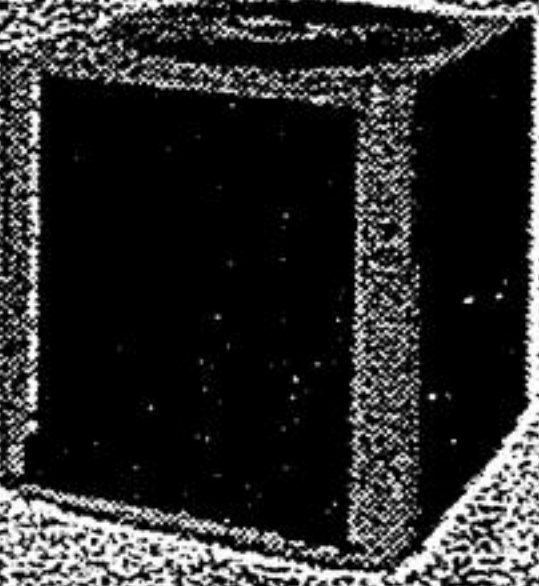


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Ministry her destiny: Phillips

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longer. She felt there was a reason why she had to do it. "Every day, it seemed there was another sign. I would turn on the television. Someone would be telling a story of changing careers; pick up a newspaper, there would be an article. Even lines in certain hymns. Something was telling me, 'you have to do this'."

Finally, last September she listened to that inner voice and announced her decision.

Her husband, Greg, was happy with her decision. He said that he had "known" for some time that his wife would enter the ministry. His support and encouragement, along with that of her children, Matthew 15, Jessica 12, and Peter 7, has helped make the transition easier.

"Friends and neighbours were very supportive, also," she recalls. "And my mother was delighted."

After informing her minister, Rev. Bob Nightengale, of the Stouffville United Church, the wheels were set in motion, and Phillips was one step closer to reaching her goal.

At that time, a discernment committee (with one of the members of that committee being Phillips herself) was set up. They meet six times over a period of one year, and discuss her progress, her commitment, or any concerns she, or they, may have. "It gives you a year," she says, "to be absolutely sure you've made the right choice."

Since January, she's attended Trent University's Durham Campus in Oshawa, to complete her undergraduate studies. She finds the hardest adjustment to make is the time spent away from her family.

Beginning in the fall of '99 she'll attend the University of Toronto, to earn a Master of Divinity degree, after which, she can be ordained. Then, when there's a calling, a congregation that needs someone with her skills and qualifications, she'll be placed in that church.

Although Phillips knows there's a lot of hard work ahead for herself, she feels that the sacrifices she's asking her family to make are also enormous. "We'll have to adjust to being a one income family, and my children will have to get by without me being here all the time." Daughter, Jessica, though, doesn't seem to mind, she thinks her mom being a minister is "cool."

But whatever the future holds, Phillips has no regrets. And for anyone thinking of pursuing a dream or changing careers in mid-life, she offers some advice: "Think it over carefully, talk it over with your family, then — go for it!"

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