

An Unexpected Path

Written by Linda Tully

Monday, 30 November 2020 12:05



Artist **Linda Tully** on *adventure, art ministry, and her new exhibit at Atelier Off Bay.*

A little background

I have always been an artist. When I was a young girl, growing up in Toronto, Canada, my father purchased a drawing correspondence course for me, and I had lofty dreams of becoming a fashion illustrator or a graphic designer. Then my parents moved to south Florida during my sophomore year in high school and life moved on and my lofty dreams were temporarily dashed. Fast forward to my late twenties, when I made a conscious decision to revisit my childhood dream, and I attended the Art Institute of Atlanta and became a graphic designer.

That “career” was short-lived and a season of travel and adventure began, and my husband and I ended up in Beaufort, via a memorable stop on a sailboat 20+ years ago. I have worn several hats since: Bible study teacher, Realtor (who hasn’t and so *not* me!) to Children’s Ministry Director, and now full-time artist.

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From big house on Bay Street to life on a 40' trawler

We were at a point in our lives where we felt that something was shifting. I had quit my job the previous year, and a project my husband was involved in had ended. We were remodeling our house (built by the Schein family in 1940) for the second time and I couldn't decide on furniture for a dining room we would never use. It hit me then that the house no longer suited our needs and a long dormant lust for adventure surfaced. I sat my husband down, suggested we sell the house, buy a boat and go cruising. He thought it was a mood swing and let it sit for a few days. But then we both felt it was so right that we just went ahead and did it. Everything happened so quickly, we didn't have time to question our decision.

A year of travel

Hands down, the NE for me, and specifically, Penobscot Bay was my standout destination. If there weren't so



much land between here and there, I'd take a boat up there every summer! Another was the two weeks we spent in Manhattan, taking the ferry from the marina on the New Jersey side of the harbor, daily, to ride "citi-bikes" to tour the area. I swore I could live there, but thank goodness I am married to a sensible and grounded guy! As for experiences... We met lots of people and made lasting friendships. We nearly ran over a small Basking Whale in the northern Atlantic, and saw loads of seals in the harbor at Province Town. The colors of the water in the Gulf Stream and the absolute clarity of the waters surrounding the cays and islands of the Bahamas will stay with me forever! I could go on ... we got tangled in a ghost crab trap while setting anchor for the night off the intra-coastal waterway near Albemarle Sound...Well, I could go on!

On coming home

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It was November, 2016 and we were in South Florida, awaiting good weather for crossing the Gulf Stream to



the Bahamas, and as long as we had wi-fi, I listened to online services at my church here in Beaufort. With new leadership in place at that time, new visioning was in motion. I've been attending that church since moving to Beaufort in 1997 and, as excited as I was for this adventure we were embarking on, I lamented missing out on the vision-casting. I said a quick prayer that morning, asking God to give me something, an idea, and Art Ministry was what came to me. Since that was early on in our decision to spend a couple of years traveling, I tucked it away in my prayers. We made our way back from the Bahamas to Beaufort in the spring of 2017 for a quick stop before heading north. I met with church leaders, shared my thoughts and they supported the idea. By the time a year was coming to a close, I just knew it was time to go home, and a year to the month, we were back in Beaufort, September 2017. My husband was also very supportive, and of course, I promised we'd go out again. We did, and we will.

About art ministry

The first half of 2018 was a season of praying, meeting artists, and trying to figure out just what an Art Ministry was. During the time I was away from Beaufort, our Parish bookstore closed down, and one of our parishioners coordinated artists to hang their artwork in the empty space. That was the seed that, in the summer of 2018 officially became a named art gallery, Selah Gallery, and signage was made, a mission statement developed, and a webpage added to our church website. We planned exhibitions for 2019 and the "ministry" began gaining momentum: we held a book study for artists that spring, enjoyed a Paint Night with the Youth Ministry in the fall, and of course Gallery exhibits that changed every two months. That's about as far as we got when the COVID-19 Pandemic hit. Like everyone else, we're holding things very loosely. Our church reopened our Parish Hall for limited-seating Bible studies in September, and one of our

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parishioners very graciously agreed to feature her beautifully handcrafted rugs with just a moment's notice. She was our exhibiting artist for September and October, and an Advent exhibition was hung in time for our Sanctuary's re-opening November 1 for limited-seating Sunday services. That exhibit will be up until January 7, 2021.

On her 'Unexpected Path' exhibit

It really began back on the boat in 2016! I never in my wildest dreams thought I'd be doing "Art Ministry" or



have a studio and paint every day and call myself an artist! When I first began to take my gift seriously, I listened to other professional artists, and the one thing that stood out to me was that you have to hone your craft. Work at it. Show up. Get good. Get better. Keep painting. And that's what I did. When I begin a painting, it's intuitive; Its message doesn't come until mid-way or sometimes at the end of a piece, and so far, this journey has been like that. The first year, it seemed every painting was about the same message, but I didn't realize it until I was putting them together for my website. This current series, an "Unexpected Path," began in much the same way. I was just painting and about four paintings into it, I realized I was painting the same message. Oddly enough, from the beginning, I couldn't name these paintings. Everyone wants a painting to have a name. "Untitled" just doesn't cut it. Anyway, they still don't have names. I numbered them as part of a series, and assigned just one scripture to all of them. So...that was the long answer. The short answer is, from a "life" standpoint – the boat, the ministry, the studio ... I'm on a very unexpected path. From this series' standpoint, it's my creative response to that, but it's also, I believe a very timely, universal message for today. I think in light of this pandemic

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and our political climate, we're *all* on a very "unexpected path."

Linda Tully's Unexpected Path exhibit will be on display at Atelier off Bay in downtown Beaufort through December. www.lindatully.com