

FAITH SHARING

Seeing God in Everyday Life



Stories of Faith from
St. Mark's Anglican Church
St. John's, NL

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life at St. Mark's

Guest Edition

Introduction

Bishop Kevin Wright of Dunedin, New Zealand, writes, "I have an idea but, as I have learned, as long as it's just an idea I have nothing." This booklet has been just that - an idea - for a number of years. Now, thanks to the contributors at St. Mark's, it is no longer an idea, but a tangible reality.

Robert and I have been encouraging and promoting the writing of short faith stories about everyday life. We believe we all have stories that could be shared, yet realizing we all may not be in a place to do so publicly in writing. We hope this booklet will be an inspiration for future opportunities.

The stories presented in this booklet are offered to the honour and glory of God. They are personal, covering many topics and a variety of life circumstances. Some may draw a tear or two. Most will definitely encourage and inspire you. Please take these stories as a gift from St. Mark's and those who have offered them for this purpose.

Wayne and Robert+

How to Use This Booklet



The booklet is designed to be used as a reading devotional resource. We encourage you to read the stories, beginning with the assigned scripture for that story. Take time to digest the story and pray the prayer written to focus or offer thanks for the experience of God in the story. You may wish to spend some time in quiet and consider one or more of these questions:

1. How does this story speak to my life?
2. How is God at work in this story?
3. How can I be at work in God's story?

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 91.11-16

Bill's Angel

My brother Bill was born 37 years ago with Down's Syndrome and a congenital heart defect. During his early years he required repeated medical care and a lot of faith. He survived four open-heart surgeries before age eight. When Bill was 29 years old my mom died suddenly. Although Bill had been taking heart medication for a long time, for the most part he was healthy, attended school and after graduation, worked three days a week. A year after Mom died, Bill once again had some heart troubles. He developed a very fast heart rate that would not revert to normal, and this caused heart failure and labored breathing. Bill was admitted to the ICU in Grand Falls. Even with medication, Bill's heart would not switch to a normal rhythm. Dad slept in a chair beside him at night and my sisters and I took turns staying with him during the day so that Dad could get some sleep.

On the second day that I visited Bill he said to me, "Mom was here last night." Because my brother has a great sense of humor I said, "Bill, you're not going crazy on me are you? You do remember that Mom died?" Pointing he answered, "I know that Janice, but she was sitting right over there in that chair." "Did she talk to you?" I asked. "Yes," he said. "What did she say?" I questioned. "She said trust the doctors, Bill. You're going to be okay." My eyes filled with tears. "Did you feel better?" I asked. "Oh yes," he said. Later that day while my sisters and I were looking at store flyers with Bill, which is something that he likes to do, he coughed and with that his breathing became easier and his heart rate returned to normal. "See, I told you!" he said.

I feel my mother's presence around me sometimes and I am sure that she was with Bill that night. -Janice Dawe

Prayer: Gracious God, be near when we call and send us your love, comfort and healing in our times of need. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 46.1-7

Turning to God

My workload at the office varies a lot during the year. Sometimes really interesting and unique projects show up that I throw myself into and time passes quickly. Some projects can be monotonous and never seem to end, but most of the time I am blessed with a healthy workload. At one point in time a couple of years ago, the workload was getting the better of me. There were a bunch of loose ends that needed to be tidied up and I was making no headway. I wanted to bury my head in the sand and hoped it would all just go away which, of course, it would not. In fact, more projects were headed my way and if I did not deal with the current backlog, my situation was going to get worse. My stress level was building and affecting more than just my ability to get the current work done. I was carrying stress home to my family life and a vicious circle was feeding itself.

I needed guidance and turned to God for help. In a private moment when the stress was overwhelming me, I held my head in my hands, closed my eyes hard and asked God what to do. I saw boxes, like the mail boxes at the entrance to my office. If I broke the whole mess of work into manageable pieces and organized it, like letters in mail boxes, then I would find my way through. That was my answer from God - break it down and get organized! A sense of relief came over me and I opened my eyes to realize that, before this revelation, I had been staring at the floor which was finished in small rectangular tiles. The image of boxes I saw was actually the residual image of the grout lines in the floor. God is all around us, even in the floor on which we stand.

—Rick Hibbs

Prayer: Lord Jesus, in times of stress and anxiety help us to turn to you for help and guidance. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Colossians 3.15-17

Thank You for the Music

It began with a call from Reverend Tibbo after I had checked a few boxes on a general information sheet on my first visit to St. Mark's Church in 1985. He said that since I had expressed an interest in joining the choir, why not come along to practice on Tuesday? That started my 25-year membership in St. Mark's Senior Choir.

Singing, especially choral singing, has always been a passion of mine, ever since being part of my elementary school choir and junior choir at Holy Redeemer Church in Spaniard's Bay where I grew up. Music is one of the best treasures God has given us and contributing to the life of St. Mark's Church through this ministry has been a privilege.

Many times in the past few years, I've felt troubled, stressed and overwhelmed with the trials that have been thrown my way. Some Tuesdays, after an especially challenging day as a junior high school teacher, when I'm tired mentally and physically, the last thing I want to do is get ready after supper and go out. However, my husband, Terry, who knows me very well, encourages me to go to choir practice. He knows that once I'm there, singing and in the company of wonderful people, I will feel better. He's right. The beautiful music that Rosalind chooses and the camaraderie of the choir members lift me up and I'm inspired by God's presence. I am reminded of all I have to be thankful for.

I had checked several boxes on the information sheet that day. Choir was just one way I could contribute to St. Mark's. I'm glad I was asked to come along to choir practice. I continue to be inspired.

-Marlene Dale

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the gift of music and for the comfort and joy that it brings. May the melodies and harmonies remind us always of your presence in our lives and keep us inspired. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: 1 Corinthians 9.24-27

Companions on a Journey

For three or four years, I have loosely dubbed myself “a runner”. I love the feeling associated with running and the spike in endorphins. However, I find it challenging to muster the motivation to actually put my sneakers on and start the first gruelling ten minutes of a run...hence, the loosely dubbed title.

This year I chose to sign up for the Resolution Run on New Year's Eve which is a 5 km course. I had only been running on and off during the first school semester so my intention was to complete only one loop of the run rather than both loops. I had absolutely no intention of running the entire race because I was afraid of not being able to finish it – until I met Tammy. Halfway through the first loop, I met a girl who was struggling so I began chatting with her as we ran. She told me of her weight loss struggle and how she feared she could not finish the race. At that moment we made a pact. We would both run the entire route and cross the finish line together.

When I went home that night, I was thinking about the race and was reminded of something Rev. Cooke said one Saturday. We were talking about the idea of miracles and he suggested that God doesn't necessarily perform huge tasks accompanied by heavenly shafts of light descending from above. Perhaps He simply taps a person on the shoulder and nudges them in the direction of someone who needs a little inspiration. For me, I choose to believe that God subtly nudged Tammy and I together, thereby giving us each of us what we needed to finish the race. Now we run together all the time and challenge each other to do our very best.

