



June 2, 2025

Full Circle

In 1964 my family began attending a small rural Baptist church in Versailles, Missouri. We quickly became immersed in the Sunday School classes held every Sunday morning, Sunday morning worship, service, the evening classes and sermon every Sunday, and the Wednesday night prayer meetings. We seemed to be going to church quite often back then. Another new experience each summer was Vacation Bible School. It was a 2-week curriculum and we didn't miss a single day.

Two or three years after we began our faith journeys at West Union Baptist Church, a request came to our church leaders. The Second Baptist Church in Versailles wanted to establish a Vacation Bible School for their congregation. The church was the historically black church in Versailles built in 1881. Mrs. Barton, Mrs. Sanders, and my mother, Mrs. Naomi Ruth West volunteered to go to the church to help them. My mother met quite a few of the children my siblings and I knew from public school. I recall she said one young man, Russell, "was a real pistol". Truer words were never spoken.

These women taught classes, provided arts and crafts, supervised outdoor recess, and organized the snack time with the obligatory fruit punch and cookies. The color of skin did not matter as it was about Christians helping fellow Christians. The VBS was quite a success. The three women returned to the church the following summer to continue their assistance but now the church members assumed the leadership positions. By the third summer, Second Baptist Church ran their VBS program on their own.

The years rolled by and I hadn't thought of those summers so long ago. I was reminded that actions taken can cause ripples that change lives of which we are unaware.

My mother died December 7, 2021, at the age of 90 in her beloved hometown. A black minister read my mother's obituary and then sang a song at my mother's funeral on December 13. It was one of my mother's favorite hymns, "Near to the Heart of God". The story ends with Reverend Robert Ross. He attended VBS at Second Baptist Church that my mother and her friends helped start. He came to know Jesus at VBS and greatly admired my mother. Now he is the minister of that church. We never know what can happen when we obey the call to help our Christian brothers and sisters.

Galatians 6:9 -10 (NRSV)

So let us not grown weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. 10 So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

~Written by Elaine Trent

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