours of silence are gifts the faithful enjoy over most of their lifetime, gifts which balance the activity and pace of daylight hours. Becoming old shifts human experience more and more into the dark. Eyesight grows dim. The mind can become veiled, its logical processes and memory slipping into a kind of twilight or even into the forbidding depths of dementia. Sleep can be elusive and unpredictable, arriving suddenly and just as deeply in the day as it once did at night. Wakefulness and the urgent need for movement and activity sometimes come in the lonely night watches when others are sleeping.

The way of faithfulness for the aging leads inexorably into the dark, and it is on that way that Anna is a seer and a guide. It is there that the sisters of the SSAP exercise their corporate ministry. We are committed as a Society to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the formation of Christian community in the dark places where elders live. We are committed to providing liturgies which include prayers and preaching appropriate for those who cognitively have moved into the twilight and night, so that liturgy can truly be the work of the people with whom we serve. We offer pastoral care and companionship to elders in care, as well as connection with the wider church and with the world.

We Annas affirm that the vocation of Godly aging is open to all elders, no matter what their physical, mental, or emotional condition. In prophetic witness to this truth, our Society offers full inclusion to any Episcopal woman over the age of fifty whose vocation has been discerned, however far into the night of old age her journey has taken her.

Our calling as Annas is to see in old age what might not be revealed or clear to others in the church. Like Anna in the temple, we have been given the gift of seeing in the dark.

II.9 RISK OF THE MOMENT

“...and coming up at that very hour...”

Anna’s encounter with Jesus happens because he is brought and she is present. Jesus is brought into the temple by his faithful parents who arrive carrying him in their arms for the observance of a religious ritual. Anna, in a season of waning energy and limited physical activity, is present because she has learned what is worth making the effort to do.

In old age, when being takes priority over doing, passivity and inertia are powerful temptations. To do anything at all, even rise from bed, becomes more and more difficult. Low energy, chronic pain, grief, and hopelessness set a course for depression and for the rejection of the gift of life. When selfcare and mobility require the aid of helpers, elders often struggle with being dependent and accepting help for activities once routine and easily accomplished. The loss of the illusion of independence is a fear of many.

Anna in the temple is undoubtedly dependent on others daily for food, for help, for support. She suffers the aches and pains of old age. Her mobility is limited, her energy is low, yet just at the moment Jesus arrives, she finds her way to him. There is no waste of effort. Her energy is devoted and directed toward what God is doing just at that time.

It is a moment full of risk. The parents are making available this new life, so very precious to them. They acknowledge the divine gift of Jesus’ life by literally placing that flesh and blood gift in the hands of strangers. Anna is not prevented by feelings of doubt, inadequacy, or fear of rejection from approaching and receiving the Holy One with her whole heart.

This encounter is the prototype of a ministry of the SSAP in which sisters, novices, and provisionals carry in their arms bread and wine, candles and linens, large print service booklets and hymns, nametags and prayer shawls for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. In Holy Communion, they place the gifts of the Lord’s Body and Blood in the hands of elders who have made the effort to be present. Anna’s “coming up at that very hour” encourages all, congregations and leaders alike, to concentrate their energy on participating in what God is doing in the here and now, no matter how challenging the effort might feel.

Anna also inspires the individual ministries of the sisters, whether in the parish church or in a secular setting, whether with elders or with children, in the fearless offer of herself and in her willingness to devote her waning energies to the service of God’s sovereignty. The sisters of the SSAP commit themselves, as Anna did, to taking the risk of the moment.

II.10 REACHING GRATITUDE

“...she gave thanks to God...”

Perceiving the Christ, Anna’s first response is to give thanks. Steeped in faith over a lifetime, she perhaps offers not a brief but a great thanksgiving, gathering up the stories of God’s saving acts across time and history to this act of redemption in the person of Jesus.

As she stands before him with her hands uplifted, she reaches to God with the community’s memory and with her own personal memory of God’s saving grace in her life. God has delivered her, transformed her, sustained her to this glorious day. Now Anna is standing before the gift of God’s self in human life and the wonder of human participation in the divine life. Anna does not understand how this infant can be the long awaited salvation of God or how his life will unfold, a life she herself will not live to see. She simply apprehends that she is standing where past and future meet as never before. She will soon join the ancient ones, and the future will be lived by others. Anna somehow knows that she is standing in the presence of the Holy One who gathers every human life, including those who have gone before and those who are coming, into the embrace of divine love.

