

How I Found the Farm - 5

Dear Debbie,

I do not recall in detail. I've been on disability for two years because of addiction. I have used that time to go to AA meetings, and in many ways, because of my amazement at the power of prayer in my recovery, I decided to formally learn Christianity. I had been brought up a skeptical Methodist, became a Buddhist after an initial spiritual awakening in 1989, and spent 16 years watching a pretty devoted Buddhist practice evaporate as part of the ravages of alcoholism. After an I was honest, I went to treatment, and the compulsion to use left. And I learned how to pray, which had not struck me as a big part of Buddhist practice. I realized I needed a community, and I like religion, so I wanted to supplement AA meetings. There is no active Tibetan Buddhist group where I live, but there is an Episcopal Diocese. I had gone to an Episcopal Church back in the late 1980's. So I began attending St. Timothy's here in St. Louis, and having been reading everything I can about Christianity. I found the Daily Office web site and many others. Perhaps during the many evenings I searched the web to learn what canticles were, and how all the different denominations came into being, and how to pray the Rosary, and how to chant the Psalms, perhaps during those evenings I happened to come across the Geranium Farm. It may have been one of those Google sidebars. I think I explored your book selling site and checked out the archive of eMo, or perhaps I ended up there trying to learn about something else (that is beginning to sound right). Anyway I liked the stories about the cats and subscribed. And I have found reading the emails to be nice and actually read them all; along with Daily Recovery Readings and Poetry Chaikhana. Have a cheerful day

Hi Debbie,

My friend Dianne forwarded me an e-mail. I've been hooked ever since. This isn't an interesting or exciting story but I just wanted to tell you how wonderful the messages from Barbara and from the other farmers are. They refresh the soul. Living waters flow from that farm.

Thank you ,
Joan

I don't know if this qualifies as "good". A "lapsed" Catholic friend from Habitat has a good friend "the deacon". The deacon told my friend, my friend gave me a book, I "googled" Barbara, and there you have it. Have told many, many others, some Episcopalian, some not. I was a Presbyterian for 58 years, now Episcopalian. Dottie in Florida.

In response to the "almost daily eMo" from yesterday...

I found this site by following links while doing a web search on Anglican Rosary Beads. I love geraniums and was curious. I also hoped to find a site where I could buy unusual scented geraniums.

By the way, I love the site--even without the plants.
Sincerely, Marge Cull

A dear friend of mine sent one about "Curves" to me because I was doing "Curves" at the time. I have since dropped Curves and started walking a mile a day and working out with a personal trainer three times a week. But I can't imagine doing without the Farm!!! Connor

Hi, Debbie,

I found geranium farm when I heard Barbara Crafton speak at a Gardens and Grace retreat last year. Many of the women there were attending because they were "almost daily emo" readers and wanted to hear Barbara speak. I signed up when I returned home. Thanks for a great website.

Judy Larson
Wisconsin reader

The rector of a neighboring parish forwarded The Almost Daily e-mo to her parishioners and one of them forwarded a particularly meaningful one to me and I was instantly hooked. I mention the site to anyone and everyone who I think would be interested and I forward e-mos I think are particularly 'right on' to family and friends. My day isn't complete with Barbara's+ reflections - I'm in awe of her ability to find meaning in the most mundane of daily routines.

Liz O'Donnell, Deacon
St. John's Episcopal Church
Bangor, ME

Hi Debbie

I live in England now but spent over 30 years in South Africa raising my family and still have many friends there. One of them, Sally, forwarded me an almost daily eMo one day, probably about three years ago, and that was it: I was hooked!

Amazingly, however, about two days later an email penpal in Australia, Adele, sent me the almost daily eMo with a glowing recommendation that I sign up for it! So you see, one way or another, I was obviously destined to become part of the Geranium Farm experience!

I love the daily eMo's; they always say something meaningful, and so simply. My life is so hectic and harried, I wouldn't cope at the moment with seriously heavy theology that required me to sit down and think for half a day! Barbara's thoughts shared with us are so gentle, but they lodge into the cracks between the busy parts of my brain and pop up at all sorts of times to be re-considered and mulled over!

