



Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

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October 2011

Thanksgiving Letter From God

By Sue Berger

Hi Kids!

It's one of my favorite times of year when you gather your families together to enjoy the bounty of your lives and make a point to thank me. I thought I'd take a moment to let you know how welcome you are and what a delight each of you are to me. I thoroughly enjoy being a part of your lives.

Nothing warms a Father's heart more than to see his kids gathered together, no matter what the occasion. I enjoy watching you play, laugh, eat, talk, work and just interact with each other. I truly look forward to your family gatherings throughout the year. Hearing you express appreciation for the creation around you and the abundance of your lives makes my heart sing. I love it when you get it—that I created everything for your benefit and enjoyment. I gave each of you unique talents and abilities and I'm glad you understand using those gifts benefits you and others around you. I want you to enjoy life and family and friendships.

You know, I still relish the beauty of the earth I created and get a charge out of you kids figuring out all the treasures and resources it contains. Blows you away now and then, doesn't it! Keep at it, there's more for you to discover! I'm fascinated by the decisions you make and the course human history has taken. Oh sure, it would have been nice to have coddled you in the Garden forever, but I knew you'd want to test your wings, to challenge your intellect, to try things your way. Only then would you really know my way is the best and be willing to throw in with me 100 percent. Some of you figure that out more quickly than others, but no matter the course, I love you all and will see you through whatever comes your way.

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Letter From God

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You know, there's a lot of pain and suffering in the world, and it breaks my heart. It's not what I intended for you kids. I hate the anger, depression, fear and hunger that floods your evening news. That will all be resolved in good time, but it makes me sad and I appreciate it when you kids reach out to those who don't have it so good. So yeah, you could say I'm thankful for you! I'm thankful you're responsible kids. I'm impressed when you reach out with thoughtfulness and compassion. I'm thankful you want to have a relationship with me and accept what Jesus did for our relationship and acknowledge the work the Spirit does between us to make it all possible. I love sharing your life with you and look forward to sharing even more with you in the future. You don't have a clue of what I have in store for you and I can hardly wait to share it with you! But, I'm getting ahead of myself....

Well, I'll wrap this up for now. While Thanksgiving was in the air, I wanted to take a moment to let you know I'm thankful for you. Thank you for loving each other. Thank you for believing in me. It means more than you can humanly know. I love you—God.



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Connections

Mission Statement

Primary: The Connections for Clergy Support Department provides intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual support and encouragement in the personal lives of GCI ministry families.

Three primary means of serving are the *Connections* journal, the Connections for a Successful Ministry and Life web pages, and the Nurturernet forum. We highlight women in ministry but are inclusive of the needs of the entire family.

Secondary: To promote respect, understanding and support for women, their personal ministries and ministries that serve them.

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• CALIFORNIA •
TAM 2 U

He Sees Us

Have you ever felt invisible? During a church visit (a long time ago), I stood a few feet away from my husband, watching as people shook his hand and talked to him. Some girls standing nearby saw me and asked if I was waiting to talk to Mr. Tkach. I'm sure I had a strange look on my face as I said, "Yes, I am."

Many women have felt invisible through the centuries, and not only felt that way, but virtually were. One woman who experienced this was Hagar, one of Sarai's Egyptian slaves. Genesis 16 tells what happened to her when Sarai decided to take matters into her own hands and hurry along God's promise of many descendants.

Hagar became one of Abram's wives, became pregnant and developed a bit of a 'tude, despising her mistress. When Abram indicated he didn't really care what happened to Hagar, Sarai abused her so much she ran away into the desert.

It's not hard to imagine her emotional state as she headed out to almost certain death—pregnant, alone, unwanted, with no hope and no future. But it must have seemed a better alternative than what she had to endure from Sarai.

And then, as she sat by a spring at the side of a road, the angel of God found her and told her to go back and put up with the abuse. He then promised her many descendants as well. Hagar's response was unlike any other in the Bible: "You're the God who sees me! Yes! He saw me; and then I saw him! (Genesis

16:13, *The Message*). In that moment she knew she wasn't invisible anymore.

