

FAITH SHARING - VOL II

2013

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

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. This is our second edition!

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



This 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, pray the prayer written to focus your thoughts and consider how this story speaks to your experience of faith. You may wish to spend some quiet time considering 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?

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 66.1-12

How Can I Keep From Singing?

Music has been a part of my life since birth. There was always music in our home. My mom has a lovely singing voice, and my two sisters and I were in church choirs from the time we were, in my mother's words, "old enough to sit still and behave". It is a rare day when I don't sing – as I work around the house, in the car with the radio or with my little patients at the Janeway. Songs pop into my head all day long.

Sometimes when our little dog, Loki, and I go for walks – our favourite spot is the Virginia River Trail – I will listen to my iPod. More commonly I leave the headphones at home, preferring instead to listen to the birds singing, the wind rustling in the trees and the sound of the water in the river tumbling over the rocks. Loki notices a little bird on the ground. As we get closer, it soars away. A hymn from my childhood jumps to mind and before I know it, I'm singing again!

“God sees the little sparrow fall, it meets His tender view.

If God so loves the little birds, I know He loves me, too.

He loves me, too. He loves me, too. I know He loves me, too.

Because He loves the little things, I know He loves me, too!”

The river twists and turns, flows smoothly, then becomes a little waterfall. We stop to watch sticks and leaves swirl away. There are little wild flowers and colourful weeds, butterflies and buzzing bees. I start humming “All things bright and beautiful”...

“Each radiant flower that opens,
Each vibrant bird that sings,
God made their glowing colours,
God made their lively wings”

Troubles don't seem so bad during a walk in the woods. Fears and frustrations disappear. Worries seem smaller when surrounded by so much beauty. The peace and tranquility fill my soul.

“For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise.”

I often feel closer to God and more confident of His presence during these walks than at any other time.

“No storm can shake my inmost calm
While to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since Love is Lord of heaven and earth
How can I keep from singing?”

Psalm 66 - “Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name.”
- Cheryl Faseruk

Prayer: Lord of all creation, fill our eyes, ears and souls with the beauty and joy of our earthly home. Hear our songs of praise. Walk with us on our journey through life until we come to live with You in heaven. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3.12-13

God is With Us

When I think of “faith sharing” what comes to mind are the times when I feel God’s presence or his gentle nudging. I don’t necessarily think of extraordinary circumstances - it is the hour-to-hour or day-to-day God moments which come to mind. They are the times when I know God is ever present, weaving in and out of my life and the lives of those I love.

Ironically however, as I was contemplating sharing a faith story, my “Nanny” was etched in my mind. My Nanny died at the ripe old age of 103. She had lived in three centuries. When she was 100 she had the ability and desire to write down her last wishes. This was a blessing for all. Nanny was healthy up until a week before she passed away. She had been hospitalized and had been unresponsive for several hours. I recall family being in Nanny’s room. Nanny was lying on her side and I was behind her. I said “We are here Nanny, we love you and God loves you too.” With that she lifted her head off the pillow and turned her head to look at me. Our eyes connected for what seemed a lot longer than it was. Nanny laid her head back on her pillow and within a very short time she passed away. My sense was that she was at peace and ready to let go and let God!

- Penny Winter

Prayer: God help us to be your voice, hands and feet, and to support those whom you place before us, whatever the circumstances.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Ephesians 4.1-6

God in the Midst of Us...Be Not Afraid

My parents were in their late 40's and early 50's when I was born and my youngest brother was a man grown. The irony, I guess, was that my mother was taken by boat to Terrenceville and from there to Come by Chance where I was born with a birth weight of 2 ½ pounds. The prospects of my survival were not great, but survive I did. My life journey was typical of that in any outpost at the time. Childhood, puberty, teenager and adulthood unfolded with no big surprises.

Because of my being born to elderly parents I was overprotected and very much loved by my extended family. I loved my mom and dad who taught me to be humble, sharing and caring. My dad passed away when I was a young man, but he instilled in me some qualities which I feel helped me become an effective but fair person in my endeavors.