Many blessings to you all.
Jennie

Several years ago Barbara spoke at a women's meeting in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. In one session she spoke of her service at Ground Zero after 9/11. My daughter spent many hours there at that time, also. I was present while another mother at the meeting discussed her daughter's service during that time, and it was so similar to what my daughter Elizabeth had done that entering the conversation would have been so repetitive that I just listened. I was impressed with all that Barbara had to say during the meeting. She shed new light on Bible stories I had heard all my life, which always thrills me. When I got home to Childersburg I immediately searched out the Geranium Farm on my computer. A year or two later I read that Barbara was participating in a program at the Episcopal Church in Metuchen. This especially caught my attention because my daughter Elizabeth had recently moved to Metuchen with her family (husband and two year old daughter). When I told her about Barbara she said she had met her when she visited the Episcopal Church in Metuchen (Elizabeth is not Episcopalian), and that Barbara preached that day. This small world amazes me over and over again. I am thankful that Elizabeth has the opportunity for contact with Barbara and the Geranium Farm.

Sincerely,
Ethel Perkins

Dear Debbie:

I found the farm because I am a mentor for an EFM group in the Hudson Valley . About five years ago one of the members of my group, a deacon in the NY diocese who knows Barbara, turned everyone in our group onto the e-mos. As it happens we also have someone in our EFM group who went to St. Clement's when Barbara was there. Since then I make sure that each of my new EFMers knows about e-mos and tries them out. They are a balm and a blessing! Karen

Hi Debbie,

I've thought about it, but I have no idea of how I found the farm. The unusual name interested me, I know that much.
Chuck

Debbie,

I found the farm during a period of desolation.

I was at a retreat and the leader was reading some of Barbara's writings to us - possibly one about finding God in the common things of life - and I became a farmer...

I have been in and out of the farm ever since - as it states in the Emo today - not every spiritual tool works forever - but I have at least read the emos - and even in desolation I find comfort and something that speaks to me - hang in there the tide will change - the path will be made smooth and all will be well. I think that even though I have lost contact with the spiritual director that brought me to the farm I am thankful that she opened the door.

I scatter around the farm and read Hodge Podge and JoAnn's articles - I have never listened to them on line and the one about money leaves me cold - so we are all different in our experience there I am sure. I do light a lot of candles and say a lot of prayers...

Hope this helps your research

Fran Malone

(It was through a friend, Kathleen, one of my brother's teacher's who is the same age as me -- just as Barbara Crafton suspected.) I still meet up with Kathleen -- the runner and the friend that told me about the Geranium Farm -- a couple of times a year for dinner. After one of our dinners a year or so ago, she forwarded an email she received from Barbara that she thought I might enjoy. It was something we had talked about at dinner a few nights earlier. I loved it. I subscribed right away. Since then, I've forwarded numerous emails on to my mother. I have copies of numerous emails in my day planner ("Unfinished Symphony", "Grace, with or without our Leave" "The Garden Branches Out", "A New Thing") -- I have many more in my file cabinet at home under "Thoughts". I've enjoyed learning about Barbara, her love of cats, the fondness she has for her daughters, the marriage of last year I think of her granddaughter, the grandbaby on the way, her love of gardening, her relationship with Q, her love of baking bread, her fondness for figs (I've never had one -- I had a date shake once in Palm Springs, CA, with my mom, but I don't think I have ever had a fig). Sometimes I get the feeling she may be sick, but am always glad to receive yet another email. I've thanked Kathleen numerous times for sharing this site with me. So many times I've wanted to contact Barbara to thank her for putting words to such very personal feelings. For making me view something in a different way. I'm glad you wondered about the people on the list -- so glad that I am one of them. Keep up the good work, I will continue to read!!!

Hugs to you all

Helen

I was slow. Several years ago, my husband learned of this new website that he thought I would like. I love flowers, so thought it was akin to White Flower Farm. Eventually, I came across the note and tried it. I liked what I read, but just was too involved with other things to commit to receiving it every day. Then Barbara keynoted at the Finger Lakes Conference (the year she had a broken foot - about 6 or 7 years ago?). Oh, I thought, this is the lady from that geranium farm. I went on a few more times, but two of our kids were married, I was ordained to the "real" diaconate and we moved all within 12 months and I lost track. It wasn't until I was preaching regularly that someone else referred to one of her eMo's in a sermon and I was hooked. Thanks to everyone down on the farm for being there every time I came back. Now my husband has pointed out that I quote something from Barbara nearly every sermon - but I only preach once a month! She has helped me get the word out on ERD and our parish now actively supports them. It's a joy to be able to hear and see her fairly often since we're in the neighboring diocese (Newark).