No matter how small or insignificant you may feel at times, rest assured God sees you. We are not invisible to him—no one is. David asked what is man that God is mindful of him. The answer: God so loved the world he gave his only son so that we might have eternal life.

He sees us and he loves us. And just as he found, comforted and guided Hagar, he does the same for every one of us. May he open our eyes to see him as she did, the Living God who sees us.



Tammy

Blog Roll

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www.onepilgrimsmusings.com

Joyce Catherwood:

<http://i-love-to-tell-the-story.blogspot.com>

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www.barbdahlgren.com

Sheila Dela Peña:

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Tammy Tkach:

www.ttkach.wordpress.com

If you have a blog, send us the URL
and we'll publish it here.

Patience Poured Down

By Hannah Knaack

Many years ago we'd just placed our House for Sale ad in the paper and were minutes away from an open house. Yet hubby and I stood at the kitchen window, astonished. That first week of April, the winds were 60 mph in our little corner of Iowa and it was snowing wildly.

"Who in their right mind is going house hunting on a day like this?" I groused. (Translation: "God, why aren't you answering our prayers?") All the repairs, painting and cleaning we'd done to get our home ready for sale!

The Holy Spirit whispered to me, "This all depends on you, does it?" I instantly felt a deep remorse. Repentance was earnestly offered, forgiveness granted. We prayed God's will be accomplished.

Seven couples tromped through our home that blustery afternoon. The last ones through bought the house that evening, offering nearly full price. God knows that I know who sold the home. Not only did he extend patience after our wretched lack of faith, but he also bountifully blessed. We didn't deserve it. Come to think of it, we don't deserve anything he gives, do we?

We soon moved to deep snow country and found a home on a hill, with a long, wide driveway and not a snow blower in sight. Hubby had priced them and decided purchasing a new one wasn't an option. "God, we have a need, if it be your will," I prayed. Checking the paper's ads that week, I saw one listed at a yard sale. Could this be for us, I wondered?

I arrived at the address much later than I'd

hoped but immediately saw a flash of shiny red near the garage. It's still here! My next thought was embarrassingly pathetic. *Well, there must be something wrong with it if it didn't sell yet.*

An image of my Lord standing quietly in the heavenly realm, my oh-so-recent prayers cupped tenderly in his hand, popped into my mind. How ungrateful I was. The snow blower was nearly new and the owner agreed to a lower price when I asked. Our Father blesses us even in our foolishness sometimes. We enjoyed our well-used gift for many years, but what I remember most and am most thankful for, is the patience extended to a foolish child of flighty faith.

Every parent-child relationship can have its ups and downs. The rocky road with my son came about because of his indifference in completing and turning in his homework. "So boring and useless," he argued. "Why can't the teacher just ask if I know the stuff, and I'll say, Yep." That particular night we'd gone round and round, like a dog on a bone, and this frustrated mother was about to throw the bone and the teen out the window.

He stomped off and I slumped against the door jamb, "Father, I cannot take any more of this. College is just around the corner." In a crystal clear manner, the Voice answered, "Give him to me."

Although the Spirit had caught me in a weak moment, while I was very warm under the collar, my next words would haunt me for years. "No," I said. "Frankly, I'm not very happy with how you've handled it thus far."

Three heartbeats later I realized to whom I was talking and was horrified. I can think of a few other descriptive words, but thankfully,

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Patience Poured Down

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this mother saw the light and made haste to correct a foul attitude. I should have been zapped for my self-righteous attitude and irreverent mouth, but yet again, patience poured down. His mercies never end.

Through my Lord's consistent and loving example, I've learned to grow in patience. It's something I've worked at over the years. How about you?

Often we lack patience, yet our loving Father pours his abundant patience down upon us over and over. We're told in 1 Timothy 1:16 his well never runs dry (Oh, to say that of myself!). Not because we deserve any of it, but because he is love (1Corinthians 13:4). And love is always patient, always kind. Please, Lord, more patience.



Hannah says: "I've enjoyed taking Mom to library book sales this summer. She buys nature magazines to make her lovely scrapbooks, which we deliver to many area nursing homes and Children's Hospital. It brings her such joy and keeps her hands busy and inspires me toward good works, as well." You may email Hannah at justmomhlk@gmail.com.