Anna prays from the perspective of old age. From where she stands, she can glimpse the whole of her life in the light of God’s redemption. In that light, the reach of her thanksgiving extends far beyond her own life to include all of life, the whole of creation.

The sisters of the SSAP, like Anna, are standing in the perspective of old age. Our grateful prayers encompass more and more of life. We are reaching new levels of gratitude for all the experiences through which God has led us to the present time. In our ministries and in our lives, we are learning to give thanks in all things.

II.11 OLD STORIES

“...and spoke of him...”

As many old people are, Anna is a teller of stories. After her encounter with the Christ, the story of that encounter becomes a constantly repeated story. She tells it with urgency, not because of her own importance in it, but because of the story’s revelation. It is a story of God’s coming, of God’s presence, of God’s redemption, in a baby she happened upon one morning in the temple. It is a story of a common experience, and yet Anna persists in telling it in the hope that the significance of what she experienced can be communicated to others.

The stories of the old, repeated as they are, tend to be ignored or easily dismissed, except by young children who love repetition. Elders must have perseverance in the face of indifference or even annoyance to continue telling their important stories. Listening to the stories of elders requires respectful attention and patience, especially if the story, like Anna’s, seems to make no sense. True listening is possible when listeners recognize the gift of the story, not just to them but to the whole community. Meaning in the telling and in the hearing begins to emerge in the context of loving relationship.

The sisters of the SSAP are tellers and hearers of stories. We gladly tell our own stories of God’s presence and power in our lives. We are committed to listening deeply and fully to each other’s stories and to the stories of those with whom we minister.

We are aware that many in our congregations of elders are living in profound loneliness, with no one near who has time or inclination to hear what they have to tell. Some of us have been called to a ministry of listening as priest, therapist, or pastoral counselor. Some of us work with children who need loving adults to listen carefully to them. When the Society gathers as a whole or in small groups, time is always available for the telling and hearing of our stories.

We Annas, like Anna the Prophet, know the power of story. We know that God speaks through the old stories of the faith. We know that God is revealed in the stories of old and young. We know that the most ordinary human experience can be an occasion for meeting God. We trust that within our Society and in our ministries with others, the loving relationships being created can bring to birth new meaning in old stories.

II.12 TENDING TO HOPE

“...to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

Anna lives in a conquered city. The people of the land understand themselves to be under divine judgment. They are looking to their God for redeeming intervention. They hope for reconciliation and the renewal of a right relationship with God. Central to this hope is the long expected Messiah who, like his ancestor David, will reign as king, bringing *shalom*. Anna tells of Jesus as a confirmation of the hope held by those who are coming to pray in the temple. It is a vulnerable hope in need of nurture, growing in the hostile soil of defeat and alienation.

To live into old age is to live in a conquered city or in exile. It is an experience of powerlessness. There are constant betrayals by a body once strong and healthy. There are assaults by the enemies named fear and despair and confusion. There is the torture of sometimes unmanageable chronic pain. There is separation, geographical and emotional, from old friends and even from family members. Old age is often a time of harsh and unrelenting judgment when memories of things done and left undone arise daily and circle weakened lives like birds of prey.

Anna and her people are sustained by the stories and rituals which remind them of God's saving acts in history. Their hope is stirred by the words of the prophets and by their own teachers who call for repentance and who point to the future God is surely bringing. Regret and remorse could flow instead of fester, and hope buried deep could reemerge. It is hope nourished by life in a community grounded and guided by holy wisdom. So it is with Christians today. The stories, traditions, liturgies, and community of the Christian church sustain our hope by the action of the Holy Spirit.

Those living in exile in old age are too often in exile from the church, as well. Parish life and worship can present insurmountable barriers for those with poor vision, hearing, mobility, or other physical or mental challenges. Transportation to and from church is often unavailable or not affordable. Once an elder moves into care, the parish connection becomes more tenuous. As clergy move on and contemporaries move into care, older parishioners drop from parish memory. Their names are shifted to the inactive list. They receive visits occasionally if they still live nearby. Many move into other communities and are completely unknown to the local parish. Lifelong Episcopalians formerly active in worship no longer are able to participate in the great liturgies of the Christian year. Sunday mornings at the Eucharist become a distant memory, awakened by the rare experience of receiving the reserved sacrament brought by a Eucharistic Visitor. Opportunities are limited or nonexistent for regular conversation with a priest and for the sacraments of healing and reconciliation as the sometimes painful work of life review unfolds. Parish newsletters can no longer be deciphered. Even the telephone becomes unavailable. In the conquered city of old age, the lines of communication are often completely down until a messenger brings word of death.