In Peace,

Lizabeth Smith

Hello Debbie,

I live in South Florida and I have a friend that lives in Raleigh, NC. Her mother Joan lives in Toana, VA and she is the one who told me about the site and I've been hooked ever since. Thanks to everyone for all the hard work and dedication. It really does make a difference in people's lives.

GOD Bless all of you!!

Jill

I found the Farm by googling Barbara Crafton, but the story goes back much further than that.

In 1995, when I was 41, I came down with meningoencephalitis. During my recovery, my parents came to stay with me and care for my two children (at that time, ages 6 and 2) and keep house for me. My mother gave me a copy of Barbara's book The Sewing Room. And this was the inscription she wrote on the inside:

"Pam,

I hope, during the time you are at leisure, getting back to your old self again, you'll take the time to read this book. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did. I realize I have been far too judgmental about some people -- why they act as they do -- when I do not know the circumstance that has brought them to the place they find themselves in.

I was able to identify with so many things in this book. I bought it strictly for the title: The Sewing Room. It took me back to my own mother, bent over her old pedal Singer sewing machine. Spending hours making me nice things to wear. Her love to me was poured out in every one of those stitches. It was not until she was gone that I realized how much she had done for me. And what sacrifices she made. You are that kind of a mother, and I'm proud of you for it, and for being my little girl.

All my love,
Mom"

It was a struggle for me to even read during my recovery because words and vocabulary were one of areas of the brain that were damaged. But gradually, I got better and as I read the book, I also came to love it.

My mother died in 2004, just seven months after my father, who was a minister, passed away. I take this book out from time to time, read the note she wrote, and then pick out a chapter. It's like having her here with me.

In the meantime, I had also bought Barbara's Meditations on the Book of Psalms. I wanted to know more about her and what she was doing now. That led me to the Farm. I love her "Almost Dailies" and her insights, the way she thinks about things.

Thanks for letting me share,
Pamela Tomlinson

Like so many others, I found it through one of the women's group at St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Taft, California. She thought I would like the geranium farm and I do! I'm reading Jan Karon's series on Mitford and I think Barbara might fit right in there. Thanks.

Christine Russell

I saw in the almost daily e-mo that you want to find out how people got to the Geranium Farm. My friend Fran had forwarded me a few of the e-mo's when we were in seminary five years ago, so I was aware of them for a while. Then I heard Barbara speak at our clergy retreat in the Diocese of Virginia a year or so ago, and liked her style and her faith, and that was when I got on the e-mo list myself. Now I always look forward to reading them and have found some cherished gems in them. Thanks!

Lucia Lloyd
Assistant Rector
St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Richmond, VA

Dear Debbie, Barbara was the keynote speaker at the Shrin Mont conference 2 years ago and I have been a believer ever since. When she was at St. Paul's in Richmond week before last people from Shrine Mont were there-- some every day. I could only go one day, but I was there. A chance to hear Barbara in person is not to be missed.
Amanda Sutton

As in the great commission messaging, the farm was shared with me by a christian who thought I'd enjoy a particular eMo (I have no idea the topic). So I was hooked. I subsequently added others to my referral forwarding, and many have continued their own subscription. Except for my special friend Elsa. She refuses to get her own subscription and instead enjoys my personal delivery forwarding, which of course always includes a third party triangulation commentary on whatever musings of the day Barbara is extolling. Through these forwardings and Elsa's responses, we have shared and compared views and experiences that range as far as the eMo can see.

I fantasize that someday I might visit the farm and meet all the characters I've come to know virtually. But until then, I continue to enjoy the company and encouragement on the walk.

Regards,
Sue Edrozo
Hi Elsa. :-) you're busted again. :)

Debbie -

This is my "how I found the farm story"

I am a nursing home chaplain. When I was in seminary, I thought I would be either the pastor of a small country church or an associate somewhere working in Christian Education. I have a friend who I re-connected with in seminary. We grew up about a half block away from one another. She was two years ahead of me in school so we knew one another, but weren't really close friends. When we walked into the same class in seminary, we were both happily surprised. Jan, my friend, had worked in health care settings before going back to college and then seminary. She took all the CPE she would need and worked a while as a hospital chaplain. She thought that is where she would continue her ministry. So where is she today? Serving a small, but growing, country church!