Never be afraid to trust
an unknown future to a known God.



—Carrie Ten Boom

Briefly Speaking...

Out of the Boat

Once upon a time there was a man who got out of a boat and walked on water. Peter made it for a few steps. There was another man Jesus asked to step out of his comfort zone and walk by faith. He didn't do as well as Peter.

Oh, at first, he must have felt fairly confident asking Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. He felt pretty good when Jesus said keep the commandments, for he believed he was one of the good guys. He had kept them from his youth. But then Jesus asked him to get out of the boat.

Jesus' response to this man calling him (Jesus) good showed he understood how this man felt about himself. Jesus asked him to get out of the boat, go beyond the works of the law and walk with him in faith, but he could not. Jesus made it plain that keeping the commandments was not enough because God's standards are much higher. A Christian's life is a life lived in faith—living in faith in Jesus and living in Jesus' faith.

As Christians, we're out of the boat now, walking with him in faith. It may seem a bit scary sometimes, especially if we look down or look back, but we're safe, eternally safe. We won't get lost—the Holy Spirit is our guide. We won't sink—Jesus is our foundation. We won't be left without support—our Father is there to hear our every prayer. So don't forget to thank God today. Hallelujah! We're out of the boat!



—Sheila Graham

You may email Sheila at sheila.graham@gci.org.

Healing Friendships

By Anne Marie Caristi

Friendship is important to women. I guess it's deeply important to all people. Remember how close David and Jonathan were? In my experience, women get hurt more easily by friendships than men. It takes much less of an offense to hurt the feelings of a woman than a man. I am speaking in general here. Think of the elementary school girls at recess who cry at home over being excluded from a certain group of friends.

A friend of mine said to me: "My little girl came home from school and told me not one person would play with her on the playground that day or any day! How do I fix that?" Why do children treat each other this way?

Even the older generation of women has friendship issues. In an article on actress Betty White's new book, *If You Ask Me*, she was asked if she ever had a co-worker with whom she didn't get along. She replied: "I made it my business to get along with them. Sometimes they didn't get along with me," she acknowledged, mentioning her *Golden Girls* co-star, the late Bea Arthur. "I don't know what I ever did to Bea. She just didn't like me. And I loved her and admired her work. But I made it my business to stay out of her way."

That's certainly one way to deal with friendship problems! But God is in the reconciliation business and Christians can call upon his power to heal friendships. I would never want to live for eternity in this world where people hurt each other. Praise God that somehow, in a way beyond my comprehension, we will all be able to live forever as the best of friends with sin never entering in. But for now, we have to navigate through our

own unique mazes of friendships.

I remember myself as a fourth grader, when on the first day back to school I saw a group of my friends from third grade on the playground, but was too timid to approach them. I felt left out that day. Ever since, I've thought, Y'know, I should have just walked up to those friends and joined them.

This sort of scenario has been repeated many times throughout my life, within all sorts of groups. Whether it was my perception or people consciously leaving me out, I can say I have been hurt by people. I'm sure I've hurt others as well as I've not been perfect in including and loving everyone.

So we all have to acknowledge how imperfect every one of us is and accept and forgive. Out of all these hurts should come a zeal for reaching out to every individual on our radar and including them and sharing with them. As women in ministry, this needs to be one of our goals.

It can start in our families and church congregations and extend to our neighbors and communities. So many people leave churches because of not feeling accepted or essentially being ignored.

Let's be a part of the solution. Let's not be superficial and shake hands and hug just for show. Let's be truly interested in our fellow church member's lives and share our lives with them. And in our special friendships with women, let's allow God's love to overflow!



Anne Marie is rejoicing that her three children have gone back to school after the long summer. She will have more time for writing, studying German, home improvement, exercise and the myriad of other interests which call out to her for attention. At least that is what she hopes! You may email her at jacaristi@gmail.com.

Old and in the Way

“There She Is!”

