

One of the Family: Meet Elder Becky Tims

When Becky Tims's daughter Michelle, a sweet girl with Down Syndrome, became what many parents would label as a "runner," Becky knew that there would be at least two places where she would never have to worry about the little girl straying beyond her reach: at home and at church.

"Everyone watched over her. She would be running all over the church and you'd hear [someone yell], 'Michelle's out!' and someone would always find her and bring her back," Becky said. "This church was her spot. She loved it here and everybody loved her. They embraced and took care of her."

First & Calvary was Becky's parents' church home before they moved away from Springfield. Becky's father transferred with his job to four other states before the family settled in Virginia. Becky spent most of her childhood on the east coast. However, when her dad announced that he was ready to retire and return to Missouri to be closer to family, a high school aged Becky moved with her parents back to the Midwest.

"All of my friends thought I was moving to the sticks," she said.

"The sticks" turned out to be a return to Springfield and to the church her parents had known from their younger years. This church would have a profound impact on Becky, leading to her and her husband Eddie's choice to raise their family within the congregation.

"We loved the people. We loved the atmosphere. Both our kids were born and baptized here and it's where we want to stay," Becky said.

Becky and Eddie raised two daughters in the First & Calvary family: Valerie and Michelle. Valerie now lives in Joplin with her husband raising two stepdaughters and two sons. One of her sons bears a special resemblance to her sister.

"[Valerie] was the best big sister Michelle could have ever had. She has two little babies now. When I look at her second one, who just turned one in February, I see Michelle. He doesn't have Down Syndrome, but there are just things about his little face that when I see them, I say, 'there's Michelle.'"

When Michelle, her second daughter, was born with special needs, Becky was not surprised. In fact, she had expected her arrival for years prior to her diagnosis.

"I always knew I was going to have a special needs child. I don't know why. I never had the calling to go be a teacher for special needs [people]; I just knew I was going to have a special needs child," Becky explained. "God gave her to me to take care of her, and it was the biggest blessing. She brought so much joy to people, including me."

Michelle's light burned brightly for her entire life as the congregation of First & Calvary accepted and loved her as their own. In the spring of 2011, Michelle passed away after battling leukemia. Though her daughter's final days were some of the hardest Becky has ever experienced, they also allowed for one of Becky's most profound encounters with God—one that cannot be explained with any other term besides miraculous.

“I was in the hospital room when she was on her last breaths. We were standing there—the staff, doctors, and the chaplain—holding hands, praying, and there was a hand on my shoulder that wasn’t anyone’s who was in the room. It felt so real,” Becky said.

Becky felt the same presence and weight of a hand a couple of days later in the hospital’s elevator.

“I felt it again when I was in the elevator going down to see her [for the last time]. There was that hand on my shoulder again, and nobody was standing behind me,” she said. “It’s unexplainable other than it being the Holy Spirit.”

Beyond this tangible spiritual encounter, Michelle was also the reason Becky and Eddie originally got involved with First & Calvary’s children’s ministry, volunteering as the teachers of the then three-year-old class.

“We went in there when Michelle went into that classroom when she was about four,” she said. “I would lead the kids in song and memorizing our Bible verse John 3:16.”

The couple would remain the co-leaders of this class for 30 years and helped facilitate the shift from only three-year-olds to a class that children remain in until they are ready to enter Kindergarten. Becky said that this position not only helped her meet much of the church’s population over the years but also solidified her belief that service within the church is a vital aspect of the Christian life.

Though she has since given up her teaching position, Becky still acts as the co-chair of the congregational life committee, working to maintain the welcoming sense guests receive when they enter First & Calvary and helping to plan events that engage with the current congregation. Both positions as well as her role in the choir have fulfilled Becky’s need to be involved with the church community and have helped her grow in her faith.

“[Church] is a place to get involved in and to share with others who believe. That time together outside of just sitting in the pew during a worship service [is important] for getting to know and to do things with the other people in the church. It’s important for your life as a Christian,” she said.

Throughout the ministry of Becky’s life, there have been a multitude of people who have touched her heart: the children in her Sunday school class, the members of First & Calvary, her husband, grandchildren, Valerie, and Michelle. Their impact, however, has never been one-sided; Becky has always and will continue to take what the Lord has put into her heart and endeavor to steward the people, places, and positions she has been given with grace, patience, and love.