

My daughter often gets annoyed when I announce what is going to happen in a movie just before it happens. As a very analytical person who loves adventure, I love a movie where I can't figure out the plot before it unfolds. Of course, it's always fun to go back and watch the movie again so you can pick up on all the plot clues and foreshadowing you missed the first time through. If our faith journey were a movie, I'd love it. It's got:

character development as we grow and change

a great writer, whose credited with writing the greatest book of all time

many directors who try to interpret the writer's intent

a cast of thousands, including all the outreach, members, and guests over the last 48 years and

a complex plot that involves the community around Good Samaritan and the people within

We even know the ending, God's work will be done, and yet, as our faith journey unfolds it is intriguing and captivating.

I was recently reminded of how I was when I started at Good Samaritan 20 years ago. I hadn't been to church in years and had two small children who I wanted to raise with a firm Christian faith base. When the Pastor insisted on coming over to talk to me at home before baptizing my five-month-old, I felt vulnerable. Perhaps it was just that old Catholic guilt coming out. I held Steven on my lap like a shield, so he would be the focus, and I wouldn't have to look Pastor Bill in the eye and admit what a bad Christian I had been. I got courage from having him on my lap. This was a new beginning.

The next courageous step in my faith journey was volunteering as lector. I have a reading speed issue. My eyes cannot focus fast enough for me to read ahead. Most of my life I had avoided reading out loud, but had been doing it daily for several years with my children. I volunteered. As an X-Catholic, I hadn't read the Bible and some of the Old Testament names meant I had to ask others for help pronouncing them. I would get the lesson days before and practice it at least ten times before reading. It's amazing how much easier it got. It was all about having the courage to step into my faith.

More recently another new step. I never volunteered to be assisting minister or Council Vice President because I didn't feel worthy. Although I have always had unwavering faith in God, the details of my theology maybe were not the same as some other church members. When we got down to having just two assisting ministers I felt God calling me to find some courage and step into my faith. When I heard one too many complaints, guess who was calling me to Church Council leadership? My small part in the

plot of our congregational faith journey became more complex.

There were many things God called me to do this year in His service. I've had to speak hard truths. I have had to trust the process that the decision of the majority is the best decision whether or not I agreed fully with it. When my faith is most wavering God gives me what I need to move on to the next step, the next conversation, or the next decision. When I feel anxious He helps me lead a calm and faithful Council meeting. He provides us everything we need.

Mostly, God has given me a tremendous gift this year. It is the gift of stepping into greater faith. He keeps showing his trust in us as Good Samaritans and calls us to courageously step into our faith. Some of us are at a point in life when maybe we would prefer to show up for one hour of worship on Sunday and just maintain a quiet relationship with God the rest of the week. He is calling us to more fully step into our faith. Maybe it's in being more courageous in what we say. Maybe it's being more courageous about sharing our faith. Maybe it's being more courageous about teaching a Sunday Church School class. Maybe you don't know what it is until you're replaying this part of your faith journey at some future date.

Laura Hunter courageously stepped into her faith when she agreed to be Vacation Bible School Director. We had a great week under her dedicated leadership. Dot Howzdy, the oldest VBS volunteer, stepped more fully into her faith when she was called on to totally coordinate the dinners. Not only were the dinners tasty, they were always on time! Judy Marvel promised the VBS kids that if any of them didn't have a Bible, she would provide one for them. Homer Smith has agreed to supervise those of us with able bodies to spiff up our church yard.

Good Samaritans are growing in faith and learning that God will trust them and use them in ways they had not expected. No matter where you are on your faith journey, God will provide you the courage to faithfully do His work in response to the love and trust he shows for us.