

# God Is Good Stories

## Batch One

I am grateful for the family of St. James where I met and got to know Jesus in the 1980s and 90s. I especially remember and value the *Treasure the Word* scripture memorization program I participated in at Sunday School, the VBS programs with our sheep outfits, learning how to take communion and being confirmed, experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit through the *Times of Refreshing* worship evenings, and being part of the worship team including a youth band called *Sunday Brunch*. I am grateful to express my gratitude and participate in the ongoing ministry of this church family. Here's to a great 50 years!

My beloved husband died suddenly on Sunday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and when I walked into St. James it was Thanksgiving, 2017. I was carrying a burden of sadness that weighed heavily on my heart. The worship was beautiful and gentle. Tears found their way to the surface and flowed freely. My first *Face to Face* service was in February, 2018 and that evening God released me of my burden of sadness through participating in the communion while listening to the song, "At the Cross". I began to sing along with this song and as I did a burden seemed to come out of me as I opened my mouth to sing. Back at the pew I shed tears that flowed and flowed. Towards the end of the service, I began to smile as I sensed sunshine filling me. I then felt a vial of liquid joy being poured into an opening at the top of my head. For the first time since he had died, I felt joyful and safe. St. James has become my family and I have learned to feed on Jesus in a community of beautiful hearts. "God places the lonely in families" Psalm 68:6

**"And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23**

The good people of St James don't just talk about loving and serving Jesus, they do it, in humble, gentle and beautiful ways. I am not a member of St James, but my parents have been members for many years. I give thanks to God for the way St James has been a spiritual home for them, and a place of friendship. Over the years they have contributed to the ministry of the parish in various ways. However, it is in their aging and vulnerability, that I find myself moved by the extraordinary kindness my parents have been shown. I am deeply grateful for the faithful ways the folks of St James have embodied the presence of Jesus in many acts of compassion and love. May our Lord continue to bless St James and continue to make you a blessing!

There are many experiences or growth events I could write about but this one seems to stand out at the moment. A few years ago we went through the *Good and Beautiful God* series and I found that very encouraging and grounding. I was trying to look for a particular paragraph in the books that could highlight the journey but in the end found that my recollection is really a conflation of several chapters. The key ideas revolve around the story of the long and tense airport line-up, the phrase "the kingdom is not in trouble", and that God is good is, intensely involved in loving people, in the wellbeing of people, his creation, and that this love for our good includes me. The outcome of the whole process was a very rapid change in me, a new ability to be much more patient with others, in lineups, on the road, on the phone - patience, a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

**God is so good!** My son's desire to attend Sunday School led us to St. James. I registered him in Sunday school, prepared to walk through the motions for a while, but God had other ideas. One Sunday in September 1978, as the priest talked, I suddenly felt like I was alone in the church, hearing a message that was just for me. I was absolutely stunned! God never gave up on me and saw my circumstances, heard my silent cries, and blessed me with this church, its teachers, home groups, and a wonderful sisterhood of Christian women. In 1986 as a lay reader God showed me at communion how beautiful people really are, and His love and compassion. One Sunday an old neighbor, with whom we'd had a dispute, approached the communion rail. I panicked about serving her and prayed, "Dear Lord change my attitude toward her so that I can offer her the bread with a clean heart." When she knelt at the communion rail I suddenly loved her! It was a miracle! St. James was also there for me when my husband had a heart attack in 1992 and through our subsequent move. God is Good, and I thank Him that I could rely on people at St. James for help and prayers. Thankyou Lord for St. James! Please continue to keep your hand upon the church and bless it and raise up new leaders strong in the love of Christ.

