**FAITH JOURNEY**

Rev. Bob Scott, May 2024

***“Since we are surrounded so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside any weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,***

***looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”*** *- Hebrews 12:1-2a*

I have been a minister for almost forty years, and in that time I have had the honor of serving in four churches, each unique and special…but as I think of my own faith journey, it is not so much the places that come to mind, as much as the people who have helped shape and nurture my faith along the way. Permit me to share a few of them with you here.

My parents are my earliest guides to my faith. My father, **Ron Scott**, was a teacher, a therapist, and a frustrated preacher. From my father I learned that “faith seeks understanding,” and that you never stop learning and growing. My earliest memories of church are sitting beside my father, and emulating him as he leaned forward and listened intently, and as he rocked back-and-forth as he prayed. Over the years my father was the one I had deep theological discussions with, and whenever I had a problem I was working through he was the one I turned to for advice.

My mother, **Marlene Sheruda**, was more of the mystic in the family, and from her I learned to be open to the working of the Spirit, even if it didn’t always make sense to me. She would always say “*You know, I think things work out the way they’re meant to,”* and she was right. My mother was also the most generous person I have ever known, and I desire to emulate her in this way too. Both of my parents passed away less than two years ago – within days of one another – and I miss them both, but I am so grateful for their continued influence on my life.

I didn’t really grow up in the church; it wasn’t until college that my faith reawakened. Away from home, struggling with my major, and feeling lost and alone, I decided to go to church, hoping to get on God’s good side. I decided to try the church I worshiped at with my father when I was a young boy, and lo and behold, the same minister, **Rev. Duane Lanchester** was still there. Attending the First Presbyterian Church of Carbondale, IL something came alive within me. but still, I had questions and doubts. So, I made an appointment to speak with Duane, and after listening patiently to me pour out my heart to him, he said, *“Have you ever thought about going to seminary and becoming a minister?”* My immediate response was, *“I don’t think you’ve been listening,”* but once he planted that seed it began to grow, took root, and bloomed.

Once I decided to go to Seminary, I found a job in the Presbyterian Church in my hometown of Marion, IL. I heard they needed a church secretary, and though I was woefully unqualified for the job, the minister, **Rev. Olive Haynes,** hired me! It was the best internship I could have! I can still hear Olive saying to me *“they won’t teach you this in Seminary!”* But the most important lesson I learned from Olive, was that it was less important to have all the answers, than to live faithfully in the questions, and to do your best to make a difference in the lives of others.

It was at the First Presbyterian Church of Marion, IL that I met my wife, **Linley Allen-Scott,** and in July of this year we will celebrate our 40th Anniversary! I always say, *“We went to Seminary,”* because I wouldn’t have made it through without her, and that has been true of my ministry as well. Linley has the gift of discernment, she intuitively sees things clearly. She is the love of my life, my best friend, and my biggest supporter. Together we have three wonderful children: our oldest **Andrew** (who is getting married this summer to a lovely young woman named **Mollie**); our middle child **Grayson** (who is named after a favorite seminary professor); and our daughter **Emma** **Jane Quio Yu** whom we adopted from China 21 years ago! I have learned more about the nature of God, the redeeming gift of love (from both receiving it and giving it), and the power of trust and hope, from my family…

…And from all my Families of Faith. How do you even attempt to summarize almost forty years of ordained ministry, in four different churches - each of these places will always be near and dear to my heart, and in each of them I have grown as a person and in my faith. But like the author of Hebrews who writes, *“What more can I say? There is no time for me to give an account,”* and so simply lists some of the heroes of his/her faith, that is the best I can do - teachers; friends, mentors, and members – especially members of each church I have been honored to serve – like: **Dr.’s Gene March and Grayson Tucker; the** **Rev.’s Robb Lapp** **and David McChesney;** **Charlie and Malinda Spencer;** **Rella and Gil Carp**, **Max Pentecost, Sue Renner, David Taylor, Dan Johnson, Dr. Jean Bennett, Brooks and Roy Workman, Don and Jennifer Golliher**, and so many others who have cheered me on my way! Over the years this host of saints (and a few sinners) have shown me what it looks like to live this Christian life with honesty and hope, courage and conviction, joy and purpose, and laughter and love! For their continuing witness on my life, faith, and ministry, all I can say is “*Thank You,”* and -

*“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow!”*