By Joyce Catherwood

Every time I walked in the door, Dad would clap his hands once, look really pleased and say, “There she is!” He was always sitting in his not-so-gently worn, green upholstered recliner, surrounded by small tables piled high with Bibles and commentaries. In front of him was a tray-type contraption he made that lay across the arms of the chair, outfitted with a built-in pencil and pen holder.

Sticking out of all his books and Bibles were those stiff advertising cards you receive in the mail. Dad used them as book marks. It seems every other page was book marked because every other page was important to him. Behind his chair was a heavy, rusty stand-up lamp that must have been at least 50 years old, with a long chain to turn it on and off.

I don’t remember exactly when he started greeting me that way, but I became so accustomed to it, it barely had an effect on me. It’s funny the things one gets used to. Now that

Dad is gone, I can’t begin to tell you what I would give to receive that greeting just one more time.

In his 90s, my dad was living alone, having lost his life partner of almost 70 years. His little house was next door to mine, with an unusually long sidewalk from my door to his—a sidewalk he specifically designed and put in. Through a sliding glass door near his chair, he would expectantly watch for me coming down the walkway, which I did several times a day to check on him.

Almost every time I came over, he wanted me to sit down so he could tell me all about what he had been reading, or a “new truth” he had discovered from his research. And sometimes, I would accommodate him. But, thinking I didn’t have time, most of my visits were for the purpose of making him something to eat or cleaning his house or washing his clothes or feeding Maggie, the little stray dog he adopted. So I busily went about getting things done.

I know he was happy to have some company, but what he really wanted was for someone to listen to him. He would talk to anyone, including strangers, and the first

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Nurturenet

Nurturenet is a computer forum for women in ministry. Its purpose is to help you stay connected through digest-mode communication (each day’s messages compiled into one email). You may use it for requests for information, prayer requests, to share ideas and resources, to receive updates on *Connections* news or just to stay connected!



Do we
have
your
email
address?

To join or update your email address, please send Tammy a message at tammy.tkach@gci.org. Please do not reply to a post unless you want to address the entire list.

“There She Is!”

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question he would ask is, “Are you a Christian?” Then no matter what the reply, he would immediately say, “Sit down, let’s talk.”

My dad’s education ended with the sixth grade. But that didn’t stop him from enjoying learning. His mind was bursting with ideas. He was continually inventing gadgets or streamlining machines to make them more efficient. He could fix just about anything.

His interests were numerous, from bee keeping and smoking meat to solar energy. Right into his 90s, he followed construction workers or repairmen who came onto his property, asking questions or giving advice—mostly giving advice. As his physical strength ebbed away, studying his beloved Bible and all his well-marked books became his main focus, which suited him just fine, because that was his favorite thing anyway.

In the course of his life, there were occasions when his voice was more readily heard. Never on a grand scale, of course. However, as the years went by, his stage grew smaller and smaller. Yet deep inside there was still so much he wanted to say. He needed to be reassured what he said still mattered. The need to be validated doesn’t diminish with age, it increases.

In my dad’s case, he became basically house bound and rarely had visitors, so if I didn’t provide a format for his voice to be heard, then it was as though the spotlights were turned off, the curtains closed and the audience had left. And that happened way too often. I was simply too caught up in all that *needed* to be done for him.

If I had it to do over again, I would spend loads more time just sitting and listening. And even if I didn’t agree, I would still listen. Even if it didn’t make any sense, I would

still listen. Some elderly people have few friends and no family visitors and therefore no stage for their voices to be heard. Already constrained by aging bodies, the added frustration of not being heard is discouraging and demeaning.

It is fascinating to consider the reasons God the Father used a devout old man named Simeon to bless the infant Jesus when he was brought to the temple to be consecrated. Simeon waited all his life for the redemption of Israel. He was given a special revelation that he would not die before seeing the Messiah with his own eyes. When Jesus’ parents entered the temple, Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms, praised God and pronounced a blessing on him and his parents.

The Scripture says Mary and Joseph marveled at his words. What he said mattered. Simeon could now die in peace, honored and validated.