The sisters of the SSAP are called, as Anna was, to seek out those who are looking for redemption and to proclaim in word and in action the glad news of Jesus our Savior. We redefine parish as the place where Christians gather. Our ministry is to gather congregations of elders in the places where they now live and through sacrament, story, and song, to tend the hope deep within us all.

III.1 LIVING WITHIN VOWS

The vows of the baptismal covenant are common to all members of the Episcopal Church. In addition, some take vows which enable life partners to create with God's help a Christian marriage. Persons who are ordained in the church take vows appropriate for their order of ministry, whether deacon, priest, or bishop. Members of traditional religious orders in their particular calling take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The taking of vows in addition to those of baptism does not make Christians better or more faithful. Vows serve to structure and focus the Christian for ministry. Vows can offer some measure of shelter in the service of a particular mission. The Canons of the Episcopal Church provide for the establishment of religious communities with non-traditional vows, and it is in accordance with these Canons that The Society of Saint Anna the Prophet was founded.

Our Society's vows are simplicity, creativity, and balance. The vows serve us individually and corporately as we develop patterns of living appropriate for elders and for being in ministry with elders. These vows inevitably place us in a prophetic stance in the world. Living within our vows offers us steady encouragement and constant support as well as impetus and challenge. We create a yearly *regula* or personal rule to guide us and structure spiritual practices which promote simplicity, creativity, and balance. The vows form the shape of Christ's yoke for Annas in our Godly aging and in our ministries.

III.2 SIMPLICITY

Simplicity is characterized by freedom, humility, truthfulness, and careful stewardship. The practice of simplicity opens the way to loving, respectful relationships with God and others. Simplicity prevents undue attachment to things and encourages the letting go of all the clutter and unnecessary accumulations of the past, creating space for new possibilities. Inner simplicity lets go of old anger, bitterness, and resentment, centering us in the abundance of God's love. Anna lived a simple life in the temple.

Simplicity weaves together the inner spiritual life and daily living with the common threads of humility and thankfulness. There is no need to be other or more than one is. There is freedom to live an open life, transparent and unadorned. The practice of simplicity raises awareness of our sinful tendency toward manipulation and exploitation and encourages direct and truthful words and actions.

In a life committed to simplicity, pleasure, even joy, is discovered in the most ordinary experiences. There is no need for many possessions or a wide variety of experiences. God is the source of abundance and blessing. A life of simplicity is always poised for the enjoyment and sharing of God's gifts.

The practice of simplicity is not the embrace of poverty and certainly not a glorification of deprivation. Simplicity offers discernment and clarity about what we truly need to live. Simplicity releases us from acquisitiveness and excess. Possessions are valued and cared for properly. There is careful use of resources and willingness to repair, reuse, recycle, and give away what is not needed. Simplicity pours a balm on the wounds of our anxieties and heals us from worry about what we shall eat and what we shall wear. Simplicity engenders a reverent attitude toward all the creation and appreciation for the constant flow of God's blessings in our lives.

III.3 CREATIVITY

Creativity is of God. Creation is the first action of God in the Bible. Before God began to create, the earth was without form, and the earth was empty. Darkness was upon the face of the waters. Creation brings the new into being, and light shines on the new life. Creation also involves separating things: the light and the darkness, the waters above and the waters below, the waters and the dry land. Vegetation and living creatures are grouped according to their kind. Chaos is superseded by order, and God sees that all is good.

The order of creation in no way implies rigidity but rather allows ways to perceive differently. With order and pattern, meaning can be discerned, beauty can be visible, and truth can be revealed. The creative person sees what was not seen before or sees in a new way. It was Anna's creative gift to perceive the Christ.

Every generation needs creative eyes. Patterns and symbols, ways of seeing that were fresh and full of meaning for one generation can become stale. The gospel of God's love needs to be communicated in new ways to speak to different people. This challenge calls for the creative eyes of Anna within each of us.