At his passing my mother and I began our life in a circle that was broken. However, her faith was strong and she continued to direct me, nurture me and prepare me for a day when she, herself, would no longer be present. The beginning of the end of her life journey started when she was diagnosed with cancer in her nasal cavity at the age of 85. Surgery and treatment allowed her to have a very good quality of life for another six years. During those years we shared many special occasions and some very special chats about life and death. Mom always cooked Sunday dinner and early one Sunday morning she called to me from the kitchen. "Calvin, my son," she said, "I'm not strong enough to cut through this head of cabbage. You'll have to help." To avoid making her feel

inadequate, I got the hammer and big knife and split that cabbage to pieces. How she laughed! I'll always remember. That very day I discovered that she was aware of her imminent death as she said, "When I die, don't be afraid, will you?" I assured her that because of her and with God's help I would be okay.

The next morning at 6:30 I was awakened as she fell out of bed. Both she and I knew that her earthly journey was nearing its end. As she slipped in and out of consciousness a dear friend, Beatrice, came to be with me. Mom's final words will always remain in my heart and memory. She said, "I'm not afraid to die, but it's hard to leave Calvin. He's my gift from God."

An hour later on the ambulance with her little boy, her gift from God, by her side, mom entered eternal rest. I returned home that day not lonely, not afraid, but with the memory of two wonderful parents and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, in my heart.

- Calvin Smith

Prayer: Draw us together Lord, and unite us in your peace, for your mercy is great and your love is everlasting. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Readings: 2 Timothy 1.13-15

Dream Gift

In 2001 my mother passed away at the age of eighty-one. It didn't seem possible that I would never be able to see or talk to her again. She was the person I admired and modeled myself after. She had always been there for me, especially through my extreme shyness. I missed her so much.

Two years after her death, I had a dream. It went like this: I stepped through a doorway and was standing in a hallway similar to an apartment building. There were steps going down, maybe six or seven, a turn and then six or seven more. Everything was a very bright yellow white. I looked up at the ceiling towering over me. There were sculptures, like cherubs, all over the ceiling and walls. Suddenly, I knew Mom was downstairs. I started running down the steps calling "Mom, Mom!" It was dark on the second set of steps but I kept running. I heard Mom say, "I'm right here." That's how she always answered us as children when we came home and called to her. I reached the bottom step and looked to the left. Mom was standing there in a room that was very bright – I was still in darkness. There seemed to be angels around Mom. I could hear a lot of voices in a room next to her. I had a feeling that she had left the second room to come and see me. She held out her arms and I ran to her and we hugged. We sat down and she put her arm around me and I rested my head on her shoulders. Then I woke up.

I don't know for sure what the dream meant. Did I actually go to where Mom is now? I do know that since the dream I feel a great peace when I think of her and that my dream was a gift to let me know saying as she said "I'm right here." - Linda Menchions

*Prayer: Gracious God, may we receive the many gifts you send us providing peace and comfort, especially around grief and loss.
Amen.*

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Ephesians 3.14-21

The Power of Prayer

Through our lives we all have trials to go through. They come in different forms and each person finds their own way of dealing with the situation they have to face. One of my friends recently received the news that she had cancer and was scheduled for surgery to determine the type, progression and treatment options. With this news a person's life becomes an emotional turmoil. Besides being traumatic to her, it is devastating to her relatives and friends. People reach out to comfort and help in whatever way they can to make her life easier. The most powerful way is through prayer.

I believe most of us have heard someone say that they had a premonition or a feeling, when someone close to them had an illness or was going through some difficulty, that everything was going to be alright. One beautiful Sunday morning I had a strong feeling that I should go for a walk to the Garden of Memories which had just been opened in Bannerman Park. I walked through the garden and I said a prayer for my friend. When I went into the park I had the most amazing feeling that she would be 'fine'. I can't explain why this happened but I believe it was through prayer. I went to see her a couple of days later, and while talking I told her what had happened. She told me she believed in the power of prayer and that anything is possible. She thanked me and said she needed to hear positive thoughts and prayers.