I have been blessed in many ways as a parishioner at St. James. The music ministry brought me to St. James in 2007, and every week it continues to touch my soul and open my heart to the Lord. These faithful, talented musicians are such a blessing. I serve in the Altar Guild at St. James and I am continually blessed to be part of this quiet ministry of faithful women. The quiet times in the sanctuary with the Lord, and knowing that we beautify God's Altar in preparation for worship provides a powerful connection. The Women's Ministry blessed me with an opportunity to be held in prayer. During a time of testimony these prayerful women allowed such an intense feeling of peace and protection that I was floating in God's grace. As well, I have been blessed with clergy that are attentive to the Holy Spirit in our midst, allowing the time and space for His presence to be felt. I have found small group ministry to be instrumental in building community, and assisting in spiritual formation. The sense of belonging and contributing to the Parish of St. James has been foundational for me.

GOD IS GOOD, ALL THE TIME. ALL THE TIME, GOD IS GOOD. I have been a member of St. James for 32 years and praise God for his constant love and support from my St. James family. I cannot say that I have had an earth-shattering experience but have always felt that God is there in all the big and small bumps in the road. My small group, and other friends, have always been there to help and listen to me. We have to remember that God is in the quiet times as well as the good times. We cannot always be on a high for God to be in our lives.

In 2009, I attended a Good Friday service at St. James. I found the service very meaningful. The message was reflections from the hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" – "See from His head, His hands, His feet". The priest drew word pictures and scripture sentences about each part which really spoke to me. Since becoming a believer, I had spent a number of years looking for a church home. After attending this Good Friday service, I have continued to attend St. James. I feel I am a part of a community where I can experience God's love and grow in my faith. Over time, I was invited to be part of a home group. It has been very special to be involved in a small group where I can grow and share my faith and prayer concerns. As my husband is not a believer, being part of a community of believers means a lot. St. James has been a church where the truth of God's word is not compromised, which is very important to me, as I seek to serve my Lord and Savior.

Come Holy Spirit . . . never heard that prayer before . . . only at St. James on the lips of our Rector. I met the Holy Spirit at St. James. Through the excellent teaching and preaching; through the witness and testimony of others, I came to know and trust the truth of the presence of the Counsellor and Comforter that our Lord Jesus promised. In times of joy, and in times of deep pain and sadness, I have heard His reassuring whisper and felt that peace that passes understanding. Each morning as I cling to shreds of sleep, I pray: “Come Holy Spirit,” and He does come. Jesus is Lord! God is good . . . all the time!

In 1982, we were transferred to Calgary. We were reluctant to leave friends, family, and our church, but we trusted that God would prepare the way. While driving with our real estate agent, I saw a sign for St. James Anglican Church. I asked if she knew anything about it. She replied, “You wouldn’t like it; the people there are weird.” I thought: “Sounds like my kind of people!” Well, we have found St. James delightfully weird in all the ways that we love: commitment to Scripture, small groups, missions and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Our first year here, there was a lady’s class, “Growing in Christ”, an introductory course in Christianity. When we finished, we didn’t want to stop meeting, and so began the long and wonderful history of the Thursday Morning Women’s group. This has always felt like my church home base. This year has been a challenging one for our family and we felt the strong prayer support of these wonderful praying ladies. St. James has offered us lots of opportunities for service, which have given us opportunities to grow and make wonderful friends. In many ways, St. James is our family here in Calgary.

I first started attending St. James in the mid-1990s, after a family member suggested I give it a try. I was in a season of doubt, and was struggling to find a home church. Coming from a non-liturgical background, I was surprised how much I loved it. I attended Alpha, and people listened to my doubts, and shared with me Mark 9:24: “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.” During the Holy Spirit weekend God cleansed me and made my belief strong. St. James has become my spiritual home and much of my history is here. At St. James, I was married, was confirmed, my children attended Sunday school and VBS, and we’ve been blessed with friends we’ve met through various ministries and groups. God has blessed our family through worship, prayer, volunteering, small groups and teachings. It is a rare Sunday where God has not met us at some point during the service. At St. James, I deepen my relationship with Jesus Christ, and continue to experience His Spirit, and the deep love of the Father. God is Good, All the Time!