Many equate creativity with the ability to paint or draw or make music, traditional artistic pursuits. Even traditional artists sometimes worry that their work is not truly creative. The Biblical view enlarges our understanding of creativity to focus on light instead of darkness, openness rather than opacity, and forthrightness instead of obscurity. Order out of chaos leads us from discrete experiences to narrative, from isolation into community, from confusion into understanding. God's creativity is an expression of God's self in love, and the creation is good.

Creativity in this more theological sense can be manifested in many ways. Inspired by love, the arrangement of a garden, the teaching of a lesson, the nurture of God's creatures, the cooking of a meal, the prayer which sees a difficult other with the eyes of God – all these express a self-offering creativity which has its source in the Creator.

The fruits of the creative life increase as time and energy are devoted to creating. In the practice, learning happens through experience. New vision arises out of old. Circling the work, be it flower arrangement, filing system, quilt, or story, allows the work itself to speak and lead. We learn from failure. The creative process can be disturbing and messy. We remember that Anna stayed at the temple for years and saw a lot of babies. We also remember that God has been at work for a long time on the same message. God is constantly at work creating new ways to let us know that God delights in us and in the whole creation. We believe the SSAP is one of God's creative ways to proclaim that message.

III.4 BALANCE

Balance is one aspect of the *shalom* or harmony of the future toward which God is leading us. Reflecting on our lives in the light of God's will revealed in Jesus, we feel a creative tension and experience a glimpse of what a life lived in grace-filled balance might be.

Balance is not about eliminating tension. It is about stimulating awareness of where we are. Tension and the stresses which tension engenders are an inevitable part of human life. Even at the cellular level, our bodies are held in balance by chemicals and processes in exquisite tension.

Finding balance between work and play, exertion and rest, time alone and time with others, doing and being, is an ongoing, everchanging challenge. Balance is not physical or moral perfection, but rather more like a dance. Balance begins in the context of relationship with others and with God. We begin to long for balance because of our experience of being out of balance, because of hurtful expressions of sin, our own or others'. With awareness, we can make adjustments and begin practices to express more well being, both physical and spiritual, knowing that the two are deeply connected. The creation of a yearly *regula* provides us with the opportunity to intentionally review and shape our practices. The commitment to modify the *regula* reflects our conviction that balance is dynamic. As Christians, we believe that God is the ultimate source of well-being. The living of our lives by grace, in sometimes uneasy balance, is living in friendship with God.

Expressing balance within our Society between lay and ordained women, as well as among working elders, retirees, and the frail who require some measure of care, gives us the opportunity to show forth a radical equality in our life and ministry together that confronts the clericalism and ageism in the wider church. As a Society, we are committed to seeking balance in every aspect of our life together.

Living in the midst of a world dangerously out of balance, we are grateful for a vow which constantly reminds us to mirror the *shalom* of God. Our balance is grounded in the incarnate Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit. It is our dance with the divine.

IV.1 COMMUNITY: DISPERSED AND GATHERED

Christian community is a gift of God's grace and the birthright of baptized Christians. As members of the Body of Christ, all Christians are invited to live into the blessing and challenge of community with other Christians. All Christians are called to name one another brother and sister. Most Christians live in a Eucharistic rhythm of gathering together and then being sent out into the world for ministry. The SSAP claims both the gift of community given to all Christians and an inheritance from the monastic tradition. As a vowed community, the SSAP is a school for holiness. As a community of women, the SSAP carries on in a new way the witness of monastic women. As a community of elders, the SSAP shows forth the incarnation of Christ in the old. As a community with a mission, the SSAP is empowered to be in creative ministry in the world with the young and with the aged.

Dispersed as we are, living in different circumstances, participating in different parishes, the challenge of developing relationships of care and trust among us requires intentional effort by every sister. Retreats and quiet days, book studies and projects, Sunday afternoon gatherings, participation in ministry together, the annual convocation, all are opportunities for deepening community life. Each of us takes the radical risk of becoming related as sister to the others, and each seeks to be faithful in those relationships. We are intentional in getting to know one another and in allowing ourselves to be known. We pray regularly for our sisters, and we ask for their prayers. We respect and keep confidences absolutely. We support and care for one another. We take joy in God's weaving of all our differences into the fabric of loving sisterhood.