She is still receiving treatments and will into the new year. We don't know what route she has to follow or where it will lead her, but we do know that as she does, God is with her and will give her the strength and courage she needs and she will be 'fine'.

- Gail Lidstone

Prayer: Lord, make us instruments of peace that through our intercessions we may behold your healing ways in the lives of others. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Ephesians 1.3-5

“I Believe”

Every day for the latter years of my mother's life, she would affectionately pin a multi-colored butterfly brooch in the top of her dress before coming downstairs to face the day. Because of her love for this brooch, it seemed only fitting that we pin it in her dress when she passed away in 1997. It wasn't until Christmas 2011 that I would come to realize the significance that little brooch would play in my belief.

I lived and worked in Gander all my life until retiring in 2006, at which time I moved to St. John's. The regret I had in leaving was that I felt I was leaving my parents behind, almost as though I was abandoning them. My partner was quick to remind me that nothing could be further from the truth. He said, “You carry them in your heart and therefore they will always be with you.” Even though I thought of them every day, I somehow felt that I needed some physical proof or sign that this was so.

Christmas parties and get-togethers for 2011 were beginning to take place and I was asked by a friend if I would like some tickets to attend the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary's annual Seniors Christmas Party, which I gladly accepted. On the day of the party, we dropped by the house of a friend that was going with us, to give her a drive. Her husband had passed away a couple of years prior to this. She was going through her decorations and pointed out certain ones her husband had been fond of.

She said that for one reason or another she hadn't displayed them for the past couple of years, but now she felt it was time to do so again because, after all, they were his favorites and he was still very much a part of her life and in her heart. These words stuck with me and it was then that I explained to her how I felt when I was leaving Gander. She tried to reassure me that they were still in my heart and with me. After a little more chit chat, and still having some doubt, we left to go to the party.

The party was well attended and everyone had a lovely afternoon. During the party they drew numbers for gifts. Although I don't often win anything, that afternoon I was fortunate to have my number picked. When I unwrapped my gift, inside was a clear plastic box containing a Christmas mug. Inside the mug was a little blue box. My friends wanted me to open the plastic box to see what was inside the little blue box. At first I said no, thinking it was probably a sample of tea or coffee to go with the mug. They insisted on opening the box so I told one friend to go ahead and open it. When she removed the cover and I looked inside, my heart beat faster and faster, my eyes watered up and I cried like a newborn baby. I felt joy and peace and love. Inside the blue box was a colored "butterfly brooch". My mother and father were still with me. My doubt was gone and I believed. I love you, mom and dad. God bless you.

- Robert Gill

Prayer: Gracious God, you come to us in signs and wonders. Give us a spirit of humility to see you in different ways. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 116.12-19

A Sense of Peace

Mom loved music and was a member of St. Paul's Church choir in Lewisporte for many years. When she died ten years ago, I placed two hymn books at St. Mark's in her memory. After donating the books I had never actually seen them in the pews.

As with anyone who has experienced a tremendous loss, Christmas can be a very sad time. A few Christmases after Mom died I was feeling particularly sad. Growing up, my sisters and I always looked forward to attending the midnight service on Christmas Eve. This year I just didn't feel like going. The children were young and had already attended the earlier service. As I was mulling around wondering whether or not to go alone, my neighbour called to see if I was going to church because her daughter wanted to go. It was getting late and we questioned whether or not we would get a seat. We hurried into the church and sat in one of the pews in the back, not where I normally sit. As I opened the hymn book to the first hymn I noticed the memorial which read "In memory of a loving mother and grandmother, Phyllis Norman, from Janice, Dave, Elizabeth, Rebecca and Peter Dawe". A quiet sense of peace came over me and I knew then that my mother was attending church with me that night just as she had every Christmas Eve when I was young. - Janice Dawe

Prayer: Compassionate God, thank you for reaching out to us even when we feel far way. You are able to bring healing and comfort. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Philippians 4.4-7

Leaning on God

My great-nephew, Caleb, is a bright, happy four year old who loves to play with dinkies, watch cartoons and imitate his uncle playing guitar and drums. In short, he's normal in every way, but at Caleb's church he's called "the miracle child".