-Gale Kelly

Prayer: Lord, thank you for sending others into our lives to challenge and journey with us. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Romans 11.33-36

Something to Remember Me By

One of the most emotional times of my life was the weekend that we spent cleaning out my mom's apartment after she had passed away. It had to be done but I found it very hard to let things go. I just wanted everything to stay the same. It was the little things that I treasured - the aprons, the china tea cups that she loved and the costume jewelry that she wore.

The following week I wandered into a bookstore. As I opened the door, my eyes were immediately drawn to a book called "Something to Remember Me By". As I read the book, with tears falling down my face, all I could think of was how this story resembled our daughters' relationship with their precious grandmother.

It told the story of little girl visiting her grandmother and every time she left, her grandmother would give her something to remember her by. As the little girl grew into a teenager and an adult, the grandmother grew older, moving from her home to an apartment and then to a nursing home.

Fortunately, there was no one else in the bookstore except the owner, who was a lovely lady. We shed a few tears together. I knew I had to buy three copies of this book – one for each of our three daughters.

I went home and packed up a parcel for our oldest daughter, Marlayne, who lived in Ottawa. The package included the book, one of Mom's special aprons and a piece of her jewelry.

Before I got it in the mail, I received a call from Marlayne. She sounded excited and a little emotional. She said "Mom, on my way home from work today, I dropped into a bookstore. You wouldn't believe the book I found. I read it there in the store with tears streaming down my face. People must have thought I was crazy. I wanted to buy three copies – one for me, and one for Melanie and Michelle. The book is called, "Something to Remember Me By".

I couldn't speak for a moment. The thought of both of us having the same experience at almost the same time was unbelievable. I don't think that was a coincidence. We both found something to help us move ahead with the treasured memories of our beloved Mom and Nan.

God works in mysterious ways.

-Kay Smith

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the gift of memory. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Luke 11.1-13

Ask and Believe

Many years ago I was a volunteer with a national organization. I did not realize that the organization was in trouble financially. It is not information that an organization likes to share. Over the years, as I worked on a number of different projects, the financial prospects became bleaker and bleaker. As a Newfoundlander I was often teased about my Newfoundland accent when I participated in these 'national' meetings. At that time my children were quite young and travelling to these meetings meant that I often had to stay up late before I left in order to look after family and work responsibilities. I frequently arrived tired before the meetings actually began.

One day when I arrived for a meeting I was asked to represent that organization and ask for financial help. The likelihood of my request being accepted was quite dismal. Earlier that day I had met with some of these same officials, and instead of offering me a cup of coffee I was brought to a staff cafeteria to purchase a beverage before that meeting started. I knew that no one wanted to make 'the ask' because if that person did not succeed (s)he would have to tell long-time staff that their employment had ended. The meeting was scheduled to take place in a very intimidating board room in an old historic building. I was terrified. I remember standing alone in the hallway and whispering a silent prayer before the meeting began. All of a sudden I experienced a great feeling of calm and a sense of presence. I knew then that, with God's help, I would know the right words to say. We received the funding that we needed. To this day I believe that if I had not asked for God's help there would have been a different ending.

-Kate Moffatt

Prayer: Lord, help us to put our trust in you, praying for our needs and the needs of others. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Jeremiah 29:11-14

God's Protection

In October 2010 I went to the John Cabot Building on Barbers Hill to attend a meeting and parked my car in the parking lot at the back of the building. Just before the start of the meeting someone came into the room, announced that an accident had occurred on the grounds and asked whether we knew anyone involved. We left the room and went to the nearest window where we could view the scene.

I saw a car hanging from the rails at the eastern boundary of the parking lot. I suddenly realised that my car was not in the spot where I had parked on arrival. I looked around for a few moments before I realised that the car hanging from the rails had hit mine, sending it to the opposite end of the parking lot where it was stopped by hitting another car.

The meeting was cancelled and I went down to the parking lot to assess the damage. By that time the police and emergency crews had arrived. Eventually, I learned that a young lady had lost control of her car, which flew from Barbers Hill into the parking lot. Though the damage to the cars was mitigated by the guard rail at the side of the lot, it was so severe that mine was a write-off.

I thank God that no one was in my car when the accident occurred and none of the occupants of the other car were physically harmed. The guard rail had caught the back tires of their car, reducing the force of the impact. -George Worley

Prayer: Our loving and gracious God, I thank you for your guidance and protection. Even when things don't go the way I planned, I know you are at work in my life. Fill me with your peace and joy as you direct my step. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 116.1- 7

A MOTHER'S FAITH

I work at the Janeway with physically disabled children. Most of the children are healthy and are learning to overcome their physical challenges. However, we also have patients who have deteriorating and life-threatening conditions and I have lost many patients over the years.

Several years ago I attended a wake for a teenage boy. I had seen him at the hospital only a few days earlier. His disease was progressing and he was having trouble breathing. He and his family were faced with a tough decision - invasive surgery could possibly prolong his life for a few more years. Without it he would rapidly deteriorate. Neither he nor his parents were sure they wanted the surgery. They were asked to make a decision over the weekend. On Monday morning I arrived at work to discover that he had passed away over the weekend.

At the wake his mother told me that, following his medical appointments, she had helped her son get ready for bed as usual. For weeks she had been sleeping on a mattress on the floor of her son's bedroom. He woke every hour to be repositioned for comfort and she wanted to be close by so she would hear him. She was so worried about the surgical decision to be made. As she got ready for bed, she prayed "Please God, help us make the right decision for our son. Please help us."

She told me that she awoke in the morning only to realize that her son had not called out to her and she had slept all night long. As she rose to check on him, she realized that he had passed away. "God made the decision for us" she told me. "He saw that our son had been through enough and he made the decision to call him home."

The peace and calmness in that mother's face was awesome. She had complete faith that God had made the right decision for her son and that she would one day be reunited with him. The funeral service was a joyous celebration of his life and their faith. -Cheryl Faseruk

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us when we are faced with tough decisions. Give us the strength to cope with life's challenges and the faith to recognize your presence when life is hard. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 145.4-6

Up on the Mountain

As the song goes:

“Life is easy when you're up on the mountain
And you've got peace of mind like you've never known.
But then things change and you're down in the valley.
Don't lose faith for you're never alone.

For the God on the mountain is still God in the valley.
When things go wrong, He'll make it right.
And the God of the good times
is still God in the bad times.
The God of the day is still God in the night.”

I had a true mountain experience this summer. My husband and I, along with some friends, climbed Gros Morne Mountain one day in July. It's a very challenging hike, as anyone who's ever done it will attest, and it's certainly not for the faint of heart or the novice hiker, which we all were. It was very tough. We didn't quite have enough food and water, so we were rationing almost from the get go.

We'd been struggling up the “scree side”, a very rocky and steep climb to the top of the mountain, which rises up 800 metres into the sky. Every few minutes we were stopping for a break. We were getting a little discouraged and it seemed like we'd never get to the top, yet it always seemed to be right over the next crest. Finally we got there!