All that is to set the stage for my "farm" story. Jan and I have learned that God has plans for us and we need to pay attention! You never know when God will give a little push or a larger shove. Or whose voice God will use to speak to you.

I love to sew. It is both creative outlet/meditation and a way to (sometimes) supplement my finances. A few years ago, Jan was shopping at a Christian bookstore (We clergy type do that a lot!) and saw Barbara's "The Sewing Room". She picked it up for me, thinking it was about sewing and spirituality and gave it to me for Christmas. I thanked her and put the book on my stack of "to reads"

Sometime later, I picked it up and began reading. One story (that sewing room story) and then another and another and another. I sat and read the whole book in one day. "Who is this author?" I wondered. I noticed something mentioned about some farm. And so I got on the computer and found the farm.

I subscribed to Barbara's daily messages right away.

However, there is more to the story. As I began to read the e-mos and learn more about Barbara, I felt a strong connection. I have some background in theatre, although not to the extent she does. I knew the places she spoke about. I knew a little about theatre people and the creative gifts God gives. I was raised (and am very comfortable) in "high church" settings - the German Reformed part of the Evangelical and Reformed tradition that is now the UCC. I am a firm believer in the inclusivity of all in God's church. And, oh yes, I have two cats!

Barbara has touched my life through her writing. She has sparked my faith. And she has helped my son. You see, my son moved to NYC about 2 years ago. He works for PWC on Madison Ave. Last year (2007) as Ash Wednesday approached, he was determined to find a church where he could worship. I searched all the UCC and Lutheran churches I could find. None were close enough to his work or had worship at a time that he could get out, attend worship, and get back to the office. So I e-mailed Barbara. Now obviously, Barbara has NO idea who I am. I explained a little of my son's situation and asked her for any Episcopal churches in the area, knowing that he could commune and receive ashes there. The next day I received a note from her mentioning "St. Bart's". I wrote to my son. He told me he would try to get there. And he did. And he went again this year. When I was in the city with him for the Thanksgiving parade, he made sure we walked past St. Bart's - so he could show it to me. "That's St. Bart's", he said. "The church where I can worship close to my office."

As we in the UCC have been saying recently, "God is still speaking!" - and you never know who God will use or how God will speak. For me, one way God speaks is through the farm. Blessings abound!

Anna Thompson, Chaplain

"I love my church because it's sort of like the Wizard of Oz. It's about having a heart, a brain ... and courage!"

In 2003 I was blessed to have two wonderful friends, the Reverend Raymond Shaheen and his son, the Reverend David Shaheen. Ironically, they both introduced me to the Geranium Farm around the same time. Sr. Pastor (Ray) who was in his 80's at the time, sent me hard copies of Barbara's Emos. PD (David) sent me the links every day for a while til I told him I'd signed up. Both father and son recognized that the Daily EMO was exactly what I needed at that difficult time in my life, and they both ensured that I had the opportunity to meet this inspiring woman who has helped so many keep the faith, one day at a time.

Nancy Crisafulli

Well when Barbara came to St. Luke's in Metuchen, New Jersey, 20-some years ago, I was fortunate to be the first parishioner, other than clergy, to meet her ... she stayed anyway! Barbara was ordained from St. Luke's, married Q at St. Luke's, and we are privileged to have her back again as an associate. I recall the publication of her first books ... Gifts for the MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT. Her many ministries have touched countless lives. Her E-Mos are timely, relevant, thought provoking, spiritual and have touched even more lives. I have mailed them to just about everyone I know, and many of the recipients already know of Barbara or The Farm. The evolution of the Geranium Farm is a gift to us all. Thank You, Barbara ... Blessings, a St. Luke's Parishioner

Dear Debbie – this message is in response to Barbara’s eMo entitled “How I Found the Farm.” I became a Barbara Cawthorne Crafton fan several years ago after finding her little Advent devotional book, **Let Every Heart Prepare** in our local United Methodist Church bookstore. I sent copies of it to my adult children and their spouses, and have used it during Advent every year since then. That particular book struck a chord with me, because Barbara wrote about her brother who had recently died. My oldest brother had died suddenly in 1998, and my grief had been profound – very different from when our parents had died earlier. I learned that Barbara had written other books; bought and read all of them. I think I was trying to order another copy of **Some Things You Just Have to Live With** to send to a friend who had just had a knee replacement when I found the Farm. Eureka ! Let’s hear it for Almost Daily eMos and all the other talented “farmers.” Since that time, probably two years or so ago, I have made a file in ‘My Documents’ called “Geranium Farm Gems.” I save the ones I want to share or use as devotionals. I am currently leading a Stephen Ministry training class, and recently used “Backsides to the Wind” following the dreadful storms that occurred not far from us on February 5.