IV.2 MINISTRY: INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE

The Society of Saint Anna the Prophet
is an Episcopal society of mature women
living within vows of simplicity, creativity, and balance
called to be prophets of Christ
perceiving and proclaiming
to the church and to the world
God's transforming presence and power
in the lives of old and young.

- The mission statement of the SSAP

The ministries of the Annas in fulfillment of the mission of the Society are both individual and corporate. As elder women committed to Godly aging, the sisters of the SSAP, by our presence in the church and in the world, are witnesses to the power of God active in the lives of elders, showing old age to be a time of spiritual challenge and blessing.

The individual ministries of the Annas, lay and ordained, are many and varied, but all the Annas share a desire to bring the gifts of their aging to ministry. We also share a particular interest in, and concern for, ministry with the old and the young.

Corporately, the Society is engaged in the formation and leadership of worshipping communities in elder care facilities. All Annas are involved in these ministries through their prayers and financial support. Some are also active participants in the ministry teams week by week. The Society also supports foreign and domestic missions which meet needs of elders and children. Other ministries may be undertaken by the Society, with the approval of the Chapter.

Our incarnational understanding of ministry in the name of Jesus affirms the importance of being, as well as doing. The incarnation includes every human life, and it is our calling to show forth that mystery by continuing in ministry into old age, even if immobile in a nursing home bed. Intercessory prayer is one ministry the physically restricted Annas may take up. Other ministries are spiritual direction and mentoring by telephone. In the economy of God, these ministries are of as much value as the leadership of congregations.

Within the Society, we engage in mutual ministry. All the sisters offer their particular gifts, knowledge, and expertise in appropriate ways to build up, nurture, and sustain the life of the sisterhood.

IV.3 SYMBOLS AND SIGNS

The most obvious signs of our identity as Annas are the signs of age: grey hair, reading glasses, wrinkles, sensible shoes, perhaps a cane. These badges of long life are common to most elders, but in the SSAP, they are celebrated as signs of new possibilities. Our aging bodies, cherished by the Creator, are vessels for offering God's incarnate love in new ways.

The habit or vestment of the Society is a cassock-alb of feminine design, in a natural linen blend homespun. It is covered by a wide scapula of the same fabric. Provisionals, during their initial year of discernment, are given a cassock-alb for the liturgical ministry. Novices receive a plain scapula to wear with their cassock-alb. Upon taking regular vows, sisters receive a scapula with a wide red band bordering the left side, front and back. The deep red of the band is the Society's signal color. It symbolizes both the passion and death of Jesus and the Pentecost fire of the Holy Spirit. Clothed in the color of our redemption and our empowerment, we are constantly reminded of the everpresent selfgiving love of God. The habit may be worn at any time. Those on ministry teams in eldercare facilities vest for liturgies and for pastoral visits. All sisters and novices are required to vest for the annual convocation.

Along with the banded scapula, regular sisters receive the cross of the Society. The cross is handmade of silver, its surface hammered to show the uneven texture of old age. The four sides of the cross are balanced and equal, expanding in width as they reach from the center. The four open (or negative) spaces are wider than the arms of the cross, suggestive of larger life, unseen and eternal, surrounding what is seen and transitory. On the reverse of the cross are engraved the initials SSAP. The cross is worn on a simple silver chain, either inside or outside street clothes. When worn with the habit, it is worn outside.

Upon taking regular vows, sisters are given the name Anna. Anna linked with the sister's given name is used informally within the Society as a term of affection and as a reminder of our kinship with St. Anna the Prophet and with one another.

V.1 DISCERNMENT

In the liturgy of Holy Baptism, the priest prays that the newly baptized will be given a discerning heart among other gifts of the Spirit. Discernment is the process by which Christians become open to the call and purposes of God. Discernment is not a purely private process. Christians do the work of discernment with the help of other discerning hearts in the community.

In our life together as a Society, we honor and respect the process of discernment whenever decisions are to be made. Discernment takes time, and we are willing to take the time needed. Whenever possible, we try to arrive at decisions by consensus. The SSAP is committed to discerning in the context of prayer and truth telling.