## Batch Two

My first visit to St. James was Advent 2015. I was moved by the beautiful music and spirituality. Near the beginning of the service a message was given that someone saw vision of something like large pipes and that the person for whom the message was intended needed a strong worship congregation. I wondered if that person was me, and that the *pipes* were a vision of the large bronze pipes that stood beside the organ I used to play. I went for prayer and explained to the two ladies that I wasn’t certain as to whether or not I should join St. James. They prayed over me, with one saying she could see an empty canoe sailing on streams of water and that God would bless me. I was to leave everything up to Him. My decision to join St. James has brought me some tremendous blessings! I had heard so much about the Alpha Course at St. James and finally could participate in one. I have attended workshops, the Thursday morning Ladies Bible Study, the first year of the Apprenticeship Course, and a Cursillo weekend. God has given me so

many opportunities at St. James, and I'm excited to see what He will unfold in 2019. God is good indeed!

When my husband and I were looking for a new church home about 15 years ago we came to St. James. We were amazed that the Apostles Creed was said, and that God and Jesus were preached here at St. James. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming. However, I was not ready to become an Anglican and would sometimes still go to our old church. Yet something was drawing me to St. James and slowly I attended our old church less and less. Finally, we decided to make St. James our new church home. It felt like home. During my time here at St. James I have developed a personal relationship with God and have come to love and trust Him completely. I have grown so much spiritually due to the Alpha Course and the Women's Bible Study. The sermons have been a real gift to me (no longer does my mind wander) and I want to take in every word. The music teams have also been a big part of my growth, and many times I wake up in the morning with a particular song in my mind that was sung on Sunday. I am so thankful that the Spirit led us to St. James.

In the beginning our family were members of another Anglican church in Calgary. Then one day there was a knock at our door. It was an Anglican minister letting us know that a new church was to be built in northwest Calgary. We immediately knew that God was calling us to be a part of the building of this new church. We were involved with the process from the very beginning. My husband helped find the parcel of land where St. James now sits. I have always felt at peace at St. James. I've felt loved and supported through both happy and sad times. I believe God chose St. James to be our church, and now after 50 years I am the only original member remaining and am still happy to call St. James my church.

### **Batch Three**

In 1995, we moved to Calgary for the fourth time in three decades. Uninterested in the liturgical tradition in which I was raised, we attended other denominations in our 16 years away from Calgary. In Calgary, we tried different churches in the NW. One weekend I learned from the Calgary Herald of a guest speaker coming to St. James, who I had previously heard at a conference. (The mid 90's were an exciting time of revival and renewal for Calgary Christians, with conferences being offered by many churches.) I headed out to St. James that Sunday, a bit bemused to be going to an Anglican (liturgical) church after so many decades worshipping in other styles. I was warmly greeted by a long-time member, and instantly felt comfortable. In fact, I strangely felt like I was 'home again'. The worship seemed angelic and anointed. The preaching was relevant, inspiring, and personalized in a way I had not experienced in other churches. The guest speaker shared words of knowledge after his sermon, and his tender, affirming words touched many hearts. More lovely worship ended the service and friendly greetings brought me to the door. I realized the Lord had ended my search and I had found my church home. The next Sunday my husband and daughter came to St. James with me, and shared my conviction that St. James was where God meant for us to be spiritually planted. Almost two decades later, we think of you all as extended family, and continue to feel grateful and blessed to be a part of this community.

Every Tuesday morning, I am blessed by being part of a group of women who gather at St. James to use their talents and time in serving others. From its beginning in 2002, the *Knit, Crochet and Quilt with a Purpose* group has produced thousands of items for both local and international agencies. As much as the items have blessed the recipients, the time spent together has enriched our own lives as we learn from one another about how to handle many of life's challenges. A diversity of ages, skills, ethnicity and religious beliefs, we encompass it all. I feel so enriched in my life by the witness of these women in serving others and in supporting one another along our journey in life. Praise God for the presence of this group in my life.