My niece had an ordinary pregnancy, but when she went into labour it was discovered that the baby was stressed. She was quickly given a c-section and Caleb was born at 8:39 on a Thursday evening. It took the medical team four minutes to get him to breathe. The doctors said it was the worst case of Meconium Aspiration Syndrome they had seen. His lungs were coated with the sticky substance and couldn't supply oxygen to his blood. There was a hole in his heart that wouldn't close and the doctors told his parents to prepare for the worst. At 4:00 a.m. my niece and her husband were told to call a priest. When he arrived at the NICU the nurse passed him a bowl of water and Caleb was baptized immediately.

Meanwhile, the call for prayer had gone out. Family, friends and people of various denominations began praying for Caleb and his parents. It was amazing to hear how many people were supporting them with prayer.

Over eight days Caleb was hooked up to three ventilators and put into an induced coma to help him breathe. During that time my niece read Bible stories to him and my brother, Caleb's grandfather, sang to him. Within a week the hole in his heart had closed. At three weeks another problem occurred. Caleb developed thrush

and couldn't nurse, so he continued receiving milk and oxygen through tubes. At ten weeks, however, he was allowed home with only a feeding tube. Although it was thought his lungs would need to be monitored for several years, they were declared completely clear within six months. By his first birthday he could eat normally and the feeding tube was taken away.

Throughout scripture we are told to make our requests known to God because God is faithful and hears our prayers. Always we're told to pray with thanksgiving trusting in God's love. Sometimes we seem unable to receive a clear answer to our prayers and sometimes it takes time for the answer to come. Sometimes the answer is not what we expected or hoped for, but sometimes God gives us a miracle...like Caleb. – Rosalind Bartlett

Prayer: I lean on you, Source of Strength, as I walk through life's ups and downs. I rest my burdens on the lap of your love, trusting that your compassion will uphold me. – Joyce Rupp

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15.51-57

A Mother's Love

For my mom it was just seven weeks from the time of her diagnosis to her death. When I learned of her diagnosis I flew home to give her the news. She knew something was seriously wrong because I came without her knowing my plans. Knowing that her diagnosis left no room for negotiation, she made a courageous decision - to go home and try and spend her last weeks with as much quality as possible. I told her I would stay with her until the end. Our days were not filled with sadness or regret. Instead they were filled with wonderful memories, with visits from friends and families and numerous cards. She faced those final weeks with the same grace with which she lived her life. She spoke about the birthday cards and anniversary cards that would not be sent. She spoke about the special celebrations that she would not be part of and the new babies who she would not knit sweater sets for. She spoke about 'her church' and 'her church groups' and 'her hospital gift shop'. And then she began to look forward to her heavenly reward. My mom was the extended family historian but she did so much more than just keep the family records. She documented births, marriages, deaths and even first dates. She was an avid card sender, and it was so evident that many enjoyed the cards she sent because they exuded thoughtfulness and caring.

We had many conversations and reminisced greatly as I carefully tried to thin out a lifetime accumulation of things. It was clear that many of the things had their value in what they represented. Over the course of those weeks it was a progressive release of stuff that no longer held its grip. She knew how difficult it was for me to sort out her things without her help, so to make it easier she would often

say "I have no idea where that came from" - her way of freeing something up to be let go. There was more space to enjoy our surroundings enjoying the simplicity of life itself savouring the preciousness of our waning time together. Those seven weeks were so meaningful for me because I got to experience my mom in a new way, through the eyes of friends. Her faith enabled her to journey this last phase of life with dignity, strength and confidence in the life to come. Each night during her life she knelt at her bedside and said her prayers. In her illness and dying she continued to say her prayers at night with me, and it was in her nightly prayers that she said goodbye. As she felt her consciousness lessening she reached out to say her goodbyes to us and to assure us that she was not afraid but at peace, and very thankful for us all.

