

Polly's Ponderings

"God called to him...And he said, 'Here I am.'" Exodus 3:4

It is funny looking back and trying to remember where it all started. I just remember being a part of a loving church family, participating in the choir, raising small kids, going to Sunday School. I began helping with youth when friends of John and I took on the volunteer roles of Youth Directors. I immediately felt at home.

Maybe it was the way I was welcomed into my youth program as a teen. That is where some pretty important relationships began. Several of us have gone on to ministry either as the pastor or married to one. Was that the reason I began – I am not sure.

Maybe it was the move to Houston and the new church where the need for youth ministry was obvious. Volunteer position, small children, John traveled, no money, so many reasons to say no. But instead, I found myself working with two sets of siblings and one other young man trying to figure out things to do together to grow our faith. This group of kids walked with me through bladder cancer at 29. As the group grew so did the relationships. One young man accompanied me as I put our dying family dog to sleep. He drove so I could hold the dog and cry. Another followed me to my first appointment as Local Pastor, where I lead the youth program. She and I still check in with each other. I officiated the dedication of her children to the Lord. And two of the parents that accompanied me and the youth on mission trips are still very close friends.

I was told that then (about 30 years ago) that the average work span of an individual serving in leadership in youth ministry was about 24 months. I don't mean in one position at one church – I mean in total! So, while I was on the journey of remembrance, I thought I would check out the new statistics. In 2023 Zippia did a demographic study of Youth Pastors in full time ministry. It found that 88 % are male, 68.1% are white, average age is 51.2 (only 5% were in their 20) and the average salary is \$39,712.00. And according to the research the average youth pastor stays at their job for 1-2 years. I was one of the rare ones who continued in that role for nearly 20 years. Call me crazy, but I loved it. Oswald Chambers once said, "The man or woman who is ready for God and His work is the one who receives the prize when the summons comes." In fact, the only thing that caused me to put that part of ministry aside was God calling me to fulltime ministry as an Ordained Elder. But I digress.

So where did it all start...with a relationship with God and a readiness, a waiting, a willingness to serve God in "the smallest thing or the largest thing – it makes no difference." (Chambers)

This month we celebrate Mary Kamas' ministry among us as our Youth Director. By now many of you have heard that we have reluctantly received her resignation. Mary has broken the statistic and remained in ministry with our youth for four years. We thank her for her service. We have been truly blessed. And where did it start for Mary – readiness. Four years ago, she walked into my office and revealed that she believed she was being called to youth ministry. Join me in praying thanksgiving over her for her service and wisdom as she seeks to serve God in other ways.

As a church we will begin the task of discovering who God is calling even now to serve in youth ministry in this mission field of Franklin, Texas. Let's join together in praying that their journey with us will start where every journey of calling does...Readiness.