There are many ways I have been blessed by the goodness of God through St. James, including: home groups, prayer team, music, testimonies, fellowship, and sermons. A fairly recent sermon based on Philippians 4:1-7 really spoke to me personally about having trust and joy in the Lord. Worry seems to come easily to me. I worry about the big things such as family and my job, but also about the little things such as what other people think. This worry can be rational and sometimes irrational, such as dread that something bad will happen to someone I love. The sermon's words referenced and emphasized rejoicing in the Lord always, regardless of circumstances, being thankful, and also the importance of worrying about nothing . . . full stop! To not worry is a command from God. Instead of worrying we are to pray about everything. The key to this is nurturing our relationship with God and trusting Him with everything. When we do this, we are given His peace, which passes all understanding. I have found the sermon on these verses a blessing and have re-listened to the its recording many times (another good St. James ministry) to help it sink in. I realize that worry can rob me of joy, and with God's help I am trying to not worry about anything and pray about everything. God is good! He is with me always and I can trust him to help me live a joy-filled life free of worry and full of His peace.

During a Prayer Team meeting where we shared stories from the past month, I started to receive a vision that became more detailed as the meeting progressed, even with my eyes open. I thought I saw a huge tent structure completely covering St. James Church. The tone of the meeting was of silence and waiting on the Lord, and seeking help and direction. As my vision was the complete opposite, I wondered if it was even from the Lord, and therefore I didn't share it. In our smaller prayer groups at the end of the evening one person related what she thought was an image from the Lord described as a large covering over our church that was hindering us. Because of the reference to a large covering I decided to share my vision. *The canvas tent structure was coloured like the 'coat of many colours'. It was not like a circus tent, but a desert 'tent of meeting', with open sides and flaps that noisily and continuously blew in the wind. Then the church building under the tent disappeared physically, but was still there spiritually. Near the edges of the tent were passing camel caravans, merchandise stalls, and street entertainers. In the centre of the tent a large crowd gathered around a single figure proclaiming the Word of God, despite the noisy atmosphere. Caravans would stop to listen and then move on, while others moved through the gathered crowd to sit and listen in the front rows. I sensed the seated people represented the St. James congregation, as it was a cross section of society, rich and poor, young and old, leaders and servants, long-term attenders and those passing through. Yet all were attracted by the proclamation of the Word of God. A light seemed to be illuminating the speaker, and at the personal prayer time near the end of the evening there were tongues of fire coming down from above and touching the head of the speaker.*

*“You’re a good, good, Father, that’s who you are . . . And I’m loved by you, that’s who I am . . .”* One of the things I love about St. James is how we are encouraged to seek the presence of the God the Holy Spirit, and listen to Him. Sometimes I get interrupted in my sleep or day by the words and tunes from a worship song we sing in church. I believe the Spirit brings this into my brain because He wants the song’s concepts imbedded in by heart and prayers. However, sometimes I wonder if it is just a brain malfunction, yet I shake the thought away and choose to be obedient and respond to the song with prayer and thankfulness. One week, while on holidays, this happened several times for about seven days with a song about praising God for his faithfulness. It led me into prayer and gratitude each time. Recently, in the very early morning hours, I was awakened by the song, *You’re A Good, Good, Father*. I took the opportunity to thank God for being a good Father and for loving me. I also prayed for my father, other fathers I knew, and that my children would recognize Father God as good, and be thankful for their earthly father. The song continued to play in my brain as we headed to church. As we waited for the service to start I was a little startled to hear the pianist playing along with the song in my head. Later in the service the worship team led the congregation in worship with the very same song. I believe that God was using this moment to confirm that He plants the songs in my brain during the day, and awakens me with music in the night, for a reason that demands obedience with prayer.

