

Spiritual Journey

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“But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Lamentations 3:22-23, NRSV

As I reflect on my life through the lens of faith, I see a journey marked through and through by the steadfast and unconditional love of God, and God's faithfulness toward me. And as I look back and see with clear 20/20 vision the evidences of God's love and faithfulness, I then find strength to face the future with a hope that assures me of God's love and faithfulness – not only in my earthly life, but through eternity.

I am blessed to have been raised in a family where there was strong emphasis on the nurturing of faith, especially through the life of the church. I am a cradle Presbyterian, and my parents served as role models as well as encouragers of faithfulness; that is, they both served actively in many capacities in the church, and they encouraged (read: insisted!) on my participation in the life of the church. My most meaningful church experiences in childhood (at least the ones I remember the most) are the years I spent in First Presbyterian Church in San Antonio, Texas, from the time we moved to San Antonio when I was in the sixth grade, through my years as a young adult.

In my adolescent years, the church was where I felt a sense of welcome and belonging, more than any other group or activity in school or the community. Church, Sunday School, and youth group were what gave me encouragement and confidence and acceptance.

After the mandatory hiatus from all things churchy while I was in college and graduate school (ironically, I ran away from the church while attending a church-related college), I returned to my spiritual roots as a young adult. When I moved back to San Antonio to work in information systems consulting, I re-engaged with my home church. Immediately I rediscovered the grace and unconditional love that I had missed during my wandering-away years. I felt a spiritual hunger and thirst for growing as a disciple and living my life in a way that would honor the One whose love so powerfully broke through to my heart – Jesus Christ. That spiritual hunger drew me to explore my sense of call, with the conclusion that I was called to serve God's people as a minister of word and sacrament.

At the same time in my life, the Lord brought a wonderful woman, Carol Waters, into my life. Carol's love and wisdom have been a constant source of encouragement and support throughout our marriage. She is a partner in ministry, an amazing mother of our three adult children (and mother-in-law of our newest addition to our family, our daughter-in-law), and my companion and friend in life.

In the current season of life, my wife and I find ourselves more and more mindful of our parents' health and well-being. So much so, that an important part of my discernment of call includes whether or not a particular call will better enable us to care for either set of parents.

Over the years, I have served in various capacities in the church. Solo pastor of a small rural congregation. Associate pastor of a large (1,500 members) congregation. Head of staff of a mid-size small-town congregation. Mission committee work at the Presbytery level. COM, CPM, Administrative Commission, Presbytery Response Team, EP search committee, Presbytery Moderator, Administrative Council, commissioner to the General Assembly. I don't mention these things to pad my resume or to make me appear important; I mention them because I love the church I serve – both locally and in denominational connectedness – and I have dedicated my pastoral life to promoting peace, unity, and even purity in the Body of Christ. Helping congregations through conflict and differences in ways that honor Christ has been a major focus of ministry for me.

All of this has led me, with the strong affirmation of my wife and family, to sense a strong call to serve the Lord in partnership with the people of the Graves Memorial Presbyterian Church. I look forward to years of fruitful ministry, including being a faithful member of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina.