

MVLP Gather Round E-News - Issue #16

May 9, 2020

This is the sixteenth issue of our E-newsletter, "Gather 'Round," to call us together through the internet to share news and needs and stories with each other. If you have a tale to tell or a perspective to share, please send it on for the next issue!

The Buildings Are Closed; The Church Is Open!

Back issues of "Gather 'Round" E-news are available on the Moosup Valley Church website, thanks to our webmaster, Pat Safstrom.

Go to moosupvalley.church and click on the tab at the top of the page.

Mt. Vernon Streams Sunday Service

Worship Sunday, May 10, will be on the MVLP Facebook Live page, streaming from the Moosup Valley Church at 12:30 p.m. Pastor Bob will celebrate Moms and all those who help to take care of us and set us an example for how to live. The songs will be in the Public Domain, so there should be no interruption from Facebook this week. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/MVLPspirit/?ref=bookmrks>). The Order of Worship is attached.

I Remember Momma!

I was my mother's firstborn. Moms aren't supposed to have favorites, but I was her favorite. She loved me so much. I could always count on my mother to be my biggest fan. I miss you Mom. Happy Mother's day! *(Michelle)*

My mother was my best friend! She loved to garden. When my sister and I were little, she made all of our dresses, and her mother made our coats for Easter Sunday. She loved all of her children and her grandchildren. I miss her every day! *(Laila)*

My mom was an avid reader, writer, lover of British comedies. She started a book club and a bible study in Orleans where we lived for many years. She loved to swim, and we trekked to the beach almost every day in the summer. She loved antiques and had several antique shops on the Cape at different times. She was a liberal woman. She fought for civil rights and women's rights. We had a VW bus with "No Nuke" bumper stickers. She and my dad had dear friends who held the same values. I miss my mom dearly, and I will miss her especially this Mother's Day, as we always gathered at my mom's home to celebrate her! This will be my first Mother's Day without her here. *(Laurie)*

My mother was amazing. She was the one who cut the grass with the old-fashioned push mower, made repairs on the house, baked the most awesome Swedish coffee bread, and never swore, but when upset would say, “O shoot!” The house was always immaculate, and she’d be disgusted with me! She wouldn’t laugh like we do; it would be a “ach, ach, ach,” with a Swedish accent. We knew she loved us even though she didn’t express it with hugs and kisses. (*Martha*)

My mother was a hard worker, bringing up six children. She was a fabulous cook who was known for a chocolate cake she made without a recipe that no one could reproduce. She crocheted afghans for all of her children and grandchildren before she died. (*Phyllis*)

My mother was a hard-working, dedicated, unpretentious, goodhearted soul who was extremely dedicated to her family, her church (MVCCC) and her community. (*Sonja*)

I am lucky I still have my mom. She will be 92 on May 19th. She is and has been a very strong woman and very good natured. She was the glue that kept our family of four kids together when we were growing up, the one who brought laughter to our home, and made the best Irish stew. She is in a nursing home of her choosing, taking that decision out of her children’s hands. She is a wonder. (*Joan*)

A deeply broken woman from childhood abuse by her father, my mother suffered from many fears. But she was also a gorgeous woman with an exquisite sense of style. Also a deeply loving woman; Ginny was compassionate to friends and strangers. And always, always so loving towards and proud of me. "The sweetest kid I could ever have hoped for." (*Kim*)

Besides the faith in God that my mother shared with me through songs, scripture, prayer, and service to others, the thing I remember her saying is that she “was put on earth to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” (*Pastor Bob*)

One day I came home from school heavy-hearted because I was afraid I had failed an exam. I got as far as the yard where my mother was out raking leaves and burst into tears. She wrapped her arms around me and said, if I did fail the course, that I could go to summer school and make up the credit – *like she had done once!* Perhaps this is when I learned to trust, in the words of mystic Julian of Norwich, that “All shall be well. And all shall be well. And all manner of things shall be well.” (*Rev. Betsy*)

And Pat has had something hanging on her wall that her mother wrote for her birthday many years ago, “A Snippet for Pat,” sharing how pleased they were to have a girl as well as her six-year-old brother, Bill. She writes of your toddler years, “Your brother Bill would be at Boy Scout meetings, and Dad, you and I would go over to church to meet Bill. When we arrived, or I should say, when *you* arrived, the boys would literally scoop

you up and place you on the kitchen counter where you entertained them with smiles, laughter and clapping your hands.” She was so proud of you and felt blessed to have a daughter!

Sometimes the mothers do the remembering. Here is a poem that Priscilla’s mom wrote recently when her Independent Living Facility did a newsletter. They are quarantined in their rooms, so the facility was creating things for them to do. She turns 95 in September.

BEING 95
ALL THE THINGS I WANTED TO DO,
I’VE DONE.
I REMEMBERED THE DAY WHEN I WAS REALLY ALIVE,
THAT WAS WHEN I WAS 25.
I THINK 55 WAS SORT OF A BORE,
I GOT A LOT DONE BUT MOST WAS JUST A
CHORE.
65 WAS REALLY DIRE,
THEY TOLD ME I HAD TO RETIRE.
ALL THOSE OLDEN DAYS THEY TELL ME
I SHOULD RECALL.
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH,
I’VE HAD A BALL!

By Ellie, 94

Rev. Betsy Reflects: Remembering Mother Eagle

Our scriptures are full of metaphors for God, figures of speech to make a comparison between two things that aren’t alike but do have something in common. God is like, for example, a loving Father, but there are many other metaphors in our Bibles.