There are many things which we are thankful for in her final weeks. She was able to stay at home until the end. She was open and receptive to the comfort and love that was poured out to her by her family and friends, and she supported those people as they said goodbye. She received her physical care in her final days with patience and gratitude. She kept her sense of humour and she always had a smile to share, even at the end.

Her requests were very simple. She hoped for a funeral from her beloved church where she was baptized, confirmed, married and where she attended her entire life. She couldn't choose the hymns because as an organist she loved them all, and as she said to me "How could I ever choose between them? You'll have to do it." So I did, and she was laid to rest having lived a life of faith.

- Sheila Marchant-Short

Prayer: Loving God, you are calling us onward and homeward towards your glorious kingdom. Give us the wisdom and courage to journey well. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Hebrews 13.16

Sharing God's Love

Hebrews 13:16 - And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

It was a clear Fall evening in 2007. After supper our son, Frank, asked if he could use our car to visit his friends. I told him it was OK and wished him God's favour as he left the house.

A short while later the phone rang. I picked it up and Frank was on the line. He told me that he had been hit by another car. At that time he did not observe any physical injury and the occupants of the other vehicle were also unhurt. I got a cab and went to the scene of the accident at the Logy Bay Road - Newfoundland Drive intersection.

When I arrived at the scene I took a few seconds to confirm that no one was seriously hurt, and then asked him what had happened. He explained that he had driven along Newfoundland Drive and stopped at the traffic lights close to our church. When it changed to green, he moved forward and was suddenly hit by a car coming down Logy Bay Road. The force spun the car around and he became disoriented. When he looked up the light was red and he wondered whether he had gone through the red light.

At that moment a lady came along and told him that she had been driving behind him when the accident occurred. She gave him a note with her name, address and telephone number, and offered to serve as a witness if necessary. The goodness of that lady gave him comfort and reassurance. This lady, who we had never met,

was willing to sacrifice the time required to serve as a witness to ensure that our son was treated fairly. - George Worley

Prayer: Father, today we choose to praise You. We choose to give You glory no matter what's happening in the world around us. We know that You are good and faithful, so we give You all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Matthew 5.1-12

Here I Am

Having grown up in the Roman Catholic Church, I found many of the hymns used at St. Mark's unfamiliar and I didn't connect with them. I may not have a musical note in my body, but I enjoy music and there are times when it can move you. The Saturday Band occasionally sings a hymn I remember from my youth called "Here I Am, Lord". I always look forward to a particular line with anticipation because it invokes such imagery and wonder that I always get a cold shiver running down my back. I recall thinking once that I hope I never lose that.

When someone really knows you, like a best friend or sibling, they know how to push your buttons – to get you upset or really challenge you. I believe that God knows me (much better than I know myself) and one day while attending a different service, God pushed my button. The person singing "Here I am, Lord" changed one letter in my favourite line and my private joy was stolen. As I know the hymn, the lines are:

*I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will send the poor and lame.*

For me, these words invoke my vision of God's Kingdom – the human pecking order is turned on its head and people live in harmony, justice, peace and love. On that day was sung, "I will tend the poor and lame." Changing an "s" to a "t" changed the whole meaning for me and I was horrified that my precious hymn was now tainted.

In preparing to write this story I looked up the lyrics and, sure enough, they are online with the word “tend” not “send”.

Disappointing, but not cruel. Many billions of people walk this earth and throughout the ages I guess maybe trillions of souls have been born and had their own faith experiences. None of these are right or wrong, they are personal. Today, as for the past 2000 years, Christians argue about truth and heresy, right and wrong. I certainly am not a person who is qualified to preach about religious rights and wrongs, but I do know that if God touches you in some small, perhaps silly way, for that moment you are inspired, hopeful and connected with God, then that is not wrong. - Rick Hibbs

Prayer: Almighty God, help us to see you in the face of the poor and lame, may we see in them instruments of love and mercy. Amen.