The discernment of a vocation to the SSAP is structured by the Constitution and led by the Director of Provisionals and Novices (DPN). Applicants must be at least fifty years old and confirmed (or preparing to be confirmed) in the Episcopal Church. Initial steps are introductory meetings, an application process including references and a background check, and an interview with the Society's Council. Those who are interested and willing to complete these initial requirements in a timely manner are invited to enter into a full year of discernment as provisionals in the Society. Provisionals are formally welcomed at the Holy Eucharist on the Feast of the Presentation in February.

V. 2 PROVISIONALS

The provisional year is a time of reading, reflection, prayer, and conversation in community. Each provisional is linked with a mentor. The two meet from time to time at their mutual convenience. Provisionals begin studying the Rule and the Constitution. They participate, as they are able, in retreats and gatherings. They serve on a ministry team in an eldercare facility if their schedule permits. Provisionals are required to complete assigned reading and attend diocesan training workshops on anti-racism and on creating a safe church for children and adults. They are asked to make and fulfill a financial pledge for the support of the Society. Most importantly, they are invited to explore the challenges of simplicity, creativity, and balance, and to reflect with their mentors and others in the community on the ways in which their particular gifts for ministry fit with the mission of the Society.

During the year, the Director of Provisionals and Novices (DPN) and mentor, as well as others, experience the provisional's way of being in community and in ministry. The provisional experiences her own embrace of, or resistance to, the Society's identity and mission. By the late fall, usually there is some measure of clarity. The provisional submits a written report on her discernment thus far, along with a statement of intention either to take, or not to take, novice vows. After reviewing the materials submitted and interviewing the provisional, the Council makes a recommendation. A provisional may leave the process at any time if it becomes clear to her that she does not hear a call to the SSAP.

V. 3 NOVICES

The novice year is a year of practice. In preparation for taking novice vows, the provisional creates a *regula* (Latin: rule) specifying her spiritual disciplines for the coming year. The *regula* provides a structure for living within the vows of simplicity, creativity, and balance. The novice vows commit the novice to a year of participation and practice in the Society. The ministry of a novice may be in her workplace, in her parish, in any church related or secular setting. If possible, the novices participate in one of the Society's weekday celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. The novice also commits to a relationship with a spiritual director or a soul friend or a group. Providing for such a resource is a key component of everyone's *regula*. The only required meeting for novices is the annual convocation, but novices are encouraged to participate in retreats and other gatherings. Novices make and fulfill a financial pledge.

Following the fall retreat, novices submit an annual report and a statement of intention regarding the taking of regular vows. Council reviews the materials and interviews the novices. Council then recommends the taking of regular vows or an additional year of discernment as a novice.

V. 4 REGULAR SISTERS

When a vocation to the SSAP is fully discerned, a novice may prepare to take regular annual vows. The *regula* from the novice year is revised prior to taking vows at the Feast of the Presentation in February. Those who have taken annual vows are called regulars or sisters. They receive the Society's cross and the banded scapula as full members of the Society and the Corporation (legal entity).

Vows are renewed each year, and sisters have the annual obligation of submitting a report and letter of intention, including a financial pledge, following the fall retreat. Each year, there is the opportunity to revise and adjust the *regula*. If formal educational experiences are included in the *regula*, sisters in financial need may apply to the Council for scholarship aid. The ministries of the Society require priests and deacons; if a sister desires to enter priestly or diaconal discernment in a diocesan program, this can be included in the *regula*.

Because the members of the SSAP are elders, the year-by-year renewal of vows allows flexibility. In the event of illness or transition, there is the possibility of taking a leave of absence from the Society without having to formally withdraw.

After four years in annual vows, a sister may make known her desire to take permanent or life vows. The community spends a year of prayer and discernment with her, resulting in a recommendation by the Council. Permanent vows are not required for full membership. Only some discern a life vocation and are prepared to make a permanent commitment. Those who take life vows still submit a report and revise the *regula* each year.

A regular, whether annually or permanently vowed, may attach the initials SSAP to her name. Within the Society, this is routinely done. In other circumstances, the use of the initials is optional.

VI.1 LEADERSHIP

The SSAP is a society in which all are called to follow Jesus Christ, and all are called to lead. Leadership can take many forms, but every sister is encouraged to develop and exercise her gifts for leadership. For many older women, this is a new experience. We are particularly mindful of the need to support and mentor one another as we stretch into God's call to be elders and prophets.