If it is within your power to provide a listening format for a senior citizen, I hope you will do so. Don’t leave it up to the caregivers; they can grow weary. For a senior, the bigger the stage, the better. Otherwise they may spend their final years feeling useless, old and in the way. And they will wonder: “Did you hear me? Did what I say matter to you? Was my life worthwhile?”



Joyce says: “We just lost Lizzy, our beloved white cat, to illness. She had been with us for 10 years. It doesn’t seem possible the presence of such a small pet could fill up a house, but our home feels really empty at the moment.” You may email Joyce at joyce.catherwood@gci.org.

Zorro and Me

Arise and Walk

By Barbara Dahlgren

I'm going to share something with you about Zorro you may not know. Shortly after we were married Zorro started having severe back pain. By the time our first child Shelly was born the pain was so intense he had to use crutches. Chiropractors offered little relief and Florida doctors weren't much help. By the time Shelly was 9 months old it was obvious something needed to be done. So we flew to California to visit his family and see a back specialist.

The X-rays indicated a slow deterioration at the base of the spine. The doctor said it was Marie-Strumpell's disease—something we had not heard of. Obviously it was named after a person who had it; today they call it ankylosing spondylitis. It is hereditary and usually appears in males in their early 20s.

Symptoms start slowly. First there is stiffness in the spine, which eventually turns into chronic pain. The prognosis was not good. If it continued, fusion of the spine would occur. The doctor said to prepare ourselves that Zorro would be wheelchair-bound by age 30. There was nothing the medical world could offer at the time.

Needless to say this was most disconcerting. Zorro always desired to be a minister. As a teen he was told that was wrong because ministers did not choose this profession, they were chosen. In college he was repeatedly told he wasn't minister material. Then, through some fluke, he was now in what he considered his dream job—a ministerial assistant with hopes of one day being a pastor. When he was *chosen* to be in ministry it was as if God answered his

heartfelt prayers and gave him the desires of his heart. Were those dreams, which now seemed attainable, to be snatched away?

Much of that trip was spent in reflection and prayer. We knew it would be so easy for our great God to give Zorro his healing touch and all would be well. We also knew this was not the way God always chooses to use his power.

After all, healing is for God's glory, not just our comfort. We realized God does not exist to take away our pain. At times God might give us stamina, endurance, perseverance or peace of mind to help us make it through the hard times, but he doesn't always grant immediate healing. At the moment it didn't seem like we had any of those qualities so it was difficult to know what God had in store for us. It was an agonizing time—a time filled with frustration, angst, tears, prayer and eventual surrender to God's will.

As Zorro hobbled on crutches we headed back to Florida, making a stop in Missouri to visit my relatives. While attending church in St. Louis, Zorro asked Ken Mattson, an elder, to anoint him and pray for healing. We were willing to surrender to God's will, but it doesn't hurt to ask for healing, does it? Ken's prayer was moving, heartfelt and sincere, but the excruciating pain and discomfort remained.

Ten days later, after returning home to Florida, something miraculous happened. It was difficult for Zorro to kneel to pray but he managed somehow. This time when he got up, he walked without his crutches, and he's been walking ever since.

I'd like to say our lives have been problem free ever since and because of that miracle we have never had another argument,

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Arise and Walk

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experienced severe pain, or had to go through tragedy, but that's not true. Years later Zorro was bitten by a brown recluse spider and almost lost his leg. A few years ago he had to have hip replacement surgery because his cartilage had eroded away. Not long ago it looked as if his hearing might be impaired when he had shingles. But you know what? His back is in great shape.

At times when we ask for healing God may say, "Wait!" or "Not yet!" or "When I return!" At other times he does it when we ask. I don't know why God chose to heal Zorro when he did. I do know Zorro has tried to live his life for God and God's glory. (Sometimes I find him most irritating and he drives me insane, one of the pitfalls of marriage, but I've never questioned Zorro's love for God.)

Others have dedicated their lives to God and not received immediate healing. Perhaps God had mercy so he could become a pastor because so many said he would never be one. God does things like that.