What a breathtaking view! The mountains and valleys and ponds and rivers went on forever. As I stood there I could almost feel God's presence. I knew that he had made all this and that we were meant to go there and see it. It was beautiful. It was so worth the climb.
-Allison Billard

Prayer: Glory, honour, might and majesty be ascribed to you Lord, our Lord, for the wonders of your creations. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Proverbs 22.1-6

A Very Ordinary Story

I grew up in rural Newfoundland where going to church and Sunday school was an expectation. My parents made sure that I attended both. As I entered my teens where it is normal to criticize authority, I decided that I wasn't sure I believed in God, and when I told my parents that I was an agnostic they took it in stride. For a while I went to a number of churches of different denominations (always Christian) to see if they had answers...but that didn't help. I often thought that it would have been wonderful to continue to live in a small community where people never seemed to question and happily accepted the teachings of the church. Throughout this time I didn't leave the church but would attend periodically, always with questions and doubts.

Once I was married and had children we felt it was important that they should be introduced to a Christian tradition, and the Anglican Church was the church we both grew up in. We didn't feel like many of my friends who didn't take their children to church so that they could choose to go where they wished as they matured. How could they choose something that was completely foreign to them? As a result of taking the children to church I attended more regularly and the teachings started to make sense. I'm not sure at what point my major fears and objections subsided, but I feel at home now in the faith and try and take my Christian beliefs into the community. This doesn't mean that my faith is no longer tested, but I have accepted the fact that God exists and fall back on this acceptance when there is doubt. St. Mark's Church has been a wonderful spiritual home not only because of the wise leadership of the priests and deacons, but also because of the welcoming spirit displayed by parishioners. -Marilyn Beaton

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in the midst of doubt we know you are present guiding us in spirit and truth. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Hebrews 4.14-16

Condominium Fire – 25 Tiffany Lane

Our fire alarm went off at 11:30 p.m. on Friday evening, January 25, 2008, during a severe snowstorm. We evacuated our condo in pajamas and bathrobes through black smoke and intense heat to our fire station.

When the fire department arrived we were instructed to go outside the building and walk through snow drifts to nearby Highgate Condominium. We were met there by the Red Cross and Salvation Army who provided hot drinks, blankets and food. Later, at 3 a.m., we were bused to Hillview Terrace Apartments and were visited again by the Red Cross bringing breakfast and toiletry supplies. Mid-afternoon they drove me to my condominium to get clothes and pick up my car, as we were still in our nightclothes.

Our hallways were extensively damaged and our condominium received heavy smoke damage. We were saddened to learn that our president had lost her life as the result of the fire.

We left Hillview Terrace Apartments on Monday when our daughter and family arrived home, and we stayed with them for three months until the repairs and painting were completed.

Experiencing the trauma from the fire changed our lives. Material things are not as meaningful to us and we can do with far less than we have. Less is better. We have always supported the Red Cross and Salvation Army, but now we see a greater need to increase our givings in thanksgiving for the kindness shown to us during the fire. Support and love shown by family, friends and our church family will never be forgotten. We continue to pray and ask God to bless them on their journey. -Stella Evans

Prayer: Lord, we know that difficulties in our lives give us the opportunity to experience your faithfulness. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Hebrews 1.14

The Butterfly Brooch

I often sat in my chair, in the twilight, while watching my mother rocking ever so gently in hers. She sometimes drifted off in a quick “nap” while watching her two favourite shows - Let’s Sing Again with Louise Rose and Songs of Praise. She was a very patient woman who cared deeply for her family and those around her, saying nothing to hurt anyone.

My mother always dressed for the day before coming downstairs. Such was the custom she had grown used to and every day, religiously, she pinned the top of her dress together with a little brooch in the shape of a multi-colored butterfly. It wasn’t expensive, but obviously my mother had grown quite fond of it.

When she passed away in 1997, at the age of 89, after having lived a wonderful life, we were gathering her things together for the funeral director and his staff. I had chosen another brooch to be worn in her dress, which I had given them. When discussing this with a good friend of mine he said “Bob, I really feel the butterfly brooch is the one your mother should be wearing because she loved it so much.” Not wanting to trouble the funeral director I decided to let things remain as they were, even though I was feeling terrible for what I had done and for not having seen the pleasure she got from wearing it.

Arriving at the funeral home the next day for the first family visitation, I was called to one side by the funeral director who said “Bob, the clasp on the brooch you gave us for your mother’s dress is broken. Do you have another one?” I was quick to reply - “Yes, I have the perfect one.” So I rushed home and came back with the beautiful multi-colored butterfly brooch to be worn in my mother’s dress. I was now at peace with myself. Coincidence or God-incidence? I believe we all have a guardian angel. My mother is mine.

-Bob Gill

Prayer: Almighty God, help us to see your hand in all the details of our lives. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading Luke 12.22-31

Put God First

When we were planning to come to Canada about eleven years ago, George and I agreed that we would join the congregation at the Anglican Church closest to our home.

I arrived in St. John's with our children in 2000 and was taken to an apartment at Hillview Terrace, where we lived for the first few months. I inquired about the Anglican Church in our neighbourhood and a gentleman from Sudan, who had also been resettled in St. John's, invited us to the service at St. Mark's.

We came to the 10:30 a.m. service on our first Sunday in St. John's. After the service we were approached by a very nice lady who chatted with us and asked where we lived. She was a nurse and we had similar interests. In the evening, she brought some food to our home and we had a long chat, during which she explained the licensing and registration procedure for nurses. Subsequently, she and her husband were very helpful in providing me with books and materials needed to prepare for my nursing exams. They also directed me to rent an apartment from the City of St. John's, where we lived until George joined us in 2002. On moving into the apartment, they assisted in obtaining a washer and dryer that were donated by another couple from St. Mark's. They were instrumental in securing financing and insurance for my first car, as I did not have any credit or insurance history in Canada. The list goes on and on.

I believe that when we put God first, he provides us with his guidance and favour, making things so much easier for us. We give God the glory for guiding us to the right place at the right time, and providing more than we were expecting.

-Ernestine Worley

Prayer: Father God, I dedicate my life to you. I choose to put you first in everything that I do. Give me wisdom to make wise choices and teach me to listen to your voice always. I bless and honor you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Proverbs 3:5-6

Learning to Trust

Twenty-three years ago my husband told me he was leaving. I was devastated. My self-esteem, which had steadily eroded during eleven years of marriage, was now completely destroyed. I had prayed that God would somehow fix my marriage. This wasn't the answer I'd expected! However, I believed in a merciful God and he provided me with the support of a loving family and caring friends. One day, a teacher colleague gave me a card. Printed on it were the words of Proverbs 3:5-6. I memorized those words and repeated them every day. Step by painful step I was led through the process that dissolves a marriage legally, emotionally and spiritually. I was given the strength to face the challenges of a single parent and the grace to maintain a civil relationship with my son's father.

Six years later, I stood with a policeman in a hospital room to identify my ex-husband who had died in a motorcycle accident. I wept genuine tears of regret because his life, so filled with talent and potential, was now lost. God's grace had healed my heart and I was truly able to grieve for him.

God has promised to never leave us or forsake us. God doesn't lie. I have found my trust in God's faithfulness and love increasing over the years, though at times I can't easily understand where I'm being led. As I learn to let go of my concerns I find joy, inner peace and hope. I realize that I am God's beloved and I am precious to him! Just think! If I, as a loving parent, take delight in my son's trust in me, how much more does God, who is love, take delight when I trust in him!