While a number of Annas are ordained, ordination does not define leadership in the SSAP. As heirs of St. Anna the Prophet, we have expanded the institutional church's orders of ministry into a new kind of leadership based in our baptism and in our aging.

Within the Society, responsibilities for our ongoing life and ministry are shared by the sisters. Each sister carries a portion. Each sister takes the lead when her gifts and person are needed. We are teachers of one another, for we all have many years of life and experience. The very ill and the very old among us exercise their leadership by going faithfully before us into the valley of the shadow of death.

Formal leadership of the SSAP is vested in the Council which is also the Board of the Corporation. Members of the Council are either elected or appointed by the Superior, according to the Constitutions's guidelines.

VI.2 THE SUPERIOR

The Superior is the elected president of the SSAP. The name of the office, which comes from the monastic tradition, seems to imply a hierarchy within the Society and the expectation of obedience to the Superior by the sisters. Neither is characteristic of the SSAP. Annas do not take a vow of obedience, either to the Rule or to the Superior, and our sisterhood is a non-hierarchical community. Power and responsibility are distributed among all the Annas; directive leadership, when needed, is exercised by the Council. The Superior is a sister among sisters; she is neither spiritual mother nor spiritual exemplar. The Superior is so named because her calling is to keep in view the whole of the Society and its nurture. She must inhabit and speak from a spiritual geography which affords her that perspective. It is a "higher" place, not for the purpose of command, but for the purpose of vision. It is one perspective among many. The Superior is to keep before the individual members an awareness of the future into which we are moving as a whole community.

The Superior presides over meetings of the Society in Chapter and of the Council, which are, respectively, the Corporation and its Board. The Superior is also a housekeeper, keeping records, administering, and performing other tasks outlined in the Constitution and By-laws.

Given the challenges of her office, the Superior is to be zealous in prayer and reflection and willing to devote significant time and energy to the work. She is to offer her leadership in such a way that her sisters are encouraged and empowered to offer theirs, as well.

VII. 1 GODLY AGING

Christians believe that the incarnation of God in a young male Jew includes all humanity. This mystery has at its heart the paradox that the most fully particular is, at the same time, truly universal. The struggle of the church to include Gentiles at the table in the first century and women at the altar in the twentieth century is a struggle which continues and will continue until all humanity is understood to be stamped with the likeness of Christ.

The call to Godly aging is a call to deeper faith in the mystery of the incarnation at a time in life which has usually been understood as a time of decline from the possibility of full and functioning human life into decrepitude and decay. Godly aging rejects the notion of human life as a progression from the “not yet” of infancy and childhood to the “never again” of old age, affirming the holiness of every stage of human life. To understand the aging process as Godly is to understand that the more we accept and cherish weakening minds and bodies, our own and others’, the more we accept and cherish the incarnate Lord.

The call to Godly aging is not limited to glorifying God in our aging bodies. We are also called to ministry. The youthful energy of the New Testament, with its ardent missionary zeal, seems to offer little place in ministry to the old whose fires have become quietly burning embers. Yet, Jesus himself was firmly grounded in the wisdom tradition, and even as a young man, he seemed to have a wise elder’s perspective. His public and active ministry of teaching and healing was balanced with the contemplative, quiet, hidden presence and power of an elder. His grandmother Anna and other elders in his village undoubtedly influenced his development. Jesus’ ministry included the gifts both young and old have to offer in the service of God’s sovereignty.

Godly aging, for those privileged to live long enough, offers the opportunity to participate in the life and ministry of Jesus in ways unavailable to younger people. The sisters of the SSAP are called in the particularity of their aging to remind the church of the universality of God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ.

VII. 2 ILLNESS AND FRAILITY

The sisters of the SSAP are in training for the arduous spiritual journey into illness and frailty. Living within vows of simplicity, creativity, and balance helps us establish health enhancing habits which increase physical well being and nurture our minds and hearts. We reject the common attitude that the human body is a machine which wears out. We understand that we are aging bodies, and our embodied experiences continue to teach us and lead us into fullness of life. The physical and mental afflictions of old age place us very close to the lame, the blind, the imprisoned, and the tormented whom Jesus singled out as worthy of his attention. Jesus understood their condition, not as a curse, but as an opportunity for the power of God to be revealed. So it is with us.

