

God Uses God's People to Accomplish God's Purpose

As far back as I can remember, God has put people in my path to draw me nearer to Him. God used my family and my church family, pastors, coworkers, friends and acquaintances. God started with my parents.

My father was Catholic. He wanted my sisters and I to be Catholic. My mother was Methodist. She thought we should be Methodists. Mom won. And, since the "Community Church of Kendalia" was the only church in town, that's where we went. I remember getting up when the rooster crowed and walking down the gravel road to that little white frame church almost every Sunday morning. I remember how, when the hot gravel started burning my bare feet, I would run ahead and wait in the shade of a cedar tree until my mom and sisters could catch up.

Later, when we moved away from Kendalia, our circumstances prevented us from attending another church. Fortunately, though, it seems that God was already working in my life. It wasn't long before I was old enough to drive, and when I felt the hunger to be in church, I visited the Catholic Church that some of my relatives attended. I can almost see the grin on Dad's face as he watched me drive down the county road toward the *Catholic Church!*

I drifted in and out of church over the years, finally accepting Christ while on a weekend pass from Ft. Eustis, Virginia or "Ft. Useless" as we called it, where I was stationed at the time. Nevertheless, God never gave up on me, and eventually led me to the woman I would later marry. But before Trish would say "yes", she made it clear that she expected me to attend church with her if I wanted to continue seeing her. I decided she was worth it! ☺

A few months later, I was baptized in that church, the same one in which Trish and both of our children were baptized in. At that time, it was called "Cokesbury United Methodist Church." This time it was Mom's turn to smile! I became a member of the congregation, attending on a regular basis. Trish and I even participated in the church's Young Adult group. In May of 1979, in that same church, I married the woman that God used to get me there.

My family and I eventually transferred our membership to [Oak Island United Methodist Church](#) because it was closer to where we lived. Keith and Kimberly went through Confirmation Classes there, and we attended worship regularly. Unfortunately, over a period of a few years, the pressures of a secular weekday jobs and weekend ranch work left little time for church. Gradually, my work became my life.

However, God was about to use another person in my life to draw me to Him. I was about to hear God's voice in a way that was crystal clear, but completely unexpected. I had become friends with a gentleman who belonged to a religious organization whose beliefs were different from orthodox Christian views. Month after month, he relentlessly pressured me to join the religion he supported. At first I resisted, but little by little, some of

what he said began to sink in, especially the part about how many people tend to “keep God in a box until Sunday morning.”

The next weekend, as God would have it, I happened to be in the back yard just as Trish and Kimberly were leaving for church. Trish asked if I wanted to go, but I decided I had too much work to do. But when they turned to drive out of the driveway and the brake lights of the car came on, it was as if a light came on in my head. I thought, “You just promised God that you wanted to do something in church and here you are, watching them drive to church without you.”

The next Sunday, I drove us to church! Within a short time, we were attending Oak Island UMC on a regular basis. We were soon enrolled in Bible studies, leading other Bible studies, taking Communion to the homebound, and serving on various committees. I learned about Lay Speaking program and became a Certified Lay Speaker. I began preaching in nursing homes and in other United Methodist churches. Soon I was asking questions about the ministry and exploring the different options available to those seeking ordination in the United Methodist Church.

Not everyone seemed as happy about my decision to enter the ministry as I was. Some people liked to tease me about it. Others were skeptical about it. Undaunted, I persevered, determined that I was following God’s will. Still, there was a certain amount of anxiety as I wondered about my ability to serve as Pastor of a church. However, I continued to step through one door after another as God led me down the pathway that He had laid out for me years before.

As I continued fulfilling my educational requirements for the ministry, the months seemed to fly by. Then one night, about midnight, God affirmed my calling by waking me up from a sound sleep. It was as if the alarm clock had suddenly gone off. I sat on the side of the bed and began to get dressed, thinking it was time to answer God’s call. After telling myself that it wasn’t quite that simple, I went back to sleep. Later that night, the same thing happened again, and once more I had to convince myself that answering God’s call would not be like getting up to answer the telephone. Finally, I was able to go back to sleep and slept soundly the rest of the night. I never forgot that eventful night, because that was the night God knocked on the door of my heart and assured me that I was doing the right thing, and that He would carry me over the rough places.

I completed Local Pastor Licensing School in 1997, and was eventually appointed as bi-vocational pastor of Christine United Methodist Church. During my pastorate there, I completed Basic Course of Study School and received a Bachelor’s degree from Our Lady of the Lake University. In early 2003, I felt God calling me into full-time ministry. I requested a full-time appointment. As God would have it, about a month later the manager of my secular job informed me that my position was being eliminated. On Friday, May 30th, I turned in my keys, pager and cell phone and walked away from the job I had held for 17 years. Two days later, on June 1st, my position as full time pastor of Oak Meadow UMC officially began. God not only found me a church, He gave me a day off in between, and two weeks to prepare my first sermon in my new appointment!

By the grace of God, I was ordained an Associate Member of the Southwest Texas Annual Conference the next Saturday, on June 6th. The following Monday I began moving into the Pastor's Office at Oak Meadow United Methodist Church.

With God's help, I completed all of the required coursework by 2005 and was elected into the three-year Covenant Connection Program as a Probationary Elder. I completed that program in 2008, went through the required interviews and verbal examinations, and was ordained an Elder in the United Methodist church on June 7th, 2008 at the SW Texas Annual Conference in Corpus Christi, Texas.

It has been a blessing to serve as a pastor in the United Methodist Church. My heart tells me that I am what God wants me to do. I feel closer to God than ever as I experience God's grace and God's continued presence. I am certain that even more blessings await me. God's grace continues to amaze me when I think of the way God has worked in my life. God worked in ways I didn't expect Him to work, and used people I didn't expect Him to use, to teach me things I didn't know I needed to learn.

When I think back on my journey with Christ, I'm reminded of walking a labyrinth. I never knew which way the path would go next. Sometimes it seemed very near the center, where I wanted to be, other times further way. Yet, while God always let me go, He never gave up on me and always welcomed me back. My prayer is that I can keep putting one foot before the other, and never stop growing in the awesome grace and knowledge of God.

As for the years in the Community Church of Kendalia; I don't remember much of what I learned there. But God used my mother to see that I went. It has been many years since I walked the gravel road to that church. My memory takes me back there from time to time, and I have come to realize that while my feet were burning from the hot gravel, my heart was being set on fire for the Lord.

Praise Be to God!

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