

## Rethinking Calling

**YouthDownSouth** interviews Kathy Tedford, the Territorial Corps Sergeant Major. Kathy is the Corps Sergeant Major of her corps in Tampa as well as the Corps Program Director. She has years of experience in her walk with the Lord and is open to his calling in her life.

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**YDS: Please tell us a little bit about yourself – in particular please tell us your testimony.**

KT: I was born in Rome, New York where my parents, Eric and Connie Jackson, were the Corps Officers. We lived on the second floor of the corps building in the middle of downtown with the men's transient lodge on the top floor. From my early years The Salvation Army was my church home because I was born into it. It was not until my college days that it came time for me to make a decision on whether I would choose to be a Salvationist and live a lifestyle as outlined by the articles of war that I had signed at the age of 14.

**YDS: What do you believe it means to “be called”?**

KT: I think being called means that you accept His gift of grace and from that moment on you allow the Lord to lead you on a journey of faith. I do believe that I am called but I believe that calling has many levels and that the calling can lead you in many different directions over the years. From the time I completed my nurse's training I felt very sure that the Lord had called me to do oncology nursing. This was my field for the next 30 years and up to 9 years ago I would have told you that particular calling was for life. But that is where the journey of faith comes in. You always need to be open to opportunities that the Lord places in your path. Almost nine years ago I experienced a very definite new calling from God to begin to work in lay ministry for The Salvation Army.

**YDS: What are your top 5 favorite Salvationists of all time?**

KT: The top 5 Salvationists are tough but I think I will pick them as far as personal impact they had on my life since these are the people who have helped shape me and have traveled with me on my journey of faith.

Commissioner Robert Watson was my DYS during my teen years. He taught me the lesson of accountability especially in my personal life. He was not afraid to set a standard of behavior that we must meet but he also never believed any of us were "disposable" and so worked very hard to help us develop into the potential he saw in each young person with whom he worked. That I am still a Salvationist and active soldier is in large part due to his influence.

Majors Clyde and Mary Moore were officers from Canada who came to be our corps officers at Atlanta Temple when we soldiered there. They were wonderful officers but the most important lesson I learned from them was the true gift of pastoral care to your people. They were the first officers to ever come to our home for a visit to just spend time in our home setting, see how we were doing and to hear our thoughts and ideas on our church and our relationship to the

church. Their most important demonstration of pastoral care was during the very long month our oldest son spent in DeKalb General Hospital with pneumonia. Money was tight, we were losing time from work so we could be at the hospital with the baby and there were very few dollars not needed for bills. Night after night the Moores showed up at the hospital with plates of food for dinner that they had prepared for us. They set a high standard for me when I became involved in lay ministry that true pastoral care involved sacrifice.

Major Jewell Farmer. I met Jewell when we moved to Tampa almost 25 years ago and she became a real mentor to me. Jewell was a true woman of God and a wonderful Bible teacher. Most of all she became an accountability partner for me. Many times over the years I would discuss things with Jewell and she would help me to see things in a whole new light. Good friends are precious and God sends them to us to help us on the journey he sets out for us.

Major Debra Mockabee was our DYS during our early years after adopting our second son Michael. For me she was the sounding board, the expert who had lived through the things I struggled with and the one that helped me see that God sends people and children to us for very special reasons. Debra loved our Michael with unconditional love and became for me the light at the end of what often seemed a series of long and dark tunnels.

Majors Rick and Connie Mikles are the people who stepped out on faith and hired me to a lay ministry position at the Tampa corps. They had faith in me, they provided me with experiences to grow and develop in my role. They were true mentors who were confident enough in themselves that they coveted strong, independent people as part of their ministry staff. I learned much from them in my seven years with them and I will always be grateful for their vision that allowed me to answer my second calling.

**YDS: If you were to give words of advice to a young adult to figure out what God wants him/her to do in life, what would you say?**

KT: To young adults seeking what God wants for their life my advice is succinct. Let Christ take His rightful place in your life, pray for open doors and then be willing to walk through them.

**YDS: What is the most successful thing you have accomplished as a professional?**

KT: I am not sure I have accomplished anything very successful in my professional life except for realizing that He can do unbelievable things when you allow Him to direct your path.

**YDS: What is your take on ministry as it relates to your career?**

KT: My career is not my ministry. My life is my ministry. I realized quite a while ago that I was to live my life, every aspect of it, so that in every word and action of my day to day life I would be living to bring others to know about the grace and love of my Father.

**YDS:** If you could give words of wisdom to our readers, what would you say?

KT: No word of wisdom from me but some from Henri Nouwen's book Spiritual Direction. "If you look at a long straight line think of it as our eternal life in God. You belong to God from eternity to eternity. You were loved by God before you were born; you will be loved by God long after you die. If you mark off a small segment on that line it would represent your human life. It is only part of your total life in God. You are actually here (on earth) for a very short time." Don't waste that time. Live your ministry, accept the grace and travel the journey of faith. Go where there are people who are in pain. Let your heart be broken so you can be emptied of self and filled with God's strength and his direction.

I love John 21:18 when it talks about being called to follow Jesus and to go where God is leading even if that place is "somewhere we would rather not go".