The inevitable suffering which comes with long life is not meaningless. It is deeply connected to the suffering of Christ. The suffering of elders intensifies in isolation. The sisters of the SSAP in our ministry with elders in care and with one another are committed to being in close relationship with those who are suffering. We are also committed to being open to relationship when we are suffering. In this way, isolation is banished, and the power of God to redeem even the most difficult and painful of our days is made manifest. Schooled in the balance of solitude and community, we are prepared for the challenges of illness and frailty. Participating in the sacraments together is particularly important in times of suffering.

Learning to be dependent on God and on others is one lesson old age teaches. It is a lesson most resist for a time. Godly aging enables us to know again what we knew as young children: we need help. The Annas are involved in many helping ministries; they are also learning to accept help with simple gratitude. The gratitude with which we respond to the help and care of others and with which we acknowledge God's upholding grace is a gratitude which sweetens and illumines our experience of need as a spiritual gift.

Those Annas whose aging takes them into the confusion of dementia and those who suffer debilitating, immobilizing illness are not unprepared. Their formation as Annas in a community of prayer and service provides orientation and support. Upheld by the care and companionship of their sisters, their calling becomes living fully in the present with patience and trust.

The yearly creation of a *regula* gives the Annas a convenient opportunity to appropriately and realistically address issues related to living conditions, transportation, nutrition, and healthcare, in consultation with the spiritual director or consultation group. It is the responsibility of all Annas to make timely plans and arrangements for household help, simpler or assisted living, or nursing home care. Each Anna, upon vowing, is required to complete an advance directive, power of attorney, and will. In November, these documents are carefully reviewed by the sister as she prepares her annual report.

VII. 3 A HOLY DEATH

Annas see in dying the process of birthing new life. This is familiar territory for old women who have been companions of many labors, many births, and perhaps have had the experience themselves. Just as a woman labors on God's behalf and with God's help to bring new life into the world, so the dying one labors, in a profoundly physical experience, to bring new life into being in eternity. Confidence in the resurrection assures that the labor is not in vain.

Annas know well that timing and consciousness, fear and pain, are not always predictable or controllable. Modern medical intervention can offer compassionate help or become an alienating hindrance. The hospice movement has fostered respect for the needs of the dying in much the same way that women and midwives have reclaimed the birthing process. Annas prepare for dying and death by having in place their medical directives and by choosing, insofar as they are able, the extent to which their dying will be managed by others.

Annas may also create a pastoral care directive for the Superior to hold which describes the kinds of ministry desired in final days, as well as the people to be involved. In our care for one another and for elders in our congregations, we offer many forms of ministry, such as gentle massage and reiki, special music, the reading of Scripture, singing hymns, chanting psalms, the praying of the offices. In all of these, we can be midwives of the dying. The reserved sacrament and liturgies for reconciliation, anointing, and time of death are the deathright of all Christians, and we are committed to providing these to our own sisters and to those with whom we minister. In our ministry with the dying and in our own dying, we seek to reclaim some of the practices of medieval monastic infirmaries where the experience of dying was supported in creative ways.

Preparing thoroughly for a sacred event is not presumptuous or morbid, but an expression of faith. Annas have the opportunity to make dying and death a holy witness to the Lord's goodness. In whatever circumstances death comes and however easy or difficult the labor, the final breath is as sacred as the very first. Our earthly lives end in a breath prayer to our Creator.

Each Anna is to file with the Superior and with her parish an order of service for the celebration of her life, including readings and hymns and the participants to be involved in the leadership of the liturgy. Sisters, novices, and provisionals are vested and present in procession for the Requiem Eucharist of an Anna. Upon death, the cross of the Society is returned to the Superior, but a sister may be buried in her vestment. The place of burial is chosen by the individual sister in consultation with her family and friends. This information should be included in the plan filed with the Superior and the parish.

The anniversary of a sister's entrance into fullness of life in God is marked by prayers at the celebration of a Eucharist close to the date. Yearly, at the Holy Eucharist at the Feast of the Presentation, all those in the sisterhood who have died are remembered in the prayers.

PERCIPERE ET PROCLAMARE

For more information about the Society of Saint Anna the Prophet,
please visit the website at <http://ssap.episcopalatlanta.org>