

I was raised as a Birthright Friend, as were my Father and my three sisters, having been born into Quakerism. My mother was a convinced Quaker, as she chose her faith as an adult, after growing up in the Church of England. While my family history and subsequent role in Quaker history is significant, my spiritual journey within that faith community was not. As the only young person in the Meeting for Worship my parents attended, I had little voice, no peers, and no instruction or education in the Christian foundation and beliefs which guide the Conservative Religious Society of Friends.

In 1994, I moved to Winston Salem. Van and Emily Cockerham were some of the first friends I made here. They, of course, invited me to church. And I came and visited and joined the choir and began to see Light. But obligations other places, to other people, became more important. My focus was needed elsewhere.

So, for many years, I circled the periphery of Ardmore Baptist Church as a choir member, then a pre-school parent, a substitute, and eventually a teacher. I somehow always knew deep inside what I sought in my life, what was missing and had always been absent from my life, lay inside these doors; there was a holy presence here in the teachings and fellowship I watched from a distance.

In the Fall of 2015, I took a trip of respite out West to visit a friend from my childhood years in Nebraska. My friend offered little consolation or advice to me regarding my personal struggles, except these three unexpected words, "Go to Church."

In January 2016, I pledged to myself that the year would be different. And on Easter Sunday, I came to church. And I kept coming. Many Sundays I found myself moved to tears as the words of the Gospel, and God's unrelenting forgiveness and redemption and Grace resonated through my very core.

And then, this past summer, I released all that I was, and all that I possessed, to God's will, to His hands. In that surrender, I found the greatest gift I have ever been given; a clear and true belief in a God who gave to us his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and transgressions, and who bids us live our lives in His image. I have felt His great hands catch me, and hold me safe. I have known and continue to experience His grace and mercy each day as I learn to live another way.

My faith journey is very young, and I have much to learn. God's time is not always our time and I am embracing patience as I walk this new path, this new way that has opened before me.

The only Bible passage I recall from my childhood now guides me in my surrender of all I am and all I can be to His great Grace.

The Lord is my Shepherd; I Shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth me Beside the still waters.

He Restoreth my soul:

He Leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil: For thou art with me; Thy rod and staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.