One of my favorites is that of God as Mother Eagle. The ancients, who spent more time studying the sky than we do, knew that it is the mother eagle who decides when it is time for flight practice and pushes the chicks out of the nest. The eaglets struggle to fly, and when it seems that they will surely be dashed on the rocks, mother eagle flies underneath them and lifts them up on her wings. My old King James Bible reads, “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, . . .” (*Deuteronomy 32:11-12a, KJV*). It is unfortunate that later translators changed “her” to “it” or even “his” to accommodate their own biases that God is *only* “Father.” You are familiar with this metaphor because we often sing, “And God will raise you up on eagles wings, bear you on the breath of dawn....”

Also in the Old Testament, Isaiah portrays God as a nursing mother when he writes, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you” (*49:15, NRSV*). God loves us

like a nursing mother – yet, even though a human mother may fail her children, Mother God will never forget her little ones. In Job, Yahweh (God) speaks out of the whirlwind, with a passage full of homey images that are reminiscent of raising a toddler:

Who shut in the sea with doors / when it leaped tumultuous out of the womb,
When I wrapped it in a robe of mist / and made black clouds its swaddling bands;
When I marked the bounds it was not to cross / and made it fast with a bolted gate?
Come thus far, I said, and no farther . . . *Job 38:8-11.*

Yes, and there are many other texts that portray God as a mother caring for difficult and disobedient children. In the New Testament, Shepherd Jesus seeks to protect his flock. Looking out over Jerusalem, both the gospels of Matthew (23:37) and Luke (13:34) report that Jesus lamented that his ministry was rejected:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those
that are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together
as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

We should not miss that Jesus longed to gather the city under his wings like a mother hen. I've heard the phrase, "Jesus our Brother;" might we, then, think of "Jesus our Mother," as did the Middle Ages' mystic Julian of Norwich? After all, Jesus chastises us for our unkind and life-killing behavior toward each other and invites us, like children, to cuddle in the safety of her wings.

And when hungry people were gathered on the hillside, Jesus divided bread and fish to feed the multitude. In John's gospel, Jesus calls himself the living bread, the bread of life, the bread from heaven (6:31-35) – even though we know that, in first century Palestine, it was the women who did the baking. And God not only bakes, but she sweeps. In chapter 15 of Luke's gospel, Jesus tells three lost-and-found stories: the lost sheep, the prodigal son, and sandwiched between them, the lost coin and the woman who sweeps her house until she finds it. The writer of Luke is careful to balance his metaphors to appeal to women who are listening – as well as to men.

For the Bible reader who has eyes to see and ears to hear, then, God is portrayed as both Father *and* Mother – a good message for a 21st century Mother's Day.

Window on Wildlife

Sonja brought my attention to the live camera feed of *Peregrine Falcon* hatchlings in a nest box located 26 floors above the city in Providence's "Superman Building," brought to you by Audubon Society. They have a brood of four chicks. One adult is currently keeping the babies warm while the other hunts and brings back a carcass to feed the family. If you google "peregrine falcon cam ri," you can watch the little ones moving around under Momma's wings. When she is just sitting on the young, you have to

watch closely to see any movement, but it gets interesting when feeding occurs. This is definitely worth watching!

Special Prayers: Please hold in your heart and prayers...

The Sroka family has survived COVID-19. Randy has been fever free for a week and is gaining strength. Jane's fever is down, but she's very weak. Ronnie's incredible care kept them out of the hospital and alive, even while ill himself. Jane describes this devastating disease as a "nightmare."

Rose's relatives, the Pierre family, who have lost four members to COVID-19, including her cousin's wife, a nurse practitioner and mother of three little ones.

Joanne is home and continues to improve and awaits the day when we can be back in church together again.

Claire's son, Jim, is much improved, with a normal temperature for two days now. He expects to move to the group home by the end of May. However, Claire's nephew in California is treating COVID-19 patients and so many have died, all ages!

Gather 'Round for Bible Study

Both Rev. Betsy and Pastor Bob are leading Bible Study. Here's how to participate:

Psalms: Tuesday & Friday mornings at 10:00 a.m. with Betsy, reading and discussing selected psalms and the Easter scriptures by Zoom. Contact BetsyAldrichGarland@gmail.com.

Gospel of John: Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. with Bob by telephone. (Send Bob your phone number, and he will call you.) Next week he continues in the Gospel of John 20-21.

The Day Will Surely Come...

In anticipating our being able to return to our churches (with fewer than 20 people and modifications), hopefully soon, we will need gloves, masks, sanitizer, and wipes. Pastor Bob has bought masks to supplement the ones you have made. If you have leads on other supplies, please let me or Pastor Bob know. We may never be back to "normal," but the day will surely come when we will be back in our pews.

A Prayer for Mothers

O Great Spirit, whose care reaches to the uttermost parts of the earth; we humbly beseech thee to behold and bless those whom we love, now absent from us, and defend them from all dangers of soul and body. *—Adapted from The Book of Common Prayer (Episcopal)*

Weekly Offerings may be mailed for:

Mt. Vernon to Ron Allen (116 Barbs Hill Road, Greene, RI 02827),

Moosup Valley to Pat Safstrom (76 Moosup Valley Road, Foster, RI 02825),

Rice City to Phyllis Dexter (53 Moosup Valley Road, Foster, RI 02825).

Reverend Betsy can be reached at BetsyAldrichGarland@gmail.com or 401-463-8697.

Pastor Bob can be reached at revbobh@gmail.com or 40

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