

Today I want to tell you of my continuing faith journey as I have always had a growing faith relationship with God and my faith community – faith that has always brought me light. I sometimes read obituaries where it will say that the person preferred the Lutheran faith meaning the person didn't go to church often. For me, my Lutheran faith has defined who I am and with my experience of faith, grace, belief, knowing, and relationships have always been intertwined.

We talk of “passing the faith” – well my parents did that for me. They were active in the church. My dad was Methodist and my mom was Lutheran and I started my faith journey first in the Methodist church then mainly in the Lutheran church. My father was always into music with piano, organ, cello, singing and being a choir director. He had a lifelong relationship with the boys/men of his confirmation class. They called themselves “the gang”. In the back of my head I began to know that relationships were important.

The first specific memory that I have of my faith journey was when I was in second grade, seven years old, and I was attending vacation bible school. We were sitting outside and having a contest to see who could find a bible verse first. Thinking back I doubt I thought much about faith at that time. In second grade it was primarily relationships – my family went to church. It seemed good and natural – that was who we were.

By confirmation I started to develop a greater knowledge of faith, grace, belief, and again relationships. This time, as I was more independent, with a wider circle of friends still with family, there was a growing understanding of a faith and grace relationship with God. I was active in our Luther League Program. We had a large church and the senior youth program could use the entire camping facility at Alexandria, MN – now called Luther Crest. I would sometimes present the “sermon” during camp worship services. Camp leaders suggested that I should think about going into the ministry. My dad was a mechanical engineer and I chose that path. Again, thinking back, this may have been a time when independent prayer entered my journey of faith. My prayer life has also matured with my faith. I have come to see prayer as a direct relationship with God – a conversation with God. How many of you remember seeing the movie “Fiddler on the Roof”? Tevye, a role made famous in the play by Zero Mostel, was driving his milk wagon and talking with God about traditions and the marriage of his daughter Tzeitel. Well, that is how most of my prayer life is – a conversation with God. His side is generally limited to yes, no, and get on with it.

One thing I know about my journey of faith is that it flows much better with a faith partner. I met Ann at Walnut Hill Lutheran Church in Dallas. My dad was transferred to Dallas in 1961 and the family moved to Dallas in the Spring of 1961. I had started college at the University of Minnesota and had a summer job and moved at the end of the summer. My brother and older sister came ahead of me and told Ann that she had to meet me and she did. After 2 years or so we knew it was love. In 1964 we were engaged. During that summer Ann took some courses at SMU and we would often study together in the library. One day as Ann was leaving the library one of the librarians asked if we were married because we looked as comfortable together as a “pair of old shoes. We still share that love, comfort and faith.

After a little over a year in Dallas my dad decided to move back to Minneapolis while I stayed in Dallas. Alma, Ann's mom and a member here in her last years, was also a part of my faith relationships. I was singing with the church choir and with my family gone, Alma offered to have me join Orville, Ann's dad, and her for dinner each Wednesday night if I would stay with the choir. Being a lousy cook, that sounded good to me and I stayed with that faith community. We were married in August of 1965. I don't believe that it was God's plan that we should marry but in all that we encounter it is God's will that it be good.

Just after Ann and I were married we moved back to MN while I pursued a master's degree and Ann taught junior high school art – truly an act of faith on her part. We joined Elim Lutheran Church in Robbinsdale and joined the choir. We were that cute young couple amongst the grey heads but we felt welcome and comfortable with that small group and therefore comfortable in that faith community. Music has also always been a part of our lives and has strengthened our various faith relationships as it gives us a means of expressing our faith through the gift of music.

After graduating with a master's degree in 1967 we moved back to Texas and then to San Diego. In 1983 I experienced what was my personal greatest leap of faith. I left my job, with a regular paycheck, in San Diego, started my own consulting company, and the family moved to Guffey, CO where I started operating a one man international energy engineering consulting company. There was a lot of time on my own "milk wagon" talking with God and preparing business plans and family financial plans. We drilled a well to be sure we had water and developed plans for a passive solar house and in June 1983 we left San Diego for a new life in Guffey/Canon City. We found a faith community at Trinity Lutheran Church and have had a mutually supportive relationship in our faith ever since and will for the remainder of our lives. In all that we have done there has been a faith relation with God and life has been good.

I have experienced stresses. My dad started dealing with Alzheimer's disease when he was 74. By the time he was 80 he had no idea who I was and when I came to visit I was a stranger in his home that caused him discomfort. He died in 1987. My older sister was diagnosed with cancer in her late 30's. We thought it had been cured but it reoccurred in 1988. It was diagnosed as incurable and a hospice was set up at our mother's home. She had been a nurse and now again was a care-giver. On one of my visits we held a service of healing and I will forever remember my sister asking during that service "what is happening to me". Well, she did know and she also lived a life of faith. She planned her funeral and chose Handel's Alleluia Chorus for the closing – I still hear Ruth Wold boldly playing that on the church organ. I do not believe that it was God's plan that my dad or my sister should die this way. I do have faith, I do believe, I do know that it is God's will that in some way good can come,

For me, faith, grace, belief, knowledge, and a relationship with God have been a part of who I am. I come here each week because this faith community supports who I am. I sing because it is part of who I am and an expression of faith. I meet God here both spiritually and physically. In confirmation I learned that in communion God is present in and under the form of bread and wine. As I have grown in faith I have come to know and experience the presence of God in me from the meal we share at the table. This intertwining of faith, belief, grace, and knowledge allows me to look forward with joy and to look back with thanksgiving. As the choir knows, I almost always begin my more formal prayers with "It is with joy and thanksgiving..." Amen.