

New Member Applicant Testimony

Jacob O'Marra



When considering my testimony, there are many directions I could walk to describe the wonderful, faithful work of God in my life, and I assure you that such possibilities are endless. Therefore, I will focus on what is easily the central theme of God's work in my life: His faithfulness (despite of my lack thereof), most of which was manifested within the medical experiences throughout my early youth and even up to today.

In 2004 I was diagnosed with appendicitis, which was treated via a surgical procedure. In 2007, I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease. I was admitted into the hospital for it in 2007, 2008, 2009 (twice), 2010, and 2017. October of 2009 was the most intense flare up to date, requiring the surgical removal of 3 feet of my small intestine. On top of that, and because of that, I received my first kidney stone in 2011, my second in 2013 and my third is waiting patiently in my right kidney. Even today, I still struggle with the symptoms and side effects that are packaged with this Irritable Bowel Disease.

Unfortunately, throughout each of these experiences, I began to develop a pattern of *not* trusting in the Lord. I would think of Him momentarily, only to allow the effects of my condition steal my focus. Part of me believed that God did not have ownership over my pain and disease, or else he would have not let it happen. I would just assume that it was required that I endure this. Another part of me did not want God's help. I wanted the attention. I wanted the break from life. However, as I look back on these times, I see with eyes that I did not have before. I see a constantly and overwhelmingly present God, working in ways I did not understand at the time. I see that His grace and his mercy have always been with me, working through the skilled hands of my many doctors, the comforting words and presence of my mother – who never left my side, and ultimately, facilitating my full recovery in every circumstance. Based on my record (both physically and spiritually), I should not be (and don't deserve to be) as healthy as I am. And yet, God was, is, and always will be faithful. He has promised this to us, and it is a promise that we must inhabit.

Like Paul, I recognize now that this disease and its subsequent side effects are my thorn, the thorn by which I remember His all-sufficient grace. I am brought low so that he would be brought high. I am grateful for this because it is the fullness of my life purpose.

I am now attending TEDS (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) and I intend on becoming a preaching pastor someday. With these, and many other experiences, I fully trust that the Lord will bring to fruition the work that he has started in me.

(Carol Marie O'Marra testimony on reverse side)

New Member Applicant Testimony

Carol Marie O'Marra



I was raised in a believing household of regular attenders and members of the First United Methodist Church. My parents had me baptized as a baby, and I confirmed the baptism at age 14. This was a year long process where I learned more about God in a personal sense, beyond normal teachings of Sunday school. I watched the show "Godspell" during our retreat and was amazed how it transformed my ideas about God's love, the hope of Jesus, the betrayal, and ultimately the death and Resurrection. That was the time I began thinking there was more to faith than singing hymns to the organ and listening to sermons on Sunday.

Within the next year, I started high school. I met the man who would one day become my husband, and he invited me to the local para-church Christian youth group, the Christian Youth Center of Morris (CYCM). They had powerful worship services twice a week with music I had never heard before, with people raising their arms up! It was relatively uncomfortable for those first few months because I didn't quite understand the gravity of God. But near the end of that school year, in April of 2011, a friend of ours spoke to me about God in such a personal fashion. I can't really remember all that she said, but she painted a picture in my mind of a God who created the whole world with the sole intention of one day creating and meeting me. Our God created the mountains and the sky so I could enjoy them. God did it all so that I could fall in love with the Lord, and the Father could love me even deeper right back. I remember the overwhelming emotion of that time and surrendering my life in gratitude and love for God. It's been a long journey of learning and growing since then, and I am grateful for the chance to do so in a new church home at VCL.

(Jacob O'Marra testimony on reverse side)