

My vision after another year

By [Guy Sayles](#)

March 22, 2015

I recently spent a couple of hours at the DMV; it was time to renew my driver's license. The place was crowded with, in the words of the old prayerbook, "all sorts and conditions" of people. It was a multiracial and multigenerational melting pot. Around me, people were speaking in a variety of languages, including that version of English I associate with New Jersey. (It really is a different language, I think!) Every imaginable style of dress and undress was on display. People had done things with their hair I didn't know could be done. Almost all of us were talking or texting or e-mailing on our smartphones.

Against stereotype, the DMV personnel were all friendly and helpful. The younger woman who helped me was particularly kind. After I took and passed (whew!) the vision and road signage tests, she reviewed the information on my license to update my address, phone number, height, weight, and organ donor information. She also asked, ever so gently, "Mr. Sayles, is it all right with you if I change the hair color we have listed from brown to gray?" I laughed and said to her, "I think that's the only honest thing to do, don't you?" She smiled and said, "But your eyes are still brown." "They are," I said, and I thought, "At least that's one thing that hasn't changed." My eyes get more tired more quickly, and the magnification I need for reading glasses goes slowly but steadily higher. My eyes fill with tears of both grief and joy more often than they used to, but their color hasn't changed. It's not something I'd thought to be concerned about or grateful for before this last visit to the DMV.

The expiration and renewal dates for drivers' licenses are tied, of course, to birthdays. In the interval between the last renewal and this one, so much has happened to me, in me, and around me. The year between my 57th and 58th birthdays has especially been a whirlwind of change and challenge.

Last year at this time, I was in the early rounds of chemotherapy; my body had not yet undergone much of the pain and weakness that treatment would bring.

I served as pastor of a wonderful church, but I was also aware that cancer had made more insistent and urgent some questions I had long had about the shape of my vocation (not just about my job but about how, with my whole life, I respond to God's call).

Last year at this time, I did not know how life-giving it could be to come as close as I would come to death.

I hadn't yet experienced what I am still learning about how healing utter brokenness can be.

I hadn't yet discovered what I am now discovering about vulnerability's illusion-shattering and pride-breaking gifts.

This year has given me a deeper assurance than I have ever had that mercy does not crumble even though I do, that joy swims across the river of my tears, and that love is more powerful than all the powers which seem, for a time, to defeat it.

When I was a toddler, I had a couple of corrective surgeries to my eyes. In some ways, all the years since have been about learning to see—about finding vision, sharpening perception, and developing insight. My eyes are still brown, but I see differently now, far differently even than a year ago. I am grateful, and I am curious about what I will see in the days ahead.

*Originally posted at [From the Intersection](#)*