

Miss Lydia

"Yippee", I heard my sister scream as I came up from the cellar with two playful, six week old kittens in my arms.

"What's up? " I ran to her and asked.

She exclaimed "No church today, look outside...the snow is over your head. We can all stay home and play with the kittens for hours." My heart started pounding. It was not that we didn't like church, although we always timed my father's sermons and kidded him if they went longer than 15 minutes, but half the pleasure was the pure serendipidity of missing it (or school) plus we would have an extra week to play with the six kittens who would soon be headed to new homes or Worcester's Animal Rescue League.

Back then, before cats were spayed, we had a tradition of standing behind my Rector Dad in the church foyer, as he shook everyone's hand and conversed briefly after service, we offered the delightful kittens to kindly members of the congregation who would assure a good home. This usually solved about 80% of the homes needed, so it worked quite well.

My Dad was walking into the back door. You might be right, he said "No one showed up for the 8 a.m. service except Mr. Burgess. He said driving was very tough and the snow was still coming down."

"Yippee" in chorus even awoke my brother, usually the last to sleep in although he could also be quietly reading in his room, as he did so often.

"No church, no church!" as my sister and I danced around the hallway. Then my Dad stated "On the other hand, we have Miss Lydia Slater to think about!"

"No way, she's in her 90s...she won't make it and Fritz never comes to church anyway!"

My Mom continued in her orderly fashion to get breakfast ready, look over her music for choir and church organist duties and was not swayed by the snow outside. After we ate, she said " I'll see you all in about 20 minutes in the parish hall" which was right next door.

We soon trudged through the snow to the parish hall, with our fingers crossed that the church would be empty. Soon after, my Dad came over to the parish hall with Mr. Burgess, who had planned to stay as the usher for the 10:45 service. "Church is on" exclaimed my Dad. "We have one in attendance!"

As our hopes and glee fell, we wondered who it could possibly be....as the roads were mostly unplowed and still piling up. It *was* Miss Lydia Slater, in her 90s and frail physically but certainly not mentally as she had walked through the high, heavy snow in her galoshes and heavy coat, to wait until a snowplow came up the main street and "demand" that he take her to church immediately!

He did! So, the choir had only four (myself and siblings) but the organist (Mom) and rector (Dad) and usher (Mr. Burgess) carried on the service in full and we were all the

better for it - seeing the fortitude and religious commitment of a ninety something year old not falter - even with an easy excuse so available! No excuse came so easily after that!