Whatever God's reason, it's been more than 40 years since that healing and we will never forget it. Ken Mattson's quiet prayer

If you're a woman and have been ordained for ministry, we'd like to hear from you. Please consider writing a 500-to-750-word article for submission to *Connections*. We'd like to know your experience as a pioneer in this exciting new world of women elders. Please send your article, photo and bio to Tammy Tkach at tammy.tkach@gci.org.

wasn't as colorful as television's Benny Hinn hitting people in the head, knocking them to the floor and exclaiming, "Arise and walk!" However, Zorro did rise and walk. Of course he does tend to drop to his knees and pray fervently each time he gets a twinge in his back.



Barbara and her daughter Sherisa recently took a trip back to the foothills of the Ozarks in Southeast Missouri to trace their roots. They spent their time visiting cemeteries and recording legendary family stories from relatives. Barbara says, "Most family trees are either a few branches short or need pruning, but I'm proud of my redneck roots. Only genealogists consider taking a step backwards in time as progress." You may contact her at bydahlgren@pacbell.net.

To the Editor:

I read the latest *Connections* magazine and I had to write and tell you that the articles in this issue are simply amazing. I was particularly moved by the article by Sue Berger, "Priceless."

Thank you for all the hard work and effort that you and the others involved put into publishing this magazine.

—Norma Thibault
Kelowna, Canada

Struggling With Grief

By Sheila Dela Peña

After what seemed to be forever, I finally picked up a sharp HB pencil, dusted it off and with trembling fingers, placed lead on paper. I managed to draw a few curves and lines but couldn't see what I was drawing. It didn't take the shape I wanted and no amount of erasures and retouches could capture the spirit or form of my subject. My vision began to blur as tears gathered in my eyes. I was trying to draw Beans, our beloved 6-year-old Labrador Retriever who passed away a little more than six months ago.



Our sweet, funny and loyal boy passed on after almost a month of suffering from kidney infection. My husband and I panicked and worried about him endlessly because we lived several miles from our trusted vet. We had relocated and had difficulty finding pet clinics and vets that were up to par. When Beans' kidneys failed, we took him to a recommended vet who did a bad job with his surgery and post-surgery care. We

I have wept in the night
For the shortness of sight
That to somebody's need
made me blind;
But I never have yet
Felt a tinge of regret
For being a little too kind.

—Unknown



will always regret that decision made in a panic. We didn't know where else to go.

After much prayer and tears, we put our baby Beans to sleep and buried him in a compassionate friend's backyard. We do not have soil or a garden where we reside. My husband stayed up with Beans the whole night, soothing and comforting him while I fell asleep crying.

Beans' death didn't bring on my depression. It's been years since I last sketched or drew anything. Drawing is what I've done all my life and the inability to get back to it because of depression has ridden me with guilt and anger for many years. I thought starting over with a picture of Beans would help me and be therapeutic. It wasn't. Or maybe it was.

I still couldn't draw, but crying my heart out again helped. I miss our baby Beans. Hubby and I find it difficult to talk about him without breaking down. But we need to talk about him. We need to look at his pictures—and are we thankful we took a lot of them! He was a willing subject. He was willing to do anything to please us.

This makes me wonder, am I willing to do anything to please my Lord? Can I trust Jesus to feed me, provide shelter and care for me while I lie at his feet like a child, or like a loyal pet does to us?

When things go wrong do I still trust that God is there and he loves me no matter what? Can I be assured of his comfort in times of grief? Jesus promised he would never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31: 7-9). And King David said, "My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life" (Psalm 119:49-51).

A good friend gave us our new pup Eloise, a Jack Russell Terrier, two months later. While she brings us much joy and is

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Struggling

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possibly the most affectionate kisser, the void Beans has left in our hearts refuses to be filled. Our other dog, little Peanut, a feisty min pin we've had for more than four years now, also continues to be my little one, but I will always miss our big boy.

The dark marks on our wall will remain untouched for a while because they were left behind by Beans. Perhaps my sketchbook will remain untouched as well for a few more months. I haven't recovered. I don't know when I will, but I'll give myself permission to grieve some more, and I won't set any deadlines. Meanwhile, I will lie in my Father's arms as I pray these words: "May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant" (Psalm 119:75-77).



