

My Faith Story

Hello, I'm Lynne. I would like to share how my grief helped me minister to those who are grieving.

For many years I struggled with the verse, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* Romans 8:28 (NIV)

When I was twenty-two, my mother got colon cancer and the next eighteen months were awful. For the last six months of her life, she had intestinal blockages due to the cancer and received sustenance through IVs. She fought for every breath. How could anything good come from her death, from cancer at the age of 49?

My faith walk at that time was pretty weak. I did start to seriously think about God but I sure wasn't happy with him at the time. I placed a huge wall around my grief and wouldn't go there. I would not talk about my mom. I never went to the cemetery. It hurt too much.

Life went on. I continued to ignore the grief. **The funny thing about grief is – it doesn't go away.**

In my role as church secretary, I encountered many people who were grieving. My experience with my mom's death helped me to understand the pain people experience.

In 2008, we moved to Ohio. I would come east every February to go on a woman's retreat. One year, we were asked the question "Is there anything that is interfering with your faith walk?" I wrote down my mother's death.

I can tell you that God does answer prayers. When I returned home from Pennsylvania, on the top of the pile of mail that had accumulated during my trip was a letter from Ruth, my mother's best friend when she was growing up. I had not heard from her, nor seen her, and barely remembered that she and Mom had been friends. She found out about me through a very strange way, from a letter I send out each Christmas to family and friends. One of those letters was sent to my mother's cousin in a nursing home. On the day Georgina received the letter, Ruth's daughter happened to visit, and she gave the letter to Ruth. Ruth then sent her letter to me which just happened to arrive on the day I got home. It was a wonderful letter about Ruth growing up with my mom, all the things they had done together and how my mom impacted her life. She ended her letter by saying, "As Christians, we know some day we will meet again, even though death took her much too soon." That letter really began the true healing of my grief, thirty years after my mother's death.

Since then, I became involved with Stephen Ministries. One aspect of the ministry is mailing out their four-book "Journeying Through Grief" series to people who have lost a loved one. Since Stephen Ministries began here at First Church, I have mailed out numerous grief series to people. I am committed to this ministry because I know how difficult losing a loved one is – and how important it is to grieve.

God has used my grief to help me minister to those who are grieving.

And now I can say with peace in my heart, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*