

Giving flows from their faith stories

By John Arwood

When the time comes to make decisions about giving, it helps to turn to our own faith stories. Just ask Will and Ali Summerville.

They never expected to be asked to serve as directors of Covenant's Capital Campaign. But when they prayerfully considered that invitation – and considered how they would support the campaign through their own giving – they remembered those who had nurtured their own journeys in the faith. And they knew they would respond with a "yes."

"Everyone has a stewardship story or a journey – completely different from mine, completely different from Ali's," Will says. "I encourage you to think about yours."



For Will, that faith journey began at the Presbyterian church in Gastonia where he grew up. An important figure in that journey is Will's grandfather, Charlie, so devoted to the work of the church that his dedication inspired a prank.

It seems Charlie was about to sit down to watch his beloved Washington Redskins in Super Bowl XXII when he took a call about some "urgent" church business that required immediate attention. Not only was Charlie being pranked – he was being pranked by his minister! Charlie stepped away from the Super Bowl to make the necessary calls to assemble a meeting, only to find out it was all in fun.

For Will, that lighthearted story would come to represent a larger truth – how his grandfather was ready to answer the call of the church, no matter the timing.

Ali grew up in a Presbyterian church in central Florida and remembers a congregation-wide effort to establish a columbarium. "What resonates with me still today," she says, "is the idea that everyone didn't have the same gifts to contribute, but everyone did their part to accomplish what they all prayerfully envisioned."

Her own stewardship decisions flow from those memories: "There will always be someone who will have more. And there will always be someone who can give more. But what Will and I have tried to do is give all that we can."

The capital campaign's three priorities also resonate with the Summervilles' own life experiences. As working professional parents, they relied on a child development center to look after their boys until they started kindergarten. So they warmly embrace the capital campaign's goal of creating a child development center that will serve a socioeconomically diverse population. Ali, as a board member of Habitat for Humanity in Charlotte, has seen first-hand the need for affordable housing in the city – another of the campaign's priorities. And like all of us, they have marveled at the beauty of our church buildings and want to see them kept vibrant and beautiful for future generations.

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