

My faith story. Boy I hope I get this right. Things should go smoothly since none of my siblings are here to contradict me.

I was born at a very early age.

I was baptized Methodist. Both of my parents were Methodist. When I was two a young dynamic Lutheran pastor from MN right out of seminary knocked on our door. He was starting a mission church. He invited us to church on Sunday in the basement of this house. I thought it was a good idea so we went and joined, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Brentwood, NY. That's on Long Island in NY.

We were active members. We served on the Council & committees. I was active in SS, Jr. Choir, Folk group, probably the predecessor of these Praise bands. I was active in Luther League & then the Youth group when it was no longer cool to call it Luther league anymore. I went to the All Lutheran Youth Gathering in Houston, TX. I think that was the last time Missouri Synod did anything with us.

When it was time to go to college I really didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I always enjoyed sports and I was a people person so I majored in physical education so that I could teach PE and coach swimming. I played baseball, basketball, a little football but swimming was really my sport.

I attended the SUNY at Farmingdale which was a Jr. College at the time then I transferred to Towson State which was a College at the time now it's a University. I was on the swimming team throughout college.

When I graduated I substituted. Throughout college they told us that there weren't a lot of openings in teaching especially in PE. I just kept going, didn't think I'd have any trouble. But they were right. So I substitute taught and coached a YMCA age group swimming team 8 & under through 18. I did that a couple of years but saw that I wasn't going anywhere.

I friend of mine got me a job with a brokerage firm selling Municipal bonds tax shelters, annuities and Life insurance. It was fun and profitable there were a lot of young guys in the office, always some body to play with but I felt like I didn't have a direction. I was floating along in life.

There was this neighboring pastor a friend of my parents, Pastor Draglin. An old Swed. He was the kind of guy who would some how get you cornered and tell you all these dumb jokes. He was also after me. He would say things to me like. If you can sell bonds you can sell Jesus. He thought I should go into the ministry.

I had thought about that partly because I was one of the few people who graduated from my confirmation class who still went to Church. I didn't think that in its self was a good reason to become a pastor.

I really didn't want to become a pastor partly because almost all of the pastors I knew aside from that first dynamic pastor who left the ministry when I was still young. All the other ones I knew were kind of nerdy and boring. I didn't see how I would fit in and I didn't want to change to be someone else.

But that old pastor got to me. I started thinking about seminary. Then I took our youth group to a Lutheran Youth Encounter Congress for the weekend in the Poconos. That's in Pennsylvania. They had a speaker there name Tony Campolo. Campolo is a lay Baptist preacher. He was at the national youth gathering we just went to in San Antonio. Campolo challenged us to live out our faith. Lutheran Youth Encounter was recruiting for team members at the time. I saw this as God leading me into the ministry. I thought I could go on a International team as a test to see if I really should be in the ministry. I'm not sure what one thing has to do with another but that's what I thought.

I applied to be on an International team. I put the team going to Bolivia Ecuador and Peru as my first choice because I had some Spanish. God had other ideas. They put me on Cross Fire the team going to Kenya and Tanzania.

So this Long Island boy went to Concordia College in St. Paul for half of my training and then to Lake Wapogasset Bible Camp for the second half of training. Wapo is the Bible camp we send our kids to. It was at Wapo that I met Sandy who was as her grandmother said working for Jesus. She was on the year round staff working as the book keeper.

Well I was just starting my year commitment so we courted through letters and expensive phone calls.

My year on cross fire taught me at least two things. First of all if you can last a year with 4 strangers learning to get along and compromise you can do anything. Secondly I went to Africa thinking that I was bringing something to those people. I came back thinking that I got much more from them than I ever did for them. When God leads you to help others you always get more back than you gave.

When I finished my commitment our relationship was still alive. Soon after we were engaged. I applied to seminary as a test. If I got in God wants me to be a pastor.

I was accepted and started Summer greek as Pastor Gary spoke about. My experience wasn't so dramatic. I was scared of Greek though. My Grandfather wanted to be a pastor but he failed Greek. Instead he went on to be an Electrical engineer the dummy.

So Greek again was a test for me. But surprisingly I did very well in Greek. And when I entered seminary I became a real student. I think it was because I found my place in life.

I was hesitant to tell this story because just because you still involved in Church doesn't mean you are called to be a pastor. God calls people to be many different things. For example if God called everyone to be a pastor we would all starve to death.

Nicky Gumble from the Alpha series talks about his conversion. He is very thankful for the experience but he says he is even more thankful that his children will never know a day that they don't know Jesus love for them.

I was hoping for some major miracles this week so that my faith story which is really just the story of your life. I was hoping for a miracle so that my story would be more interesting.

I have never known a day when I didn't know Jesus loves me. I am baptized. Jesus told me that day that he loved me. I was too young to remember but my parents always told me. My Sunday school teachers always told me. The pastors I thought were boring apparently found a way to tell me.

There was a time when I acknowledged my faith. I was sitting in the pew during my confirmation service, waiting for things to get started. I thought to myself, do I really believe? But the thing was there really wasn't any alternative. I believed because nothing else was true.

There really isn't any alternative. I usually joke that I don't believe in atheists. But I don't. God is true, God's love for me is true, and God's love for you is true.

I have had some challenging times in my life but is always there. Doesn't mean things will go my way even if I have the best intentions.

Amen means it is true.

God is true, God's love for me is true, and God's love for you is true. Let's all say amen.