

Stories of Northside

INTERVIEWEE: **EMILY FAWCETT**



Very rarely do we look at our lives through the lens of story. If prompted, we have the ability to identify events that led us to a certain place, layering one memory on top of another to form a kind of papier-mâché narrative, but it can be

difficult to tell our own story. Why? Because some of the best authors do not live life according to the story they want to tell. Some, like Emily Fawcett, would prefer to be cast, not as the protagonist, but as the narrator who champions other characters.

Emily Fawcett's story is worth telling, simply because she has filled each page with the praise of others' achievements, not her own. She is a woman who doesn't quite know how she became involved in so many things but maintains that all she has ever done is put family first.

"I am so blessed and happy for each day, and I'm thankful for each day. That's the first thing I do in the morning, say, 'Thank you, Lord,' and then I'm sitting up and I'm walking and I'm talking. I've been blessed. Period. Growing up, marriage, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and a church full of people that care about me, and I care about them.

"I don't know how you get involved in things. You just do. I suppose it comes from my childhood. I was brought up that you got involved with church. I grew up in McRae, Georgia, which is a teeny tiny town, and the Methodist church there was sort of the center for all of the youth. We had a huge MYF group, and my mother was Superintendent of the kindergarten for 30 years. So, I knew. I knew I was going to be involved somewhere along the way.

"I remember my husband Bill's grandmother lived in my hometown, and I have a picture of Bill and me on the steps of my church where we both worked, back when we had nothing to do with each other. He was much older than I was. It was a lot of fun when you think about it.

"So I've always done that, MYF work; I've always been involved. I met a young minister when I was in high school: Carl Fulton. I loved him, but he worked me to death. Next thing I knew I was president of the South Georgia MYF. I'm not kidding you. All of a sudden I looked around and thought, *wait a minute; how'd that happen?* But it was a great experience because I met some really neat young people, so that was fine. I forgave him."

Despite her insistence that she really doesn't do anything more than anybody else, Emily carried that same passion for involvement to Northside.

"I came here in 1956, when Gilbert Hall was preaching and we were in the Chapel. We had the stage, and the pulpit was down in front. That's where I joined. The church was six years old and had about 250 people attending. Look where we are now! They were a great group of people and were always so caring and supportive. Northside became my new small town.

"I do think it was the people here. It's that connection you make that just continues on through everything you do in the church. When I first came in, I was not really active because I had John, my son, right away. He was in the first 3-year-old class here, and that led to me teaching 2nd grade Sunday school. It was one of the first things I did here. I did that for three or four years. I remember Claire, Kathleen, and I each having

a table with our children. It was up to us. We would have a curriculum unit, and we would break down the material into something fun.

"I was also president of UMW for a time, but I don't know how I ended up doing that. We were all involved in the circle groups for UMW. Canon Circle is part of that now, but it wasn't then. Back then, all the women in the church were put into circles; we didn't get to choose. They drew names and you went into that circle, but that's how you met the different people in the church."

Emily currently heads both the Funeral and Altar guilds but still holds that her years of dedication and service should not be attributed to her: "It's everybody working together that we get it done." To expound upon an old adage, it takes more than a village. It takes a family willing to step up and support each other, and according to Emily, "Family comes first. Period."

For Emily, it's more than the service, more than her passion to see a need and step up to the challenge. It's about sharing the joy she feels when volunteering: "I want people to be involved, to feel the same fulfillment I do. I like people, I love this church, and I want them to come support it in whatever they do, whether it's just filling ice in the cups. It's something that you can be a part of.

"I feel like I have been blessed all of my life. I really have. There's no doubt in my mind that God is holding onto me. It makes me want to give a little bit of that back and encourage others to do the same. It's really important to me. I don't feel like I am doing anything that anybody else wouldn't do. I'm happier when I'm busy, and I want other people to feel that happiness too."

It would be difficult to compose Emily Fawcett's story and leave out the verbal accolades for her years of selfless service to Northside, but she wouldn't have it any other way. All great stories portray a main character who doesn't live his or her life as if it will one day fill the pages of a novel.

Emily is a woman who likes to mow her own yard because of the conversations she has with God while sitting on her tractor. She attends t'ai chi at the church, keeps her great grandchildren twice a week, and sits in the back pews on Sunday morning because she doesn't like having people know what all she does. She doesn't want the attention, nor the praise. She simply loves her church family and chooses every day to put them first. ☸

To learn more about the Funeral and Altar guilds and how to get involved, contact Dr. Ann Brightwell McCord at DrAnn@NorthsideUMC.org.