-Rosalind Bartlett

Prayer: I will trust that you are with me, God. I believe that you will guide me. I place my confidence in you even when my faith is wobbly and unsure. Amen. – Joyce Rupp

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Revelation 7.9-13

Worshiping in Other Cultures

My faith journey is just that, a trip to different places. It can be stimulating to go to church in different cultures as well. In 1997-98 we lived in Brisbane, in Queensland, Australia, and were members of a small Anglican parish there. The service was much the same and we met some lovely people in our attachment to this community. Later in our travels I attended a service one morning in Timaru, along the coast from Christchurch on the South Island of New Zealand. The music was wonderful, with a visiting choir from Singapore that service, and the welcome they provided us was indeed terrific. Later, in Apia, (Western) Samoa, in the South Pacific, we were invited to attend the local Anglican service by friends, ex-pat Australians who lived there. Aside from nearly perishing in the intense heat of the morning sun, the participation of the children, in their crisp bright outfits, we have always fondly remembered. Words to the hymns, printed in Samoan dialect, were projected on an overhead screen while we accompanied the congregation from a hymn book printed in English.

Another service that was special, and in the Anglican tradition, was one we attended in a suburb of Tokyo, Japan. Yes, the service was in Japanese and before it began, the rector, or whoever he was, came over to us and *apologized* that the service would be in Japanese! It did make some sense though, and we followed with some of the cadence clearly in the prayers.

Outside the Anglican tradition, another service that rests at the top of the list was a church gathering we visited in a township bordering Cape Town, South Africa. I was reluctant to go or even to be in such a place, but Marilyn persuaded me and I am so grateful we did. The excitement of participation by the congregation was huge and it proved to be one of the most uplifting moments in my life. Simply stated, WOW! There were several other nationalities there, who were asked to identify themselves by the enthusiastic pastor and so we jumped out of our chairs with much vigour. It was truly a special moment. The choral musicality of the South Africans will be a memory forever.

We are fortunate indeed in the worldwide Anglican Communion that we have these touchstones that might, with luck and opportunity, come into our lives from time to time.

-Richard Beaton

Prayer: Lord, you teach us that we are indeed able to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. Amen.

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Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Readings: Ephesians 4.1-6

My Christian Journey

I grew up in the small community of Lornville, NB. We had a young minister. I attended church and then stayed after church for Sunday School, held in the back pews in the church.

I joined the R.C.M.P. at the age of 18 and travelled by train to BC to begin my training. I started going to church there and joined the Sunday evening youth group. A few months later when I was moving to Ottawa for further training, my last Sunday I was pleased when the youth group surprised me with a large cake in my honor.

From Ottawa, I transferred to St. John's and lived in barracks on Kennas Hill. My roommate and I attended Cochrane Street Church. I met Stella in 1956 and we were married on August 29, 1959, at St. Mary the Virgin stone church on the Southside Road by the late Canon R. R. Babb.

We moved several times in our careers and became involved in our church and community shortly after settling in our home. For us, it made life more simple and enjoyable as a young family.

-Murray Evans

Prayer: Gracious God, when we journey with you through our lives you are faithful in our lives. Help us to remain connected to your family, wherever our journey takes us. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Matthew 6:25-35

When God Speaks

In the summer of 2000, I found myself a single parent with two small children. I knew that to provide a good life for them, I needed to finish my education. I was very close. I'd been working on a Bachelor's Degree from Memorial, through distance education. I needed five more courses to graduate. Hopeful that I would finish in the Fall 2000 term, I attempted to register. To my dismay, none of the courses I needed were being offered. In fact, they hadn't even been developed for distance education yet. I didn't know what to do.

At my mother's home in Pickering, Ontario, while changing my six-month-old son's diaper, I kept thinking, "What am I going to do?" I wasn't praying exactly, but God answered me anyway. A clear, distinct voice inside my head said "Go to St. John's." It was so strong I looked around expecting to find someone there, but I knew I hadn't heard the voice with my ears. I shrugged it off thinking "That was stupid - how could I go to St. John's? I've never been there. I don't know anyone there. I have nowhere to stay with two small kids. I'd have to be crazy." A minute later the same words entered my head, even louder and clearer than before - "Go to St. John's." I said out loud "I can't do that by myself, I just can't!" I suddenly thought, I'll run this idea past Mom, and she'll convince me not to go. Certain that she would try talk me out of it, I was completely stunned when she smiled and said "I think that's a wonderful idea." My mouth dropped open and I tried to tell her why it was such a bad idea, but she just said, "Don't worry, you'll find your way." Reluctantly, with \$200 to my name, and only faith to guide me, I started on the journey.

Since the day I arrived in St. John's everything has fallen into place, better than I could have ever imagined. I don't know why He wants me here, but until He tells me differently I wouldn't dare go anywhere else.

-Ruth Leake

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you always know what is best for us. Help us to listen, to trust and to remember that your plan is always the right one, and give us the strength and the courage to carry it out. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Matthew 5.1-11

Grief, Faith and Limitless Comfort

I grew up in a typical Newfoundland community, had regularly attended church, said grace at meals, said prayers every night and trusted in God along the way. As a teen, I discovered there were “cool” things to be learned, not just parables and psalms but life-lessons and values from Jesus’ word and other teachings. Several great ministers, as well as my family, had left an imprint of faith on me as I grew into adulthood.

My faith as an entity changed slightly over time, especially when my wife was diagnosed with terminal cancer. At times I had questioned certain aspects of my faith, to a degree, however I stood fast with God knowing that never-ending love, compassion and comfort were ours regardless of life’s independent journey for each of us. Before my wife passed away, at one of my darker moments of confusion, pain and pre-grief, I made arrangements with family to look after my wife and daughter for an hour and I went for a well-needed walk alone as I had done a few times before. Walking with head down thinking about our upcoming days, I finally reached the ocean. Standing there I felt a totally overpowering sense of weakness and utter helplessness. All I knew to do was to put my arms out and ask God openly to please give me the tools, resources and strength to get us through the coming weeks. I cried and walked along, and stared out to sea for what to me seemed to be only an instant in time. The fear of the unknown instantly subsided and I felt a warm, deeply comforting feeling inside. I can only guess I had what people call an epiphany. I immediately knew 100% deep in my soul that God had already given me everything I needed to support myself, my family and others, but that I needed to use my own strength and faith to keep going and allow God’s precious gifts to be used correctly. It may seem clichéd, but for me, that day and other days since have established solidly what the traditional idea of faith and teachings I carried had really meant for so many years. God is with us during those very difficult moments, but during the good times too.

-Jonathan Bishop

Prayer: Lord, your promise is to never leave us or forsake us, but to be with us in all the circumstances of our lives. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Luke 6.37,38

And I Know That There are Angels All Around...

In memory of my dear grandmother – Emily Jane Gill

My grandmother was a very kind and loving woman, wife to my grandfather, James, and mother to seven sons and one daughter. She lived a very simple life taking care of her children and husband on Pinchaid's Island, Bonavista Bay. An excellent cook, I remember her saltwater ducks and gravy. She was an avid reader and especially enjoyed books by Grace Livingstone Hill. She served many meals and cups of tea to friends and visitors.

