



“I Am Second.”



by Sue Wright



BECKY GOSSETT

Have you ever felt you were born to something—to sing or write, to play soccer or be a star of stage and screen? Ask anyone born-to-be, and they will tell you these innate urges can be both a blessing and a curse. Becky Gossett, someone born-to-dance, not only found this to be true, but no surprise, went on to meet the challenges of her mostly welcome compulsion with all the grace of the accomplished dancer I’m sure she was in her youth. That is, she met these challenges with a grimace and a giggle, and of course, her signature smile. Ironically, when pressed to make a stand, she was more than glad to do a bit of genuflecting too. And now, without further ado, step into Becky Gossett’s world with me. She’s one of Second’s deacons and a “Lady with a heart for dancing, wherever she may be . . .”

“I’m a middle child,” Becky begins, “And this means I had to learn early on to be a peacemaker. They say we learn a lot about how to deal with people from our siblings, and living with mine, I learned to be a mediator, a consensus builder, and a democratic leader. For instance, whether we sat in the back seat of our station wagon for a long or short trip, I felt it was my duty to keep my sister Kathy and brother Scott from hurting each other if they started fighting. In the process,

we learned about unconditional love, a life lesson serving us well.

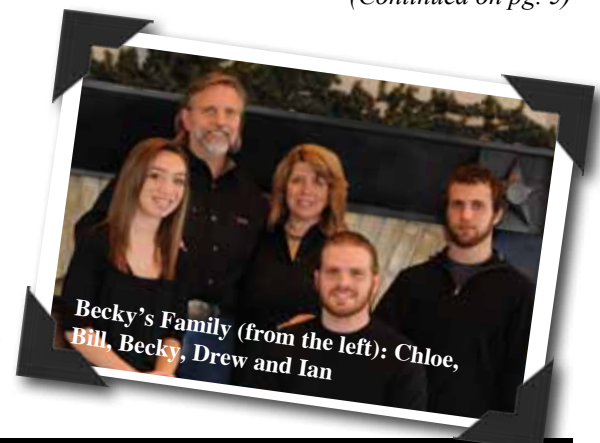
“As a youngster I grew up dancing—wanting to dance—and around the age of seven finally talked my parents into dance lessons. I had argued (no small feat for the peacemaker I already was!) that since my siblings would be taking organ lessons—which I had no interest in—I should be able to take dance. I loved dancing. I’ve even taken classes as an adult.

“By sixth grade, as an extension of my dancing, I began cheerleading and was part of a cheer squad for eight years, including a stint at William Jewell. And why am I mentioning dancing and cheering here? Because needing to defend those pursuits throughout my teenage years would come to seriously impact me and my faith story. I experienced the hard way that these personal interests of mine were not popular among certain Christians. “I’ll never completely understand why dancing and cheerleading were considered wrong by this particular group, but I do recall hearing a member of the church I attended at the time remark in a business meeting that ‘Dancing feet and praying knees do not belong on the same body.’ I found this disturbing and was determined I would be a body capable of both.

“Looking back, I guess it’s often been the sideways comments of others that have spurred me on. For example, the comment of a college acquaintance who expressed amazement I could be ‘a Christian AND a cheerleader.’ As though the two were mutually exclusive—wow! This struck me as terribly narrow-minded, so in my middle-child-peacemaker-way, I had to show her as I had tried to show others, how Christ can live in the heart of anyone . . . rah, rah.

“In High School,” Becky continues, “I joined an ecumenical High School/ College choir hosted by a Disciples of Christ church near my own church. The coolest part: I was able to be on the choreography committee and not only create but perform an interpretive dance to the words of the 23rd Psalm. That summer, we made a two-week tour performing this collaboration for several congregations. I can say

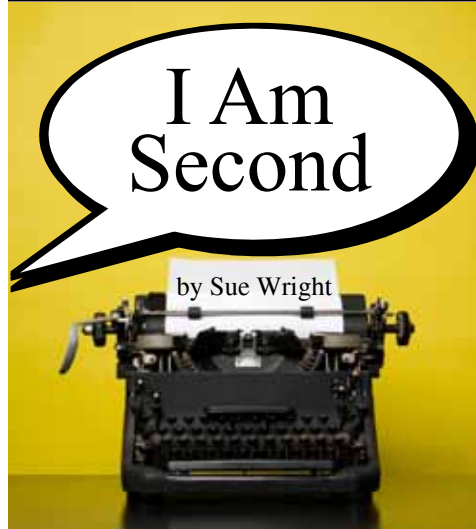
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Becky’s Family (from the left): Chloe, Bill, Becky, Drew and Ian

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without a doubt there is a reason 'praise Him with dance' is scriptural. I felt God blessing dance as an authentic form of worship. Dancing in a church setting gave me such joy I often had to hold back tears by the end of the service."

As for The 23rd Psalm, Becky says it has touched her again and again. And her explanation why: "I was born with a heart condition that often kept me from high levels of physical exertion. In fact, I remember many times while dancing or cheering I'd have to sit down and take deep breaths before I could join back in, if I could at all. Up until 1998, I could usually adapt my activities when I felt my heart 'racing,' as it was prone to do. That year, however, a few weeks of crummy heart trouble ended in a botched medical procedure that injured the AV node in my heart. My first pacemaker was implanted then. I was 38 years old with three young children, and I couldn't help feeling I had been wronged. This was indeed, a 'dark valley.'

"Saddened and broken, the erratic rhythm of my heart bothered me for eight more months. During this very tough time, it would be our 2BC family and other Christian friends whose prayers for me and my family

saw us through. These folks fixed our meals and cared for our children. God's love came to us directly through God's people.

"There were even a few miracle moments," Becky remembers. "While hospitalized, a nurse told me her prayer group was praying for me by name. I hadn't been aware of this but I was very thankful once it was made known to me. I also felt a profoundly strong sense of peace one Sunday evening after a rough stretch and later learned I had been the subject of another prayer group. Since then I've received a second pacemaker and I am happy to report I no longer feel angry about my heart requiring a pacemaker; most days I don't even give my condition a thought. I have learned that God supports our healing when we are open to it."

And what of Becky's career path? She describes it as very different from what she expected when she graduated from WJC. "God helped me find a passion for teaching ALL KINDS of young children by closing some doors and opening others—time with *Parents as Teachers* being an essential part of that Godsend.

"The day I was selected for my current position," Becky goes on, "I was overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility for what I might be taking on. I knew I wouldn't be able to do what was being asked alone. So slipping into a dark room, I began to pray, and the verse, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,' came to my head. As a result, I am leading the early childhood programs for Liberty School District and loving

it. Each morning, I walk into the building thanking God for that day's fresh start. I ask God to be present as I relate to staff members, parents, and kids."

Becky says her husband Bill and their three children have been the greatest blessings in her life. She's grateful for each of them . . . their uniqueness, their talents, their depth of character. She's grateful for our 2BC family too and its positive influence on her family's life.

"In my Bible," Becky tells us, "I have written these words under a passage special to me. It is one of the best things a Christian mom/cheerleader with dancing feet and praying knees who works for a public school district could ever embrace as her tagline." Attributed to Saint Francis it is this: "Preach Christ always. And if you must, use words."

New Century Version: "Why preach the Gospel with a megaphone when a pompom will do!"

From what I've seen, that's how Becky Gossett does it—a woman born-to-dance; a woman born-to-be-a-Christian. Suewrights@att.net

