

# REFLECTION ON OUR JUSTFAITH EXPERIENCES

BY MARY BECKER

The decision that my husband Gary and I made to join the very first JustFaith group was a pivotal one that set our course for all the years that followed. If that sounds overly dramatic to you, I can only respond that is the truth of it as I look back over the 30 years since.

As I recall there were 12 participants in that first group, primarily composed of 'social justice folks'. I fit that description, however Gary did not. In fact, as we left some of the sessions, he was troubled and would say that he just couldn't go along with some of the things we read and discussed. But we stayed with the entire 34-week program and by the end we emerged - I can only say - transformed.

In JustFaith Gary heard the cry of the poor, he found his heart of compassion, and he began to act to do justice. I on the other hand, calmed down and began to focus my energies on nonviolence and anti-war issues, and trusted others to take on work that was beyond my abilities. Gary changed and I changed - and in the process we gained a fresh new appreciation for one other and began to work together as partners in working for justice.

That didn't happen instantly. We had been married for 27 years at that point, and our relationship habits were ingrained. It took spiritual direction and therapy and arguments and prayer and a whole lot of grace to bring that partnership to fruition.

And I doubt that our partnership would have taken hold as it did without experiences we had in countries of poverty - 'third world countries' as they were called. The year after we finished JustFaith we traveled to El Salvador and to Haiti. We saw poverty and learned about unjust, cruel systems that we could not imagine existing in our US home. We met courageous, wonderful people in those countries who became part of our circle of friends and colleagues. We were launched from Louisville to the world. What a blessing!

In the years and decades since that first JustFaith group, Gary and I facilitated some JustFaith groups and modules. We helped launch JustFaith onto the national scene 20 years ago, and we served on the Board of JFM. Currently I'm facilitating one of the Racial Equity modules - which meets the current moment and is - as you would expect - challenging and excellent.

Gary was a graceful man with a big personality and a big heart. In 2018 he passed away peacefully at home following a few years of illness. I believe that he is making big waves in the cosmos right now - and is watching over JustFaith Ministries with a huge smile of satisfaction and joy



*Mary & Gary*  
**BECKER**  
**SOCIAL**  
**JUSTICE**  
**AWARD**