At the beginning of Lent every year she would give up butter and sugar, and at the end of Lent - for Easter Sunday - she would pack a box, including butter and sugar, and bring it to a needy family.

All my adult life I've tried to follow my grandmother's example (not exactly giving up butter and sugar during Lent) in my daily living. Always with me are my grandmother's words - give and you will have something to give. Thank you, Nana, for enriching my life.

-Helen (Gill) Rogers

Prayer: Lord, thank you for grandparents who gave us models for godly living. May their examples of compassion, kindness, humility and gentleness be remembered by us and practiced to your honour and glory. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Lamentations 3:22-23

Our Faith

A number of years ago my brother, Peter, and a few of his friends used to go diving for a couple of hours most weekends. They wore wet or dry suits depending on the temperature of the water and used oxygen tanks. This particular morning they went to Portugal Cove and usually they returned around lunch time. At approximately 2:30 p.m. our Minister arrived at our home with the news that there had been a diving accident - Peter could not be located and was presumed drowned. They continued the search for a few weeks but he was never found, and we never knew what had actually happened to him. We were blessed to be surrounded by family and friends, and we received visits and letters full of hope and prayers, even from people we didn't know.

The following year in December as I was heading home from work I was struck by a car driven by an impaired driver. I was in a coma for a month, and at one point the doctors informed my parents they did not expect me to survive the accident. It was devastating news to my parents to face the possibility of losing both their son and daughter, both at age 19, and within a year of each other. Again my parents were blessed with people, prayers, love and companionship. I firmly believe that I did survive due to faith and the power of prayer, and it has played an important part in my life.

I asked Mom how they both found the strength in both cases, to go on each day waiting for news. She said "our faith". I have never forgotten those two words. I believe there is a reason for whatever happens in our lives, and sometimes we don't understand the reason, but God is always there and will guide us through if we listen and pray for His guidance.

God never gives us more than we can carry. -Gail Lidstone

Prayer: Holy and gracious God, help us to put our trust in you because you are faithful. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Matthew 5.7-8

Ask! Even the Simplest Need God Will Provide

I was skeptical of peoples' frantic prayers for the traffic lights to change, for the bank to still be open, or 'please let there be a free parking spot!' I assumed that the good Lord had many more serious requests than those!!

I was a proud, stay at home mother of four! I would gladly give to any neighbour who came to my door to borrow bread, eggs, milk or a cup of sugar. I could not bring myself to do the same! I always made sure I had the basic needs in my pantry.

We had just settled into our first home in Winnipeg, across town from distant relatives. It was our first holiday weekend in Canada, and we had invited six of our relatives to their first dinner in our new home. I started to clean the house from top to bottom, through the bedrooms, bathroom and - Oh my goodness, how the mighty had fallen - I could not find toilet paper anywhere!!!

Whatever was I going to do? No stores were open (we were not yet aware of the 7/11)! I would have to swallow my pride and go next door. This was a holiday weekend and all our neighbours were at their cabins. Dear Lord, where am I going to get toilet paper?? I use cloth napkins and wipes - no tissues - visions of newspaper squares tied on a string!! 30 minutes to go! Meal all prepared, table set, lounge pristine, family room unrecognizable, all toys neatly stacked.

10 minutes to go! Hallway cleared and porch entrance scrubbed. No grit or shoes or extra coats around. Front steps and door mat brushed to welcome our guests!

Habit made me peep into the letter box and I could not believe my eyes. There was a sample toilet roll! Never before and never since have I received a free toilet roll in my mailbox. -Doreen Hood

Prayer: Lord Jesus, your goodness and graciousness abound as we learn to lift our petitions to you. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 8.4-6

The Angel Tree

On July 29, 2001, we were at our cabin when we heard there was a fire at our house in St. John's. With a feeling of dread, we hurried home to find the devastation that a fire can cause. Fortunately, no one was hurt and most of what we lost could be replaced. Some of the most difficult things to lose, though, were our Christmas decorations - all the special memories of our family's school years and even some special ornaments from our own childhood.

We were very thankful that our neighbour was alerted to the fire by her cat early in the morning. After checking, she saw smoke coming from our bedroom window and called the fire department. Later that week as we chatted to our neighbour, I commented that we must have had an angel watching over us because things might have been much worse. She paused and said, "Well, yes you did. My cat's name is Angel."

It was at that moment I began to feel a sense of peace and to feel that everything would be fine. I immediately thought of how we might have angels on our Christmas tree this year.

When we moved back into our home 4 ½ months later, it was almost Christmas. Friends, neighbours and family near and far had heard the cat story and sent us angels. When we decorated our tree, we had 95 very special angels. We numbered each angel and wrote down who gave it to us. What an incredibly special tree we now had!!

It is amazing how God works in our lives! Sending us something to help us be positive in a difficult time helped us through. This episode in our lives served to show us as well how very generous and kind people can be. Every year when we put up our tree, each angel is gently hung and we think of each and every person who gave them to us.

-Kay & Kevin Smith

Prayer: Lord, you make your presence known to us in many ways, especially in times of trial. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: 2 Corinthians 12.9

God of the Colours

It was a late November day. I was making a special visit to a patient who was dying. I had met her about six weeks earlier, when she received her diagnosis and prognosis. She had not been a regular church attendee and felt, at best, only nominally connected to my parish.

I gave her complete freedom to receive my visit or for me to leave. She accepted the visit. I made an offer to walk with her through what lay ahead. She accepted my invitation. In the coming weeks we talked about many things secular and spiritual. I met her as a stranger and now she was dying as a friend.

On this late fall afternoon we both knew our time together was growing to a close. It was as if time collapsed and we both felt that we were in the 'now-ness' of the presence of God. In the silence and stillness of those moments we looked out from the fourth-story hospital window struck by the sea of orange and yellow fall colours moving our field of vision to the waterfront and the magnificent Lake Nipissing. The late afternoon sun was dancing across the canopy of autumn leaves. We felt the presence of absolute serenity. She turned to me and spoke ever so softly saying, "I am ready, this is my time, God is here." She died the following morning. I am forever grateful for the privilege of being allowed to enter peoples' lives at such times as these, knowing that it is not I, but the Lord, who gives me the strength, wisdom and compassion to minister. -G. Wayne Short

Prayer: Gracious God, you enter our lives at the slightest invitation, often through others. May we be open to know you more dearly even in the times of trial. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 98

Spirit in Song

There's nothing quite as uplifting as feeling moved by the Spirit, and one way in which I feel His presence within me is through music. Like most people, my primary exposure to hymns is on Sunday morning, and I tend to leave the service with the recessional or the day's anthem stuck in my head for the rest of the afternoon, often well into the evening.