Faith Sharing In Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 19.7-14

Pilgrim

I have been a tourist and I have been a pilgrim. Sometimes it is difficult to tell them apart. While tourists and pilgrims share some of the same characteristics, there are some very important differences. Pilgrims seek to grow in their faith and understanding by exploring places where they willingly encounter a learning environment. Like tourists, we want to take in as much as possible, but we also seek to permit our experience to touch us deeply hoping that we will be changed in some way. The Holy Land hosts both the tourist and the pilgrim, and from all outward appearances, the two are indistinguishable. Tourists can certainly have pilgrim tendencies as surely as pilgrims will have tourist traits. The pilgrims must balance their inner lives with their exterior lives. This was certainly my experience in the Holy Land. At times I was overwhelmed with what I was seeing. Fortunately we had processing and reflection time built into our itinerary. I used those times to journal and to pray. I found myself returning to my journal and savouring my experiences once again. While we are not adept to think of our daily lives as a pilgrimage, there are certainly some similarities. The best one is our need for balance - the need for reflection time to help us navigate so many competing demands for our resources. The greatest resource is our time. In Jerusalem I experienced the Jewish Sabbath, which had some similarities to how we once observed Sundays. There was a refreshing hush that fell over the city. The streets became peaceful and it became possible to relax. Some Orthodox sections of the city ground to a halt, where streets and all businesses were closed. And yet the greatest challenge was to cultivate my interior life, a challenge that is even greater in our North American lifestyle. As I approach life

back home I take my experience of being a pilgrim as a model for
my continuing journey of faith. - Rev. Wayne

*Prayer: Almighty God, lead us and guide us in our faith journey so
that we may walk in the light of your glory and grace. Amen.*

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Romans 12.9-13

Another Path

After my son was born I had a serious injury to my neck. Years of nursing, pushing, pulling and having three babies in five years had taken its toll on my body. I realized that I could not go back to the traditional nursing jobs that I enjoyed. In nursing, as with many professions, in order to continue to be registered, you must maintain a certain number of hours working as a nurse. Because of the injury I had to take a year off, and with the maternity leave that I had taken as well, I would not have enough hours for the coming year. If I let my registration slip I would have to complete a ten-month refresher course in order to reenter the nursing profession. I loved nursing but questioned whether I would be capable of ever working in a hospital environment again. The children were young and financial demands on the family were high, but I needed to find something that would work with our growing family and my physical limitations.

One day, as deadline for registration loomed, I felt that I was at a crossroads, and feeling overwhelmed, I prayed. "God, if I am to continue with nursing, please give me a sign that this is the path that I should take. I need some direction." Of course God does not answer immediately, and sometimes answers in unexpected ways. Very shortly after the prayer I opened the Newfoundland Herald and there was an ad stating that the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador was looking for Registered Nurses to volunteer, and that the program had been approved by the ARNNL (Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador) to count as nursing hours. I was amazed. I called the centre and soon after was volunteering there as a Registered Nurse. Years

later I worked there in a paid position in the same capacity as Coordinator of the Friendly Visiting Program. This program opened my eyes to another side of nursing that I had never considered. Working with seniors who had limited social contacts and matching them with volunteers had many rewards for all of us involved. I thought that I would be working in acute care in a hospital setting for my career, but God had another path for me. - Janice Dawe

Prayer: O God, the giver of good gifts, lead us into the pathways that enable us to serve you in our work and the settings where we are called. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Psalm 46.10

In the Silence

I wasn't sure I wanted to "lose" my whole weekend. I look forward to the end of my work week, when I get to do the things I want to do. I get to relax and unwind before Monday comes and it starts all over again. So when I heard about the spiritual retreat last Fall, although it piqued my interest, I dismissed the possibility until I learned that friends of mine from choir were going. From then on, there was no turning back. I was on my way to Conception Harbour to spend two nights with six other parishioners from St. Mark's, as well as Reverend Robert Cooke.

I wasn't sure what to expect. I didn't know how profoundly this weekend would affect me in my spiritual journey. It was an opportunity to commune with God unlike any I have ever experienced. It all revolved around silence, prayer and inward reflection.