#### **Batch Four**

For a time in the early 2000’s, St. James’ Christmas Eve service would include a *homegrown* drama, created and produced by members of our congregation. In October 2002, the lead of that year’s production asked if I would write a song to be part of the play, where a man acquainted with tragedy and suffering finds himself wandering into church one Christmas. The song was to express what he might have prayed at that moment. I had written only one song in my life at that point, and no one at church knew about it. So why was I asked? I later discovered the lead was praying about who to ask, and my face kept popping up. He was being obedient to God’s prompting. Why did I say ‘yes’? I didn’t have any reason to think I’d be able to do something like this. Yet, a few days before I was approached I had been doodling on my guitar and had stumbled on a few notes I thought might possibly form the basis for a song. I took this as a sign that maybe God was involved, and perhaps our friend had not been completely crazy to ask me! The result was the song ‘Wandering’, and a further number of other songs. These songs have contributed from time to time to our worship life at St. James - *a gift from a God who is good!*

Despite having lived in the Ranchlands community for more than 30 years, I had never before been into St James, even though I had driven by many times. Then one day about seven years ago, I drove by St. James and saw a sign inviting me to walk in, and to find out what *“the meaning of life is”*. I walked in, and have not left since. Walking into *“the meaning of life”* turned out to be an Alpha course. By walking in, I have fallen in love with the church as well. I have seen many magnificent churches before, but the simple architectural design of St. James shows so much about the true meaning of Christianity. The plain wooden cross at the centre of the Chapel symbolizes the suffering of Jesus, his love and his sacrifice in order to redeem us from our sins. When I sit in the pew in the chapel, looking towards the cross, the Holy Spirit overwhelms, and compels me to kneel down, to thank Him and to pray for His mercy. I was a wandering sheep. God lead me to my spiritual home at St. James.

When I first moved to Calgary about 15 years ago, I felt a little lost and knew that I needed to find a home church. God of course knew this too. St. James wasn't the closest church to where I was living, but I was drawn to it and decided to give it a try. By the time I left my first Sunday morning service, I knew that St. James was part of His plan for me. From the moment I walked into the building, I could feel God's presence and encouragement. A couple of parishioners realized that I was new and went out of their way to greet me and make me feel welcome. We also sang a song that I used to sing as a youth growing up, which I have only heard us sing maybe twice since. God was speaking to me through the music, showing me that this is where I needed to stay. I have continued on my faith journey at St. James ever since with God walking beside me, guiding me along. God is so good and I am so thankful that St. James is part of His plan for me.

I had the most amazing life altering experience at a St. James' New Wine evening. I went up for prayer and I was given a picture, formed by words that became a vivid picture in my head. It was me as a young child sitting on Jesus' knee. His unconditional love was shining out of His face onto mine as I looked up at Him. I felt His love in a way that I had never experienced it before. It was personal. I felt myself open up to His love and accept it. This experience comes back to me over and over in difficult times to sustain me and remind me I am truly loved by the Prince of Love.

I am so grateful for the faithful service of the Prayer Team at St. James. I have gone up many times for things big and small over the years. I frequently shed tears, often from relief at sharing a burden with both those who prayer and God. One season I was really struggling with the sudden loss of my mother and not being able to picture her anymore. One of the Prayer Team got a picture to share with me. It was of a tea party. He had no way of knowing what a comfort that would be to me. My mom and several of our neighbours would get together most mornings for a cup of tea. These women were older than my mom and had already gone to heaven. For me this was a huge message, that my mom was in heaven with many friends and at peace. I took great comfort from this. This is only one of dozens of times I have received help and comfort from our Prayer Team.

I have co-organized the annual St. James' Parish Picnic the last few years. I cannot count the number of times I have been amazed by the way God, in His faithfulness, has provided. He sends exactly the right person for each task, the right number, down to the very last moment. Last year, anticipating snow, we moved everything indoors, and it still worked out! Our leftovers were a joyfully received blessing to the Bagged Lunches Program. Even grocery store sales have aligned for our needs with costs fitting within the budget! Thankyou God for being so faithful and good!