I'm also blessed with being a part of St. Mark's choir. As such I get to enjoy yet another day each week with songs of praise repeating in my head - the day after practice I tend to catch myself humming the anthems we've practiced the night before, and the hymns for the coming week. While I pray to the Lord every day, it's during the times when I hear these songs of praise that I truly feel embraced by the Holy Spirit, and a part of something so beautiful and loving. One of my favorite parts of choir practice is when we've just finished practicing the bass section of an anthem and I can sit back for a moment and enjoy hearing each of the other sections rehearse the same lines. Each on their own sounds so lovely and it can be such a peaceful moment where I can reflect on the words being sung, expressed in varying notes of thankful praise. Then when all the sections come together, it's such an uplifting rush where I can truly feel the Spirit in the room with us, come to hear our worship in song. The time following our sung praises is when I feel particularly attuned to God's voice. It's as if the praises sung quiet the noise of the world around us, and bring us closer to Him, that we might hear what He has planned for us, His people.

Whenever I feel unworthy to sing his praises, that others have been more blessed with lovely voices, I remember that the important thing is that his praises be heard. All words of praise are pleasing to the Lord and we should never be shy to share them with everyone. Maybe, just maybe, we can help others hear God speaking to us, when we've drowned out the noises of the everyday world.

-Robert Billard

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the gifts of music and voice in which to praise you and feel the wind of your spirit filling us for worship and for service.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Matthew 18.20

God in Our Midst

I have had the privilege of being part of a Christian sharing group for approximately 17 years. Others in the group have been sharing longer. This group began as a result of a Cursillo weekend, which is a short course in Christian living. Our group consists of four treasured friends and myself. One happens to be my husband. We meet weekly in the comfort of our homes for one hour of focused sharing. The sharing time opens and closes with prayer. Everybody in our group is respectful of each other and we have equal opportunity to share. The purpose is threefold: to reflect on our week and to share particular circumstances when we felt God's presence in our lives; to share a reflection on our study of God in our life and to share our plan for action for the coming week; to share something we plan to do to be the hands and feet of Jesus so that we positively impact others.

I enjoy our sharing immensely and I know this "time out" from the busyness of life is something I need for my Christian journey. These sharing times are a constant reminder of the weaving that God does in our lives. As is a reflection of our humanity, some weeks we share our struggles, some weeks we share our joys and most weeks we share whatever is in our hearts and in our minds. One thing is for sure - when we journey in this hour God is in our midst leading us, and we each provide support along the way.

I thank God for the blessing of my sharing group and the gifts that each member brings.

—Penny Winter

Prayer: Lord, help us to share our faith with others, to learn from them and enjoy the care and support of others on our faith journey. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Matthew 17.1-9

Thin Places

A few years ago when reading “The Heart of Christianity” by Marcus Borg, I encountered for the first time a discussion of “thin places”. In his words, these places are “anywhere our hearts are opened” and “a means whereby the sacred becomes present to us”. He goes on to say that churches can be, but are not exclusively, thin places.

This, then, explained to me the reaction I experienced many years ago at Coventry Cathedral. My visit came at the end of several weeks of a European tour which included many of the well-known churches and large cathedrals in several countries. These were wonderful and inspiring for their architecture and historical significance, of course, but perhaps seemed too busy, too commercial, too much part of “things one must see” to inspire an emotional response. In any event, not until a spur of the moment decision to visit Coventry at the end of the trip did I experience what I now know was a “thin place”.

This cathedral had a long history, like so many others, but was largely destroyed along with much of Coventry in a bombing blitz during November 1940. What I saw was the resurrected building, not yet twenty years old, set among the bombed ruins of the old. At the time of my visit I was only aware of some of the details of the history, the bombing and the reconstruction. What I did experience was a powerful emotional reaction - to the juxtaposition of the destroyed and the rebuilt, to the quite different images of the stained glass and to an overwhelming sense of a great presence. In fact, the effect was so great that I sat in a pew and wept, but why I could not say. Now I can understand what feelings or faith inspired the congregation to make the decision, the morning after the blitz, to rebuild.

I have had similar sensations in later years in very different settings, including the Moravian church in Goose Bay, but none has been so powerful as the one in Coventry Cathedral. In that experience I do believe that the “sacred became present” to me.

-Lois Jeffery

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to find those places in our lives where you break in, where we feel your presence so powerfully. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 127:3

God's Gift

This may sound clichéd but I will never forget the day my first daughter, Victoria, was born. To put it in perspective, I was young - only 21. Lorie and I were still sorting out what we wanted to do with our lives. Needless to say there was a lot of uncertainty and anxiety.

That day had been overcast and foggy, which is nothing unusual for Central Newfoundland in June. Other family members were at the hospital awaiting the arrival. There was nothing unusual about the birth and before I knew what hit me - boom, I was a dad. There were tears, laughter, hugs and handshakes.

After my daughter was cleaned up and passed to her mommy, it was my turn to hold Victoria. As I held my daughter for the first time I walked to the window as if to give her a view of the wonderful world she was now part of. As I did, the clouds parted, the fog lifted and the room was bathed in sunlight. In that moment I said a prayer, making a promise to do all in my power to love and care for this child. I felt the weight of her in my arms and the weight of the responsibility and gift in my heart.

I didn't just receive the gift of a child that day, though that would have been gift enough for me. No God blesses more abundantly than that, even more than we could ask or imagine. On that day I also received a purpose, something to live for. This tiny gift in my arms helped me see beyond myself to something much greater. It was at this moment that the faint sense of vocational calling that I had felt for some time came sharply into focus. Shortly afterwards, I entered theological school. God gives good gifts, and I am reminded of that every time I look at my children. -Rev. Robert Cooke

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gifts you give. Always let me be receptive to and thankful for your giving. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Hebrews 11.1-2

Faith Created a Family of Three

When we first attended a church service at St. Mark's, we came on a baptism Sunday and were introduced to "God's Circle of Love". From that single occasion we knew St. Mark's was the place we wanted to start our life as a married couple.

In June of 2006 we shared the sacrament of marriage here. We loved each other and we wanted to share that love with children. Getting married later in life, we were aware that having our own children might be challenging. Still we hoped and prayed.

We discovered that trying to have children naturally was stressful. There were many ups and downs – short-lived celebrations and longer, harder disappointments. We turned our hope to the prospect of international adoption. Adoption is not for the faint of heart. Your adoption journey becomes your hobby. It is a discovery of culture, learning about each other and a test of faith in systems and communities that you cannot control.

We were faced with daunting paperwork, assessment and errant communications. Through this arduous process we had to maintain our faith that a child would find its way to our home. We had to believe that a child who needed us as much as we needed him or her was out there waiting.

Almost two years after applying to adopt, we celebrated after receiving the required provincial approval. Our faith was tested again when, three days later, we learned that our adoption agency in Ontario had declared bankruptcy. It took strength to start again - but with support of our family, our friends and many other people who had heard of our struggles - we stayed determined, and we prayed.

This year we will celebrate our 5th wedding anniversary and recently we proudly celebrated the Baptism of our baby daughter, Selina Piujuq, born on October 14, 2010, in Nunavut Territory. Through friends of friends we learned of this baby and her need to find a "forever family". We are blessed to share our love with this little girl and our family has now extended to very special people in Canada's North.

Together with our daughter Selina, we are now a family of three in God's Circle of Love.

-Judy and Fraser Davidson

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the gift and heritage of children. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Philippians 4:4-9

God's Provision in Poverty

When we first moved to St. John's in mid-August we were having trouble making ends meet. Money that we had been anticipating was delayed and we could only afford the necessities. I prayed all the time that we'd be able to make it through 'til November when we'd have an income again.