We arrived on Friday evening, just before supper, and I began to get to know the others with whom I had chosen to spend my weekend. A delicious meal cooked and served by the Sisters of Mercy, a thought-provoking video, evening prayers and a restful night's sleep rounded out our first evening at the retreat. It was how we spent the rest of the weekend, with ample time for reflection, much time given to silence and time just spent in each others' company, while reading or thoughtfully debating whatever topic came to mind. The weather being perfect the whole weekend, we took long walks through the picturesque community, which accentuated God's presence.

It was a chance to get away from the “busyness” of life, to de-stress, to withdraw from all the distractions that life throws at us. With the outside world put aside for awhile, we were able to just take time to be still and know God. Then, we were slowly brought back into the world, better able to deal with the pressure we sometimes feel during the week. We shared an intimate, spirit-filled Eucharist on Sunday and when the time came to leave, I knew I would never again be the same. Far from feeling I had “wasted” a whole weekend, I came away feeling refreshed and bolstered by the retreat, and its residual effect continues to this day. It was truly an awesome experience that I will not soon forget.

- Marlene Dale

Prayer: Dear God, help me to be ever mindful of your presence in my everyday life, and to recognize you in the silence. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: John 1.1-14

The Hand of God

I have held the hand of God. If that grabbed your attention then my next line will shock you even more. This momentous event happened at the Hoyles-Escasoni Complex. It was shortly after my ordination to the diaconate and was my first visit to Hoyles Home for our monthly Eucharist. After worship in the chapel we take communion up to residents who are unable to make it down to worship. Being my first time there, I was feeling very nervous. Up until that point almost all my ministry experience had been with people thirty and under, so to be in this type of institutional setting was definitely outside my comfort zone.

While we were in a room to administer to a woman on our list to receive that day, a hand from the next bed touched my arm. I turned to see a woman in the late stages of Alzheimer's. Her eyes were vacant and she was mumbling a steady stream of gibberish. She had no hair on her head and I saw that she was not so much reaching out for me but simply flailing her arms. I saw her name above her bed and I was moved to hold her hand. As I did, I said her name and her arms stopped moving, but she continued to speak. At that moment as I held her hand and looked deeply into her eyes, I saw something divine. It's as if God was lying there right in front of me. There was something holy and sacred about the frailty and weakness of this woman. I knew nothing about her, but I imagined she once loved and was loved and that she was perhaps a mother, a wife, a sister, a friend. I reached for a tiny piece of bread, gently dipped it into the wine and said "the body and blood of Christ given for you". A peace came over her and she stopped her mumbling to look straight ahead at me. I thought I saw

a hint of clarity there. We stood frozen like that for a brief moment. Then the shadow returned to her eyes and she drifted back into the throes of her dehumanizing disease.

I left that place changed. If you ask me if I think there is a God I will say I believe there is, because I held God's hand in that most thinnest of places at Hoyles-Escasoni. The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood. "We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory". (John 1:14a The Message) God is here among us. We just need eyes and hearts to see.
– Rev. Robert

Prayer: Creator God, give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to feel and hands to serve the wonder of your incarnation among us. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Matthew 7.7-12

God Comes Near

It has been a privilege to serve God for many years. During these years God has walked with me through good times and difficult times. God has always been supportive of me even when I have not been supportive of God's ways.

There have been several incidents in my life when God has been very close to me. One of those happened as a winter storm was gathering on the Great Northern Peninsula. I was driving from Cook's Harbour to St. Anthony over a rather rough gravel road. The snow was falling and I was quite a distance from any house. My car suddenly stopped in the road. I began to panic and in such a state bowed my head in prayer. At that moment it was as if I became very relaxed and a voice inside me said 'Get out, remove the distributor cap on the motor and clean it.' Those who know me know that I have no mechanical skills. Nevertheless I obeyed that inner voice and carried out the action. I removed the distributor cap, wiped it clean with a tissue, got back in the car and turned the key. The car motor started and I drove home successfully before the major storm came on. I was very thankful for the faith that enabled me to bow my head and await instructions.

God does break through sometimes in our most challenging moments and he shows us the way forward. This incident is but one of many when God has come near over the years. The result is that when I have cause to doubt, as most people do, I go back to those times in my life when God had a message for me. I can write, therefore, of God's message of support in times of need.

