

THE JOY OF SERVING

When I was a young girl, I was talking to one of my favorite Pastors that I have known over the years. He was young with a wife and two children. I often baby sat for them and enjoyed them. As we were talking, we talked about the giving of our tithes and gifts. Now I understood the fact that the church needed monetary support and I saw others giving their time, my Mother included but I had never thought of myself as a “worker.” He told me that the giving of my gifts and talents was just as important as giving money. We were talking about the fact that I would be going away to school and no longer being paid for working. This had bothered me and although I gave little in return for what I had received from that small church I did make some contributions. He said that I needed always to have a “job” in the church, that it was a responsibility I had taken on when I joined the church. So, when I went to Nurses Training I visited those who were hospitalized from our church at Ford Hospital for three years. It wasn’t much but made me feel connected to the church and pleased the recipients. I took his words to heart and learned the joy of serving. I then started out with Sunday School and writing to college students to keep them connected to their home church, then went to committees. I can truthfully say that I have never had a “job” that I haven’t either loved or learned a great deal from. I have enjoyed many different positions in the church from serving to leading, from Ushering (still one of my favorites), to serving Communion, to Trustees, to chairing SPRC (Staff Parish Relations Committee) my personal favorite committee. Through it all I have developed a passion to see others in roles who might find the joy I have received from serving. I think the only committees I haven’t served on have been Memorials and Together in Missions, but I have supported their work through Administrative Board and Council on Ministries. I have also taught Sunday School and found myself on Facebook with a former 4-year-old that I adored when I taught 4–5-year-olds. He told fantastic stories and always in his stories his Dad was the hero. Early on prior to coming to Utica, I taught Sunday school with 7th graders although one boy without fail, asked to study “Solomon’s Song of Songs” every week. He was a precocious boy. At that church I began to attend Annual Conference and learn the workings of the church at large. This also placed me on Pastor Parish Relations, and I found I loved that service. When we came to Utica, I was asked where I would like to serve and I said, “Religion and Race,” and served there for a couple years. Then I served on Pastor Parish Relations Committee again and found my niche once again. When the Pastor asked me to serve as Chairperson I hesitated, and he told me to pray about it. I did and although I made him go over every person, I felt would be better and I finally told him yes, but he would have to help me. I then began a position that would last 6 or 7 years. When my time was done, I became an Usher and took a Bible Study Class and then a few years later it was back to PPRC for another term and now I have been on PPRC two more times. It brings me joy to work closely with our Pastors, some have been easy others have been more challenging, but all have helped me grow, and all have given me the joy of serving. I have also served Coffee Hour and as a greeter, both fulfilling positions. I have learned that “We are the church.” Our church needs our support in every way not only with our tithes but with our service. Each time of service has strengthened my faith, encouraged my growth, and each time I served I took away more than I gave. I hope that you find your joy in serving in whatever capacity.

Don’t pass up the chance to serve, the chance to be the church. God will be with you, own your church. I am praying for you.

1 Timothy 3:13 Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Lord, make us your servants. Be with you daily as we seek you. Bless our efforts so they are pleasing to you and to your church. Be with those who are ill and those who grieve. Be with our leaders, may they find your way always. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry and grant him safety. Be with his family. Lord, we ask that you help those who are subject to war, give your children safety and freedom from the fear they suffer. Be with our church, may each person find their way to serve, and may they know the joy it brings. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson