

My faith journey is a special, very real part of my life. There has never been a time I was not active in the Church or called myself a Christian.

I am blessed to have been brought up in the Presbyterian Church, following a long family history of church involvement going back several generations, and which included elders, deacons, Sunday school teachers, Vacation Bible School volunteers, and my own work as a Presbyterian Christian youth leader, Sunday school teacher and deacon. The Presbyterian way done 'decently and in order,' is part of my spiritual DNA. Its worship, organizational and foundational structure based on *The Book of Order* and its beliefs and creeds based on the *Holy Bible* and *The Book of Confessions* are comforting familiarities to me. They provide context and language that I intuitively believe and define who I am, who everyone is – a beloved child of God, saved by God's grace through Jesus Christ.

I heard God's call on my life to serve at an early age – I remember feeling "set apart" at the age of 10, but I thought it was to be a good Christian - helpful, kind, respectful, etc. which I was, much of the time, but not always. When I was 18 years old, I heard the 'call' loudly one day while reciting the Lord's Prayer. Out of fear, I ignored it, which resulted in many years of frustration and began a quiet battle within me of trying to live out God's call on my life in what I deemed were appropriate ways – regular church attendance, Bible Study groups, becoming a Stephens Minister, then a wife and mother, and raising my children in a faith-based home, and their attending Christian schools the first few years of their lives. As I write this and reflect upon this, I understand that I was living out my Christian faith as best as I could, but ignoring God's call because I was simply afraid, a lack of faith on my part. It was only when I began working with Children and Youth Ministries at the Presbyterian Church of Dover, when I felt I was truly in-line with what God had in mind for my life. When I accepted the full call to become trained for ministry as an ordained pastor of a church, it was then that I felt completely at peace for the first time in my life, even in the surreal, stressful times of a pandemic.

As I reflect upon my journey, I confess and I am grateful, profoundly so, that I have been blessed with little-to-moderate trauma and heartache. From childhood to adulthood, I experienced disappointment, sadness, and frustration, but I also rallied, and was always in a place to help someone else with their challenges, listen to them, encourage them, and pray for them. In the lows and highs, ebbs and flows of life, I have felt and *seen* the Lord's presence – sometimes obvious, sometimes not. My life has been a good one, and I am grateful for the many experiences I have had, even when those experiences proved to be very painful and difficult, such as suffering a miscarriage, having a son born with an Apgar score of zero and who nearly died at birth (he survived thankfully!), being laid off from a position I loved due to the 2008-2009 economic crisis, and having to close down a beloved school due to a COVID-19-related financial crisis. It has been during these times I have felt God's love and mercy sustain me. It continues to do so, and it has made me more deeply aware of the suffering around me and to be the ears, eyes, hands, heart and feet of Jesus Christ where the Holy Spirit guides me.

Prayer is important to me. I pray regularly for my church, friends, my family, colleagues, people who have asked me to pray for them, situations I am aware of, and for this state, country, and world. I feel I am living a life of grace, because of the prayers of my ancestors – my grandmothers and great-grandmothers were prayer warriors and believed in praying for future generations. I hope to take all that I have learned along the way to help lead a church in a way that its members will grow in faith, will flourish as God intended for them to do so, and know they are loved, so that they can serve others.