

From Kathy:

Every story has a beginning. Mine starts in the living room of my childhood for it is here that I experienced the face of God, unknowingly at that time, gleefully dancing to old-time music with my father, joyfully taking turns with my mother and sisters.

Later, my religious education from first through eighth grade enhanced my understanding of God's agape love. I was in awe of it and deeply moved by the suffering and sacrificial love of Jesus Christ.

As my world expanded and comprehension grew, like a floodgate bursting, I witnessed and experienced disturbing behaviors. Behaviors I could not comprehend and left me wary. I struggled to make sense of "why" and figure out how to attend to the hurt, mine and others'. From time to time, I referenced behavioral health or spiritual materials. My understanding grew painfully slow. Connection to Church and God became sporadic and peripheral. I trudged forward, somehow persevering.

Plodding along, deciding on a "practical" occupation, I worked as a secretary after high school. I eventually put myself through college earning a Bachelors degree from Robert Morris in the field of computers.

I married a man I love. However, we brought into it immaturities and distorted thinking. Needless to say, this distressed our relationship and clouded my personal turmoil. Seeking clarity amidst the fog, I persisted in educating myself through prolific reading, pursued spiritual counsel, and enrolled in psychology classes here and there. I was exhausting myself in my frantic attempts to make sense of this world and to "save" the people in my life and myself.

Concurrently, my husband and I endured two deaths of dearly loved family members. Already teetering on a precipice, a year later I plummeted into a deep cave. I was diagnosed with depression. By the grace of God, a wise doctor empowered me with the idea of "choice." He said it was my choice, of course, but he recommended psychotherapy and likened this prescription to that of a diabetic needing a doctor's care.

Choice! This profound concept hit me like a ton of bricks, an idea I naively never realized I had!

Through this empowering offer, I risked entering a therapeutic relationship with a professional and subsequently group therapy. Individual and group therapy offered me a safe haven where feelings of shame no longer prevented barriers to my self-exploration. I was humbled by this saving grace of good care that I received!

My husband and I began a journey of healing, together and separately. For me, this entailed continued study in the field of mental health, fine tuning self-care, and a slow but steady pursuit of God and relationship with a faith community.

We were better equipped to manage our emotions and respond more healthfully to situations. For instance, our yearning to bear children was squashed when I was told that I could not conceive. We consoled each other in our grief and, after some time, looked into adoption. Meanwhile, we were so blessed with many nieces and nephews.

Nearly ten years after my diagnosis of depression, I enrolled in the Counseling Psychology program at Chatham University. The following seven years were arduous ones as I maintained full-time employment in pursuit of the 60 credit Master of Science degree. And while I was convicted of a presence of a higher power, the Divine, God, I wasn't cemented in any one faith community. Yet, I had not ever completely lost hope in Catholicism.

Regardless, I strove to lead a Christ-like life, to recognize the human dignity imbued in all of us. Much opportunity to practice this was presented in the work I did with hundreds of persons hurt by interpersonal violence and trauma throughout my years of work at PAAR (Pittsburgh Action Against Rape) and later at the Good Grief Center for Bereavement Support and Glade Run Lutheran Services.

Then, my husband and I were greatly surprised to discover that we were pregnant! Despite being into our 40's, we were blessed with this child. Humbled once again by the outpouring of love from so many, I rested at God's feet.

Motherhood made me aware of this: my husband and I could not parent alone. I believed it imperative that our child learn about God, belong to a faith community, and understand all humans are imbued with dignity and thus must be treated accordingly. I believe that good attachment could be further secured through a communion of people steeped in honor and love for each other and a power greater than ourselves, a Divine Love as modeled by the life of Jesus Christ.

I sought out employment with a Christian counseling agency, Meier Clinics, so that I might offer services to persons who desire to interweave spiritual matters with behavioral health issues. I feel at home and have seen clients here since 2015.

Since my child's birth, I've experience an unquenchable thirst to know God and to delve more deeply into the roots of the faith I was born into. Thus, my studies continue along with communion with others, listening, listening, listening, and supporting others where ever they are and whatever their decisions may be.