I've learned throughout my life that *there are many options, but only one choice*, and through situations and people at St. James I stayed close to our heavenly Father. As a young man, away from home in a new city in the early 1980s, it became clear some of my choices were not good and I needed to find my way back to the Lord. At St. James God introduced me to a man who played a pivotal role in the groundwork of my adult life. He took me under his wing and introduced me to others, including one who gave me a role in the youth and adult group. He

introduced me to a blessed friend who is my climbing and skiing partner. He pointed me in the direction of the biggest blessing, my wife of 34 years. I came to know IVCFs Pioneer Lodge and staff in Bergen through him as well. In that one introduction, and my 2 ½ years at St. James, God laid a foundation that centered me on Him through the gift of His Grace in Jesus our Saviour and in whose Spirit, daily I seek strength. The priest was a tremendous example for me, as he lived and taught lessons I continue to draw from. How remarkable that I was found at St. James, and extended a friendly hand that pulled me into the fold at a time in my life where the alternate could have taken me in a very different direction. The fingerprints of this gentleman from St. James will always be on my life and in my soul. "*But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord*" Joshua 24:15.

### Batch Five

I'm sure all musicians and vocalists would admit to suffering from performance anxiety quite often – me perhaps more than most! On those days when fear causes by lungs to close up and my voice to come out as an unrecognizable squeaky scratchy thing, I suddenly hear the congregation rise up to meet me – like a tidal wave of voices! It's as if our congregation senses the need to support and increases their gusto and volume accordingly. In those moments, I feel their gift and there is such beauty in our combined voices. It is like I'm surrounded by a choir of angels. It is an honor to be part of facilitating worship. While concentrating on our efforts we don't always get a chance to dwell in the *worship moment* ourselves. I feel that perhaps God allows us to stumble like that occasionally, so we are forced to stop and take a breath. And in those moments of clarity He shows us the main reason we are there – to be the whole body worshipping together. Layer upon layer of individual hearts and voices woven together into something truly beautiful.

The music team tries not to get caught up in *performance*, but strives for excellence so that our offering is worthy to God. On some Sundays, it seems that the enemy conspires against us as we suddenly encounter a battery of problems: technical issues, instrument problems, ailing voices, and nerves. Sometimes nothing seems to gel! Similarly, sometimes one arrives to lead worship but is feeling poorly on all fronts, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. On those days, we reach the end of the service and feel so low, fearing we have truly let God down. Yet on days like that, nine times out of ten, people approach us after the service and thank us. They tell us how the music has specifically blessed them – how they felt it was anointed that day. Our good and gracious God reminds me on those days that we don't need to be perfect, we just need to be willing. If we come as servants, honest and open to Him, He will honour us with His presence and His grace, and our meagre offering can always be used for His good plans.

In 2010 my daughter passed away. In the months afterwards, I started looking for a new church to attend. I live just down the street from St. James, and drive past it daily. One day, I noticed the Alpha sign hanging up. I had taken the Alpha course several years earlier. I thought that taking it again would be a good way to try St. James. I called the church and found out that the course would be starting the next evening. I realized I knew the leaders from volunteering at Ranchlands School when my children were young. That was January 2011, and since then St. James has become my church family. I volunteer in the nursery, teach at Kids Rock, help out with VBS, and assist in other areas when needed. I'm so grateful that God led me to St. James!



*So then, just as you received King Jesus as Lord, you must continue your journey with him. You must put down healthy roots in Him, being built up brick by brick in Him, and established strongly in faith, just as you were taught, with overflowing thankfulness.*

*Colossians 2.6-7* St. James has been my spiritual home for many years. It is where I am being built up “brick by brick in Him, and established strongly in faith.” So much so that when faced with incurable cancer, I was able to say without doubt that God was indeed with me, and I am His child. It is my intention to continue this journey with Him, for it is truly wondrous to know the embrace of God, have fears quelled and be filled time and time again with overwhelming gratitude. It has been almost eight years since the beginning of this journey.

