

# Planting Seeds — Blessings of Faith

By Anita Stohs

God calls His children to faith through the Holy Spirit, through the Word and Sacraments. The Word of God can be shared by people in a variety of situations. The seed of that Word can be planted in the fellowship of friends, among family members, and even in the midst of strangers. The following stories are examples of how the Holy Spirit works through God's Word, as the Word is shared by ordinary people to encourage others and to bring people into God's family.



## Dawn\*

Dawn's father was an agnostic, and her mother did not attend any church services. When she was a little girl, visitors from a nearby church invited Dawn's parents to come to their church.

Dawn's parents said no. One of the visitors persisted, noticing Dawn running around the living room behind her parents.

"What about your little girl?" the visitors at the door asked. "We have a Sunday School!"

Dawn's mother decided to let her attend. Her parents dropped her off at Sunday School and came to pick her up. Dawn went from that little girl playing in her living room to a faithful Christian woman, one who has spent a lifetime encouraging people in learning and living the faith. She is the leader of a weekday Bible study group that has been meeting for more than 30 years. By the work of the Holy Spirit, Dawn's parents followed her in the faith.

## Judy

Judy came from a family that was Christian but did not attend church services. When Judy was in elementary school, a friend invited her to Sunday School. Judy's parents did not object, and Judy began attending with her friend. Her parents later followed her into membership. God strengthened Judy's faith in Christ, which did not waiver as she grew up and into college and graduate school years. While other dorm mates would sleep in on Sunday morning, Judy was always up to attend the worship service at her church. She lives her faith with a kind and compassionate manner toward others.

Judy met her husband in a young adult singles group and joined him in his church home. Judy is involved in religious education, music, and the LWML in the church they attend. She is an example of how God brings faith through the invitation of another child.

Dawn and Judy's stories illustrate how God can use a simple invitation to Sunday School as an open door to a lifelong relationship with Christ.



\*All names in this article have been changed.



## Bev

Bev's family attended church on Christmas and Easter, but Christian education was not a priority. While growing up, Bev played in an alley beside a parochial school where religious instruction classes were held. Bev watched through a window and wanted to attend. Though not given permission to do so

right away, her parents later allowed her to attend a church instruction class, taught by a nun. Bev walked or took a bus to attend classes and services alone. Her church attendance later led to her mother also joining the church.

Bev remembers one nun in particular who showed an interest in what the children in her class did in their daily lives, building a relationship with the children she was teaching. At one point, Bev lived near her grandmother who attended church each week and was an influence in witnessing faith to a child. Bev continued her pattern of regular church attendance into young adulthood, when she married into a Lutheran family that had followed the same pattern. By God's grace, she remains faithful in church and Bible class attendance.

## Jennifer

At a time when neither of her parents was attending church, Jennifer, who had been baptized and brought up in the faith, kept on going alone. The mentoring of a caring adult, actively working with older youth in that church, was a help, as were the parents of other youth in the group. Jennifer met her husband at a college-level church activity for young adults and attends weekly services, participating in a variety of church activities, especially Bible study. Her story is a reminder of the importance of caring adults who take part in young adult church programs, as well as the power of the Holy Spirit to keep the light of faith burning in His children, when worship is not a part of a family's weekly schedule.

May God help all of us, when the opportunity arises, to be a part of a welcoming environment that can lead to the seed of God's Word being planted, thus bringing about faith by the Holy Spirit. We may see the open door God gives to us to invite people to "come and see Jesus," or we may be on the other side of that door as a caring individual who nurtures that Spirit-given faith. *Q*



## Taking Bible Lessons to Heart

*By Anita Stohs, with Susan Wagner*

Susan Wagner and I attend Bible study together at Hope Lutheran Church in Shawnee, Kansas. She hobbled in one morning with an orthopedic boot on one leg because of a fractured ankle, and a broken toe on the other foot. She then told us the story of what had happened:

"My friend's car had been in the shop for over a week, and I was helping by playing chauffeur. One afternoon I picked her up so she could walk her puppy, Serena, before ending her long workday. Unfortunately, Serena had been sick, so her kennel needed to be cleaned. I opted for the walk instead of the cleaning! It was a beautiful spring day, and a walk with a puppy would be the perfect antidote for the funk that had recently consumed me. The fresh air and sunshine further boosted my spirits.

"We were almost back to the apartment, when suddenly I was twisting, falling and crashing to the sidewalk in a blaze of pain. As I sat there in my torn, bloody jeans, knowing at the least my ankle was broken, I reflected on the Bible study I had led at my LWML circle meeting only five hours before. 'Lord,' I thought, 'I really didn't need to take the lesson to this level!'

"Apparently, He thought I did. Three days later I heard the same verses from Second Corinthians repeated in the Sunday sermon! The lesson? 'Comfort Ye, Comfort Ye My People' Bible study [Spring 2018 *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly*]."