In September, my two-year-old's foot pushed out the toe of her footie pyjamas. I knew she was getting desperate for clothes – especially pyjamas that fit - but I had been delaying. I decided that I could afford to buy her an outfit or two at the Thrift Store, but even that small amount was a stretch. As I was packing the two of us up to go - I had my shoes on and was putting hers on - when there was a knock at the door.

The caretaker of our apartment building was there. He mentioned that he had a bunch of clothes that his daughter (a little older than our daughter) had outgrown, and he thought that instead of taking them to Salvation Army, he would offer them to us first. Not only was it boxes of clothes that fit and were too big for her (enough to last her the next year!), there were also shoes, winter boots, an adorable monkey costume for Halloween and several pairs of pyjamas. Then, he brought two amazing ride-on toys for her as well.

I collapsed to the floor when he left, laughing and crying as I pulled more and more clothes out of boxes and bags. My daughter touched my tears and said “Mama sad?” I said “No, sweetie, Mama is happy. Sometimes tears can be happy too.” God had provided. I really feel that it was an answer to prayer that those clothes and toys arrived with perfect timing. He barely knew us and had no way of knowing how desperate we were, and especially no way of knowing that I was on my way out the door. God truly listened and blessed us. -Jan Moffett

Prayer: Lord, help us to reach out to you in times of need believing that you are able to meet our needs. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Galatians 5.22-25

A Father's Inspiration

My father was a humble man, a modest man and an inspiration to all who knew him. He instilled in his children many characteristics that advanced harmony, love and compassion among all peoples. To this very day I have some vivid memories of his way of treating people which echoed encouragement, gentleness and respect.

How often he would sit by the old stove in the corner and devour stories like "Old Yeller" in the Family Herald. He appeared to be reading with a know-how that amazed me. Later he and I met "Bunga of the Jungle" in my geography book and his eyes would gleam as I read to him about places and people far away. He took his turn saying family prayers every night and made them come alive with his dramatic way of doing so.

As I grew into a young man, my father grew into an older one. Because of him, I increased my quest for knowledge and developed a keen desire for learning. When he received his first Old Age Security Pension cheque he asked me if I would get it changed for him. I agreed that I would and when I took it from his failing hand I reminded him that he didn't have it signed. His reply broke my heart and it was then that I saw how vulnerable he was, and yet how strong at the same time. "My son," he said, "I can't read or write" and I almost cried...almost.

If a picture is worth a thousand words then my invitation to you is to picture this: a Convocation exercise from Memorial University, a young man with cap and gown in hand and a supportive family in the audience. As I took my alphabetical turn to convocate, I looked to where my parents were sitting. It was then that I saw my father proudly sitting there, with a bandaged face because cancer had attacked it. He was holding the program and trying to find the name of his son. My mind went back to Old Yeller, Bunga and the cheque signing and then I cried, just as I'm doing as I write this. Yes, my father was an inspiration and I just hope that I instilled in my students some of those qualities as I retired from 30 years of teaching. My father fooled us into thinking he could read and, in doing so, motivated us to utilize the talents and opportunities that God has provided for us. -Cal Smith

Prayer: We are all called to advance your kingdom here on earth. Every occupation is a gift from you and we give you thanks for the people who inspire and enrich the lives of others. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 86.1-7

Breath Prayers

I am the youngest of three girls - and I am very close to my “big sisters”. In 1997 my brother-in-law Bill, married to our middle sister Dorothy, was diagnosed with leukemia. Bill was an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces and stationed at Gagetown, New Brunswick at the time. He was fit and healthy and only 45, so it was very hard to see him knocked off his feet by this sudden, unsuspected disease.

For two years he endured chemotherapy, a bone marrow transplant and numerous critical illnesses. Every time he or Dorothy would pop into my mind - many times every day - I would stop and say a quick prayer, “Please God, help Bill with his recovery.” My mother calls these “breath prayers” - little pauses in our busy lives when we stop to communicate with God.

Two years after his initial diagnosis Bill became critically ill again and was hospitalized. I continued my frequent “breath prayers”, asking for God’s intervention. One afternoon as I worked around the house, I was suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of terrible sadness. Bill and Dorothy popped into my head and I started to repeat my prayer, but found that spontaneously my prayer had changed. I found myself praying “Dear God, if Bill can’t recover, please end his pain and take him home. Please give Dorothy the strength she needs to face the coming days.” I didn’t know where the words had come from, but with that prayer, a feeling of calmness came over me.

An hour later, Dorothy called to say that Bill had passed away - almost at the minute of my prayer-changing experience.

I know God was surrounding us that afternoon. -Cheryl Faseruk

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to quiet our hearts and minds so that we may hear you speak to us. Surround us with your love and give us the faith to feel your presence. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Mark 10.13-16

And a Little Child Shall Lead Them

Following the passing of my dear husband, my mom and dad and beloved sister, I found that attending services in my church filled me with sadness, and I just could not go there.

I moved to the east end of town and St. Mark's Church was just around the corner.

By this time a dear little grandson had come into my life. His mom had to work every Sunday, so he had to miss going to church as he so loved to do.

One Saturday night he called me on the phone and asked if I would be going to church on Sunday. I replied, "I don't know Mike, are you going?" He replied excitedly, "Oh! Nan, I'll go if you'll go!" So, of course, this gave me a great incentive to go and take him along. He was so delighted! He was three years old. He is twenty-two now.

I told Canon Tibbo what had brought me back to the fold. He looked at me and said, "And a little child shall lead them." His words proved to be very, very true.

Thank God for St. Mark's.

-Doris Thistle

Prayer: Gracious God, we know that the desire for worship is found in the hearts of all your people, and sometimes it takes the leading of a child to bring us home. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: James 5.14-16

The Power of Prayer

In the small community where we grew up, my father was thought of as a religious man. He attended church regularly, and no matter what denomination kept church, you would find him there. It always amazed me when the topic of death arose and my father stated quite adamantly that he did not believe in the afterlife. His premise was that when you died there was nothing. My mother, being a strong believer, would get quite upset and say, "I don't know what to do with your father. He doesn't believe in anything!"

In my father's 83rd year he suffered a stroke and was air-lifted to St. Anthony Hospital. Of course I flew up there to help. He was recuperating nicely and we were pleased with his progress. One afternoon a former United Church Minister from our parish came to visit him at the hospital and my father was quite pleased. During the visit my father went into cardiac arrest and a code blue blared out through the hospital. As doctors rushed in we were ushered out and taken to a private room to discuss what interventions we would want, and to sign papers. I thought that my father was truly going to die.

As they worked frantically to resuscitate my father, with little success, the minister asked if he could go in to have a word of prayer. As he held my father's hand and prayed, my dad's heart went back into normal rhythm. A week later Dad came to live at our home. When visitors came he loved to tell the story of how the prayers worked better than the doctors.