I could go on and on. . . but just wanted to share my story of finding Geranium Farm. It continues to bless my life on a daily basis. I feel as though all of you are friends I’ve known forever. I send love and thanks.

Dottie Coltrane
Atlanta , GA

Hi

This story, while not dazzling, is the story I have.

Barbara was the chaplain at, I think, the first Episcopal Communicators’ Conference I attended in Boston in the mid 1990s. I was the newly named editor of *The Oregon Episcopal Church News*.

I was lucky because Barbara and I sat together for a bit and discovered we both had Minnesota roots. During our chat, I remembered a Minnesota colloquialism, “Oh for dumb.” (I speak Minnesotan.) Something interrupted our visit and there wasn’t time to explain these three words. I worried for years that Barbara would “take them the wrong way” – another nugget of Minnesota regional speech.

When I retired in early 2004, a friend gave me what was, at the time, Barbara’s most recent book. After I read it, I read all of Barbara’s books that were in our local libraries. Another friend told me about the Geranium Farm web site and I’ve been reading it nearly daily ever since.

While I enjoy all of Barbara’s writing, I can particularly relate when she writes about gardens and cats. I often forward these columns to others who like digging in the dirt and purrs in the ears.

Who knows, maybe all our cats read Barbara’s columns over our shoulders.
arlene

I work for Forward Movement Publications and Almost Daily eMos are very popular among my coworkers.

I don’t remember the first eMo that was forwarded to me, or why I signed up myself. I’m sure whatever I read “hit home” and compelled me to visit The Farm.

I do know that when a particularly good eMo is delivered to our inboxes, heads will pop up over cubicle dividers asking “Did you get today’s eMo?” Word spreads quickly in our little office and within 5 minutes of delivery, there is an office of people happily discussing the newest eMo. We’ve all lit a virtual candle and requested prayers once or twice too.

While I don’t always get to read the new eMos when they’re delivered, I do seem to open them at just the right time.

And for that I thank you. And I’m not just thanking Barbara for writing them - I’m thanking everyone involved (and I’m sure there are many of you working behind the scenes).

Often the message in the eMo is just what I need to hear to get through my hectic day. It is my chance to relax and reflect for just a few moments.

Thank you all again for your good work!

Marissa Tucker

Am responding to the requests to let you know how we found out about Geranium Farm, HodgePodge, etc. My oldest best friend, Tomi in Tamps, Fla. (we’ve been friends since we were 18 months old in Virginia and going to the same Episcopal church there) and I then told the entire Daughters of the King chapter here in Las Cruces and anybody else I could find. Everyone loves it and we all learn so much and enjoy everything coming along. Thanks - Dee in Las Cruces

Since you asked, my brother, (Bob Bennett , day #2) and I were talking about something now forgotten, and he offered to sign me up for the E-mos. Barbara's writings fascinate me, and I admire her style, her wisdom, and her ability to convey ideas. I really look forward to seeing E-mos. I have since purchased most of her books, I think, and have been to a service at St. Luke's and two book signings, loving every second. Barbara's acting background readily comes to the fore, and she is tremendously charismatic in person. She is also incredibly warm and considerate. She expects much more of herself than any one person can deliver!

I do not easily talk about my own journey, but have mentioned the site to a couple of friends, one of whom says she is enjoying it daily. I expect the other will be in place soon, as hers is a more disciplined journey than mine.

I strongly suspect that the number of readers is getting to be something like the grains of sand, and that we can't know how many lives this amazing ministry touches.

Thank you to all of you for all that you do. Susan Bennett Easton, NJ

I originally knew Barbara as a guest preacher in NYC at Roman Catholic masses for the LGBT community. I asked for her e-mail one Sunday and she just said, look up The Geranium Farm online. I was hooked.

Fr. Bill Burt