My good news story is my gratefulness for being brought up within St. James parish. My parents were original members. I don't know where my Christian faith would be without this church being a part of the foundation. Some of my earliest memories are of standing at the front of the church with all of the children and the Priest leading us in songs while singing and strumming his guitar or playing the piano. We were taught actions to songs like the *Zacchaeus Song*. We were made to feel like even though we were children, we mattered. I have clear memories from our time at Hope Lutheran, especially family movie nights which included a can of pop and a small bag of chips. I watched the youth group video at St James this morning and was reflecting on my own time in youth group. There wasn't the technology back then to create such an amazing video, but listening to the responses of the youth group members, I realized that while lots has changed, a lot is the same as it ever was. When I was in Youth Group, there wasn't space for us in the church so we would walk across the street to the home of a special parish couple and have our Sunday morning meetings in their basement. The two leaders helped us to learn more about God and our relationship with Him and with each other. Favourite memories include numerous Balloon Camps and a Youth Camp at Entheos where the guest speaker was Anne B Davis (“Alice” on the Brady Bunch). It was an amazing time of fun, faith and fellowship. It was a safe space to be ourselves. One of our youth leaders ended up becoming an Anglican minister himself and the other became a missionary in Thailand. Having Christian friends, playing and praying together, was integral to my Christian faith development and I am so grateful. God is Good indeed!

The first time I came to a service at St. James was about 4 or 5 years ago. I sensed an attitude of awe for God!! I also recognized a great respect amongst the congregants for the house of God and all that is in it! My response to this was deep appreciation and a desire to be in that atmosphere more often!

In the early 1980s the Holy Spirit drew me to St. James and breathed life into my childhood experience in the Church of England. Faith in Jesus was strengthened through good preaching, and a journey of inner healing began. This happened in part through volunteering in the Sunday School; a Bible Study called ‘Lord, Heal my Hurts’; being introduced to the ministry of Leanne Payne; attending one of her healing prayer workshops; and participating in Times of Refreshing services that began in 1994. In late 1996 we moved to Wheaton, Illinois where I was delighted each June for four years to host St. James women who came to attend the Pastoral Care Ministry workshop, led by Leanne Payne at Wheaton College. Now, while enjoying a snowbird lifestyle, I am thankful that God provides, either directly or indirectly through the community of St. James,

wonderful young Christians to look after our house. Over the years He has given us much that is good in a variety of American churches but it is always a joy to return here each spring. *The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Psalm 126:3*

### **Batch Six**

Our testimony of God's love and grace started in 2012 with an infertility journey. At that time, we were told that we could not get pregnant naturally and would have to go through the IVF process. We did one cycle but that unfortunately failed. Just before another cycle I injured my back and the resulting chronic pain led to back surgery in 2015, delaying our desire to start a family. Needless to say, those years were full of doubt and fear. Yet God had a miracle in store for us, and it started when I joined the Wednesday Morning Ladies' Bible Study Group at St. James. The support and prayers of these amazing ladies, along with all the prayers from the Prayer Chain, helped us to keep believing in God's promises and to just keep trusting HIM. After another failed cycle, we decided to give it one last try. We were given a 20% chance of getting pregnant. That cycle was where God gave us our miracle of getting pregnant with, not one, but two beautiful babies. They were born on March 4th, 2018. GOD IS GOOD ALWAYS! Thank you to the St. James parish for all the prayers, love and support.