Jesus said “Ask and it will be given you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you.”

- The Ven. Tom Moulton

Prayer: Gracious God, give us the courage and wisdom to seek you in our times of need. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1.17-18

Surveying the Cross

The cross is the focal point of our Christian beliefs - our Lord died on the cross for our sins. When we look around St. Mark's Church you see the cross in the overhead lights, the window behind the Altar, on the Altar and so on.

At our Baptism we are signed with the sign of the cross. In the Book of Alternative Services the celebrant recites the following: "I sign you with the cross and mark you as Christ's own forever."

With this background concerning the cross I'm going to relay my story. I have been a server and crucifer for some twenty-five and thirty years both here at St. Mark's and other parishes. I have been a crucifer for many church services and special events such as the annual memorial services in both of our cemeteries, the blessing of the fleet during the Cabot 500 ceremonies and funerals, especially the funeral of my beloved mother-in-law in Central Newfoundland.

For the past several years, here at St. Mark's I have been both the server and crucifer on the altar. What has left me with a deep spiritual feeling is being the crucifer for procession, gospel procession and recession, and seeing what I see. I guess to see what I see you really need to be the crucifer. At St. Mark's something very special happens each time I lead the choir and clergy in procession and recession. The combination of the overhead lights casts shadows at several points. The cross is silhouetted and moves along the floor ahead of me. I am always deeply moved by this spectacle.

Seeing the cross casting its shadow before me reminds me of the cross leading each of us on our daily journey through life. When we sin we return to the cross, confess our sins and receive forgiveness, in order that we may pick up our cross once again and continue our journey. - Nathan Menchions

Prayer: O Lord, you died on the cross for our sins. May we always lift high our cross, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Faith Sharing in Everyday Life

Reading: Luke 3.1-6

Our Advent Watch

Advent is my favorite time of year. As a child I remember that first Sunday in Advent when I realized we were singing “Christmas” hymns and lighting the Advent candles. I can still recall the thrill of excitement that would run through me. “It’s almost here!” I would think and elbow my mom to let her know I had just realized Christmas was coming again. I love Christmas, and not just for the gifts, although I’m sure when I was younger that was a big part of it. I was excited for all the activity - the preparation, the food, spending time with family and friends, having time off from school and going to church. I have only wonderful memories of everything about Advent and Christmas. As an adult it is certainly a more complicated season. As a society we have gotten very far away from the humble beginnings of our Lord. Yes, there were certainly gifts at that first Christmas, but they were full of meaning. I struggle each year to find some of that meaning in all the excess that we experience. My family puts aside a set amount of money that we would normally spend on unnecessary “token” gifts and instead we “purchase” items from the World Vision catalogue to help make a difference in the lives of others who go without most of the things we take for granted – food, clean water, sanitation, medical supplies. It’s not much, but it’s what we have found to help us reconnect with the season. Here we are again, at the beginning of Advent, and I have to admit it still fills me with the same thrill. I love Advent, and I’m glad I’ve found at least one way to experience a small portion of what that first Christmas might have been like.

- Allison Billard

Prayer: Gracious God, guide us in this season of preparation for your nativity that we would behold your glory among those we seek to serve. Amen.

Living to the Glory of God

Thanks

On behalf of St. Mark's I want to thank the writers for their contributions. We have stories to tell and many will indeed benefit from our faith sharing. There are things we are meant to hold in confidence, but our faith is not one of those things. It is indeed a challenge for us to speak and share more freely and openly about our faith. It is a challenge we must embrace and I am grateful for your sharing. This is one way in which we can Live to the Glory of God.

Rosalind Bartlett

The Rev. Robert Cooke

Janice Dawe

Bob Gill

Sheila Marchant-Short

Linda Menchions

Gail Lidstone

Cal Smith

George Worley

Allison Billard

Marlene Dale

Cheryl Faseruk

Rick Hibbs

Nathan Menchions

The Ven. Tom Moulton

The Rev. Dr. G. Wayne Short

Penny Winter

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.