Sheila says: "I felt moist and warm licks as tears ran down my cheeks. It was sweet Eloise!" You may email Sheila at sheila_delapena@yahoo.com and see her blog at <http://velvetconfections.multiply.com>.

For however devoted you are to God,
you may be sure that he is
immeasurably more devoted to you.

—Meister Eckhart



Why Do I Believe?

Why do I believe in the things I cannot see?
And meditate both day and night of how
things ought to be?

Is it not enough to see this great world as
one?

And not to wonder or to worry of how it all
began?

The majesty of God's handiwork, I can see in
every day,

And how that all things work in just a certain
way.

The seasons come at their proper time, and
with no help from me.

For there is a power behind it all, that no one
else can see.

So each day, I live my life, knowing it's not
up to me

To make birds sing, the flowers to bloom,
and to put the leaves upon trees.

That's why I believe the life I live, was given
me for a reason,

And I will reap whatever I've sown in God's
own time and season.

—Submitted by Charlotte Trout
Elkhart, Indiana, prayer ministry

A careless word may kindle strife;
A cruel word may wreck a life.
A bitter word may hate instill;
A brutal word may smite and kill.
A gracious word may smooth the way;
A joyous word may light the day.
A timely word may lessen stress;
A loving word may heal and bless.

—Unknown

Wilma's Poem

By Cathy Emerson

A few months back I wrote an article "Family Matters" in which I discussed the lives people have when they get older and face challenges of memory loss. My husband and I came across this poem among personal effects as we were moving our dear friend to a nursing facility.

Perhaps she had an inkling of what was coming, or else at the time it was simply rather humorous to her. To me, it speaks of dementia or an Alzheimer's patient's attempts to cope with life.

It's terribly sad to lose one's rational and logical frame of mind. Even linear thinking goes out the window or is lost to the fogs that blind us in our thinking. One day, we will no longer face this travesty. One more reason to pray for the return of our Creator!



We are so pleased that all our friend's belongings have been removed from storage. It was costing her money and we were hard put to find a home for an organ and a hospital bed. The former went to a young man who was starting a band and the bed to a homeless veteran who is now in an apartment. So too did her pots, dishes and cutlery. You may email Cathy at cee-wee@juno.com.

A Letter to a Friend

Just a line to say I'm living
That I'm not among the dead.
Yet I'm getting quite forgetful
And more mixed up in the head.

There are times I can't remember
Standing at the foot of the stair,
If I must go up for something
Or I've just come down from there.

With the refrigerator open
My poor mind is full of doubt,
Have I just put food away,
Or come to take some out.

There are times when it's still dark
And I stand beside my bed,
I can't be sure if I'm retiring,
Or getting up instead.

If it's my turn to write you
There is no need to get upset.
When you're my age these things happen,
It's so easy to forget.

With the mail-time fast approaching
I will try to make it clear
In this letter I am mailing
That I love you, precious dear.

Yet with the mailbox before me
As my face turns ruby red
I failed to mail your letter—
I just opened it instead!

—Author unknown

Being a Light...*has a lighter side!*

My wife cannot ride in a car without telling whoever is driving what to do, when to do it, etc. She is, bar none, the worst back seat driver in the world. I have long thought this, though she would deny it. She claimed she seldom, if ever made comments about my driving. I, of course, claimed the opposite. Now I have proof. The other day we were headed for the mall and my daughter piped up, "Daddy, before you married Mommy, who told you how to drive?"

A teacher was finishing up a lesson on the joys of discovery and the importance of curiosity. "Where would we be today," she asked, "if no one had ever been curious?"

One child quietly spoke up from the back of the room. "Still in the Garden of Eden?"

My broker called me this morning and said, "Remember that stock we bought and I said you'd be able to retire at age 65?"

"Yes, I remember," I said.

"Well," my broker continued, "your retirement age is now 108."

A man pacing back and forth glanced at his watch and yelled upstairs to his wife, "Honey, are you ready yet?"

Shouting back, the woman replies, "For crying out loud, Ed, I've been telling you for the last half hour—I'll be ready in a minute!"

—Cleanlaffs

Confidential Peer Listener Line

Shall we talk? We're here for you!

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