My story of St James is stitched into my Anglican story, but my Anglican story has its deepest roots in my Plymouth Brethren childhood teaching about what it means to be a Christian. In the 1980s in Calgary, the thing about going to church as a young man in your 20's was that you pretty much didn't. Therein was the surprise of finding a good friend at St James. He was a long time Anglican, and attending St. James was a return to something known, and for me it was a departure. He noticed that I saw something good here: a resting space. As people of faith we can do one of three things: we can believe what we believe because we believe it; we can abandon our belief because we no longer believe; or, we can cultivate our belief in the dry heat of our experience and understanding. Some Christian churches demand the first, believing because we believe, and some churches encourage the second, abandonment when we don't. The restfulness of the Anglican faith as I found it at St. James was found in its core – just Jesus. Not a set of notions that you must believe with verifiable precision because they are true, or mock because they are foolish – just Jesus. My comprehension and error; my temptation and shame; my agony and joy; my sickness and health; my dullness and brilliance; my banality and beauty can all rest together when at the core of my faith it's – just Jesus. And it is restful. It's restful because in the dry heat of the third option there is a surprise – it's just Jesus who is doing the cultivating. It's not so much a story as a discovery for me, and perhaps it was more of a rediscovery for my friend. In any case, it's what two younger men found when they came to St James some 40 years ago – just Jesus. Oh, and after 40 years they are still friends!

In the mid 1980's, Thursday Morning Women's Bible study began with exercising our bodies to Christian music. Getting the heart rate up. Sometimes doing the Can-Can in a *giggling* row. Strengthening limbs, cooling down and resting with meditative Christian music. BODY, MIND, and SPIRIT. With the body exercised, it was time to exercise the mind with Holy Scripture. In keeping our bodies as a healthy residing place for the Holy Spirit, there was a sense that one was ready to delve into the riches of the Bible by the leading of the Spirit. What a glorious time of fellowship and fun!

My mother is one of the original members of St. James. My father knocked on people's doors to invite them to the church, and he helped find the land where the church now sits. When I had cancer 20 years ago, I was on the Prayer Chain and felt God's love. I always knew I'd beat cancer. I felt I was given this 'situation' to help others. I was to be strong so others could be strong. I'm happy that with His help and love I am cancer-free.

### **Batch Seven**

In the winter of 2015 I had intense pain in my hip and numbness in my foot. It was a herniated disc in my back, and a year later I was able to have surgery which was successful for 10 months. Then the pain and numbness returned. A second surgery was booked, but I didn't have peace about it. During the waiting time a story kept coming up at church of the woman who was bleeding for 12 years and came up behind Jesus, touched the hem of his garment, and was healed. I began to cling to this story, reading it over and over. I had to wonder, where is this hem? How can I touch it when Jesus isn't on the earth in bodily form? I began going for prayer after church. Perhaps in prayer I could touch His hem. Two months before the surgery the pain increased, but I kept praying that God would heal me—not a doctor or therapist. I knew His healing would be perfect, and I knew He could do it. Meanwhile a book about back injuries arrived at the library. I read it quickly and followed the suggestions. Two weeks later I was walking to pick up my kids from school, and half way there I stopped, realizing I had no pain. The next week it was the same, and the following week I could walk for 20 minutes without pain. Then the numbness went away. One of my favorite scriptures, Psalm 139: 5, suddenly stuck out "*You hem me in - behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me*". I realized, I was in the hem of his garment the whole time. The story does continue. I have recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. His timing in healing my back was incredible. If I had had to sit for 3 hours for a chemo treatment 6 months ago I would have been in agony. Now, I feel no pain. God is reminding me daily that He is right here with me. He has been so good to me!

How do we meet people's needs for furniture, both to give and receive, while being a disciple of Jesus and giving Him the glory? That's how T.L.C. was birthed. No longer was the acronym just Tender Loving Care. Now it was also THE LORD'S CLEARINGHOUSE. Young families, refugees, people needing a helping hand, could register their furniture needs with T.L.C. Those who had furniture to meet those needs donated the items. Jesus' commandment to love your neighbour as yourself was being lived out, giving all the glory to God. St. James had this ministry running during the 1980's.