



Ambushed... in the Best Possible Way

Faith Story by Libby Blake

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Although my husband Jim and I began attending FUMC twelve years ago, we didn't immediately become members. In fact, it was a seven-year process of talking about it, praying about it and finally doing something about it! My faith journey as a child had been wonderful. I had embraced a personal relationship with God, been very involved in youth group and choir, spent summers with a missionary family in Oklahoma. As I entered my teens, my mother moved our family to a much more fundamentalist congregation.

While it was a good fit for some, I felt smothered. The Lord I knew was getting lost in what seemed to be unending rules and regulations. I became anxious about Religion (with capital R) and found myself hyperventilating during services. Thus started a thirty-year avoidance and while I tried to maintain my faith and asked in prayer for forgiveness, it wasn't until Jim began encouraging me to attend that I was slowly reintegrated into formal church services.

That was the beginning of what feels like Chapter Two in my faith journey. For me, joining a church meant not only a renewal of a very personal relationship with God, but that I was willing to give of my time, talent, and assets. So Jim transferred his membership and I became a Methodist for the first time. I had no idea how the Lord would use me and prayed that I would be open to any invitations. It wasn't long until Pastor Steve approached and asked if I would be willing to be a co-leader of the Nominations and Leadership Development Team. I said, "Yes," with absolutely no idea what that team did! I had been ambushed. I had a direct answer to prayer! And luckily, I had Kim Reynolds as a co-leader.

Kim and Bonnie Reynolds plus the other seven members of that team (including a rotation by each of the Lay Leaders) gave me a glimpse into what "serving" in this church could mean. We were behind the scenes, trying to match members to many openings, always asking for guidance, and praising God for the many who said "yes". It could also be frustrating and involved many phone calls. We had deadlines. I felt inadequate. Because I didn't know many members, I felt like I couldn't contribute. The team always seemed forgiving. Kim and I found we were very much in sync and brought different "talents" to the leadership position. Our team thanked God for the many wonderful people who agreed to serve.

I received a very personal gift through serving on Nominations/Lay Leadership. Being surrounded by God-Grounded people who were interested in meeting me was the true beginning of my integration into this great, big, diverse congregation. I am so grateful for this blessing.

Having just recently completed my three-year rotation, I am looking forward to finding new ways to serve. This church is blessed to have multitudes of modern-day followers of Jesus giving of their time and energy, supporting through faithful contributions, caring for each other and for those in need near and far.

And so, I feel my personal Chapter Three is just beginning and that God (through my husband) brought me to the right place at the right time. I give thanks to Him.