Knowing that my father's health was rapidly failing, I decided to broach the subject of death. As we talked I realized that no longer was there any doubt in my father's mind about life after death. That one experience had made a believer of my father! Dad lived for six weeks after that, and many times he retold the story of how the prayers had helped. God works in mysterious ways and, by allowing Dad that experience, he made his passing easier for himself and his family. It renewed my faith in the power of prayer and showed that by touching one person, that person can touch many!

-Lexie Maddocks

Prayer: Lord, in mysterious ways you touch our lives to bring healing to our bodies and to our souls. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: 1 John 5.14-15

A Narrow Escape

It was February, following a major snowstorm, and we were on the Trans Canada Highway returning to St. John's. We had spent the weekend in Central Newfoundland where Linda was given a baby shower. Our first child was due in about three months and we were full of hopes and dreams.

The road was in fair to poor condition. We had been driving for four to five hours and there were few vehicles travelling. Permission was needed to enter St. John's as a state of emergency was in effect until midnight and we hoped to be back before that time.

We were travelling west of Whitbourne when suddenly there was a huge drift of snow across the road ahead of us. There wasn't enough time to brake or stop – we ran straight into it. The engine slowed, but didn't quite stop, and the headlights died. Our car was in the left lane of the highway. Then, in the distance, a car's headlights appeared heading in our direction. We were very nervous and felt quite alone. I had the accelerator pressed to the floor in the hope the engine wouldn't die altogether. The car drew closer and closer. While neither of us said a word aloud, we were both praying. Please God help us. The people in the other car would have no idea we were directly in their path, since our car was in total darkness. The engine returned to life just in time, allowing me to pull our car over to the right hand side of the road. WE WERE SAFE! The other car passed by, unaware of the dangerous situation that had existed only seconds before.

When we stopped into a service station in Whitbourne to have our car checked, we found the engine compartment completely blocked with snow. The mechanic cleared the snow and, when the engine dried, we continued our trip home.

-Nathan and Linda Menchions

Prayer: O Lord, be with and guide all who travel by land, air and water. This we ask in your name. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Romans 8.26-28

A Father's Wish

My Dad and his brother were best friends until my uncle died at 80 years old. For the five years before my uncle's death, my Dad had struggled with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, although he was enjoying a long period of remission at the time of my uncle's death. My Dad was a quiet man with a big heart - an exceptional Dad in every way. He had a quiet determined faith. He knew his convictions and felt God knew his. In November of 2005 we began to realize that he was losing his fight with lymphoma.

My Dad was unsettled about his brother as he had been cremated, but never buried. Although I wasn't aware of the conversation, he had asked his niece to have her father buried, as it had been three years since his death. She agreed and that was the last he spoke of it. Shortly afterward, my father died at 81 years of age. My mother explained my father's wishes. He did not want to have a funeral or funeral home visitation. He wanted a private family burial service, which he wanted Wayne to do. He had told my mother he was too tired for a funeral.

I attended the funeral home, which was owned and operated by a good friend of my family named Corey, and we made the arrangements for the burial. I remember having a discussion with Corey about a burial plot. He said that I could go and choose a place. I said my Dad would like to be near a tree - he loved trees - but I was quite willing to take the next spot in the cemetery, so I didn't go. When we arrived at the cemetery on the morning my Dad was to be buried, I noticed that the open grave was right under a tree. I commented to Corey how nice that was and how much my Dad would like it, at which point he said that my uncle was buried next to him. His ashes had been buried there a couple of weeks before. So my Dad and his brother are together under a beautiful maple tree.
-Sheila Marchant-Short

Prayer: Lord, we see your handiworks all around us even in the small details. Give us hearts and minds to see you more clearly. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 37.3,4

Reluctant Bible Reader

This is a very simple story about an experience I had many years ago in Newfoundland - an experience that is perhaps more common than we realize, and one that many of us can relate to. When our family originally came here to Newfoundland from Scotland we, being members of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, joined the Anglican Church. My story took place during the genesis of women taking up the priesthood. The friendly members of our new church soon invited me to become a member of the vestry.

At my first vestry meeting, the Priest-in-Charge asked for a volunteer to take on the task of organizing members of the congregation to read the epistles during the Eucharist Services. Contrary to my reputation I immediately volunteered. Why I acted so quickly I cannot say...perhaps to impress?

This job turned out to be time consuming and was not so easy. Many people were difficult or impossible to enroll. There was, of course, a reliable core group but expanding this group was a condition of the job. My story relates to one young lady who was very unsure about reading aloud by herself in church. "I don't think I can!" What if she made mistakes and embarrassed herself and her listeners?

I persuaded her to take up the challenge by reminding her that she would be reading in her church, where everyone loved each other unconditionally, in the presence of God. She read very well and, for her, the experience was joyful.

Years later, a young female priest introduced herself to me. The Rev. lady stated that by persuading her to read in church I started her on her journey to becoming a priest in the Anglican Church of Canada. I was rendered speechless, humbled. In retrospect I realize I was being reminded that everything we do and say may be interpreted by our neighbours as the will of God. -David Hood

Prayer: Lord, as we learn to place our trust in you we discover your will in our lives. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 46:8-11

The Value of Stillness

I am not very good at keeping a Sabbath - a day off, a day of rest, prayer and recuperation. I don't know how to shut down. I always feel the need to be doing something. Being still feels like a lost opportunity to "get something done". This tendency drives those around me to utter distraction. Sometimes it even makes me feel a little unhinged. Having too much to do and too many deadlines is overwhelming. Throw in a particularly challenging day and it's not unheard of for me to come a little unglued.

In mid-January, I was having a really bad week. Everything I put my hand to turned out wrong: the big trip we'd been planning was cancelled; I couldn't get anyone to return my phone calls so I could book some of the activities I was planning for the youth group; my email was down at work; I still had a hole in my roof from Hurricane Igor and it seemed the contractor was never coming to fix it. I kept telling people I was having a week of Mondays. It felt a little like the movie Groundhog Day where Bill Murray's character wakes up every day to relive the same day over and over again.

Finally one day, probably in the middle of the week, Wednesday or Thursday, I had just about had enough. My schedule was making me hyperventilate. How would I ever find time to get everything done? I had taken on too much, but what do I do about it? So I closed my eyes. I took a deep breath and I just sat there, very still. Then I was filled with a sense of calm, almost as though someone was saying "just hang in there, it'll be ok, you can do this". I knew that it would all work itself out. I just had to be patient and persistent, and maybe draw myself up a schedule to help sort things out. And that was it. The week of Mondays was over. Thanks be to God, and to him alone.

–Allison Billard

Prayer: Heavenly Father, when our lives are in disarray help us to remember that we have only to turn to you and ask for guidance and you will show us the way. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Thanks

On behalf of St. Mark's I want to thank the writers for their contributions. You have shared a little of your faith journeys and experiences with us. You have turned an idea into a reality. It is our prayer and hope that this booklet may inspire others to share their faith stories in a future opportunity. Well done, St. Mark's, and may you reap benefits from this little adventure in faith. Our thanks to the following for their stories:

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ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST PARISH PRAYER

Almighty God, by your acceptance of our patron,
St. Mark the Evangelist, you showed us your way of love
and acceptance. Direct us in following your example, so that
we may respect the dignity of every human being
and further your kingdom of justice and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.