



Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

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We Are Valued!

By Lila Millhuff

Over the years, my husband and I spent a lot of time with one man in our congregation, Jim P. He became a dear friend who always came back to the same theme. He felt he was not needed or valued and was just putting in time for no purpose. His wife had long since died and he was lonely. He felt God was keeping him around too long.

Jim died last September and we miss him. Here's what he did not see in himself: he's the one who would pick up anyone, any-time, anywhere, when he or she needed a ride. At a church event or any gathering, he was always there. His door was open for friends outside our fellowship and his life affected many people. He was the one I loved to listen to at our Bible studies, as I enjoyed his viewpoint. God had given him a wealth of wisdom and knowledge, which truly added to our congregation! I celebrated that and all the positives God placed within him.

Haven't we all felt like Jim from time to time? Most of us can relate: Why am I here? I'm too old to be useful. Or, I'm just a woman. No one listens to me. I have no value.

But we *are* valued! We are here for a reason and we have a purpose. Sometimes we look at others without seeing the true person or their true value. Sometimes we look in the mirror and see no value. That is never true. Everything God created has a purpose.

I love trees. They have great value. They give us life-giving oxygen. Some bear fruit and some are good for shade, shelter or decoration. They each have their own special beauty.

On our many walks in the desert, I've seen a lot of trees, many of the same species, but none exactly the same. Some might see these trees as having no value. But here's what I see: trees begin their life in the same way, growing in the earth. The environment, wind and heat affect their growth and can give them unique shapes, like the one in the photo. Its trunk is lying on the ground, then it goes upward and branches out into beautiful limbs. Little critters can quickly scurry up this kind of tree and children might do the same. What a delightful place to play.



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We Are Valued!

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Just as no two trees are the same, but are beautiful in their own right, we too, are beautiful products of our environment, of the genes we've inherited and of the winds of change that come our way. Each of us is unique, with our own special value that God has given us.

Don't let the song he has placed in your heart be unsung when you leave this life. Let him work in and through you by reaching out to encourage, listen or help others. Use it with thankfulness, for God has given you that song as a special gift.

And never forget the greatest gift of all, the greatest value of all. God gave his only Son Jesus because he wants us in his life. That is value, so never look in the mirror and say you have no value or purpose. We are God's children and that's something to celebrate!



Lila and her husband Ted have been married for almost 54 years. She is soon to be a great grandmother of two. Lila has been music director of Grace of God Fellowship in Tucson, Arizona, since 2006. She loves the outdoors, traveling and listening to everyone's life story. You may email Lila at lmillhuff@att.net.

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Connections

Mission Statement

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

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

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

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• CALIFORNIA •
TAM 2 U

The Bread of Life

The other night I put some flour, water, yeast, salt, oil and sugar in a little machine and the next morning I woke up to the most wonderful aroma—freshly baked bread! I just love my bread machine. I can set the timer and let it do all the work for me. All I have to do is take out the loaf, cut a slice, toast it and thanks to a productive fig tree this summer, apply my own homemade fig jam and enjoy.

The smell of baking bread makes you feel warm and fuzzy inside and calm and happy outside. It makes you think of home, family and good things to eat. There's nothing like it to raise endorphin levels and put a smile on your face.

When Jesus called himself the bread of life, the people listening didn't quite know



what to think. They were used to hearing the story of God giving the Israelites manna in the wilderness, but this was something new. He wasn't saying he gives us bread, but that he is the bread. "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35, *NLT*).

Jesus gave his body for us as a gift of grace. You might say grace is like flour, the main ingredient in the bread of life. Without grace there would be no forgiveness, no salvation and no eternal life.

He gives and sustains life. He fills us when we're hungry for more than physical food and satisfies our spiritual thirst with the water of life. We are nourished most as we do what Brother Lawrence called practicing his presence, by being continually aware of his life within us. He is the one who loves us unconditionally and is always there to talk to, give us a hug and help us see things from the right perspective.

Being with Jesus is like walking in the door of your home and being greeted by the wonderful smell of fresh bread, knowing you are welcomed, loved and cherished. It's knowing you will be cared for and comforted no matter what. He is the bread that warms, fills and keeps us going—forever.

Tammy



Love looks forward, hate looks back,
anxiety has eyes all over its head.



Mignon McLaughlin
The Neurotic's Notebook (1963)

Get Up!

By Sharie Meyer

This has been a difficult year—a true *annus horribilis*.

I have trouble walking. My legs are unstable and can buckle without warning. Some of this is congenital, some is from accidents, improper or nonexistent treatment, and, well, OK, increasing age. I'm handicapped, which is not a PC term these days. I think the acceptable one is mobility challenged. I have to use a walker to help me to my motorized scooter.



A year ago I had a bad, bad fall, one from which I did not bounce back quickly. Five months later, I had another fall, also a bad one, compounding the remaining problems from the earlier one.

Then came the case of cellulitis in one of my legs. We are now talking emergency rooms, hospitalization, home nursing care, and, oh yes, antibiotics and allergic reactions over and over and over. It became necessary to accept being bedridden for several weeks.

Nothing unusual, but when you are bedridden you lose muscle strength in spite of any exercises you're doing. Since that time it is harder to stand, more worrisome to walk. I must; I must stand. I must walk. No choice, it must happen. My husband has to help me as I can't do it by myself yet.

I have to lift myself with my arms using a walker, with John stabilizing and counterbal-

ancing it. Once upright, I lock my knees together, clutch the brake mechanism on the walker, and take slow, small steps until I am able to sit on the scooter. The whole time, I must focus on each step—no distractions, no talking, no awareness of anything other than the mechanics of each step. With each step, I repeat my mantra, “Get up!”

Get up, get up, get up—nothing else, just get up. Don't stop, don't quit. It must happen every day. Get up, stand, walk. God is very much a part of this. Sometimes “get up” is a prayer, sometimes a plea, sometimes a reminder. God designed me, God made me, he can hold my legs together. If I can't do it myself, he's there. He's willing to do what I can't and he expects me to be working toward doing this myself. You see, God's mantra for me is also, “Get up!”

He'll help. He'll make the difference, but I should not expect to live as a spineless blob observing life while cradled in his hand.

Get up, Sharie. Keep trying. Don't stop the exercises. See the physical therapist. Get up! Pray, talk with God. Ask for his help, expect it and get up! Do what I am physically able to do. Use my body. Use my muscles. Stand. Get up! Again and again and again.

Is this not a metaphor for Christian living? Often we speak of the comfort, the joy of knowing God. We revel in the awareness of his love. We learn to accept grace. We cast off legalism. Do we forget we have a role? Do we think taking action somehow negates grace? God's grace is there, held out to us in loving hands, but we have to reach for it. We have to accept it; we have to take action.

Remember the blind man at the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-11). Jesus did not just stretch out a finger and touch him. No, it was a partnership. They worked together. And the crippled man in John 5:8 who was told, “Get

I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess.



—Corrie Ten Boom

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Get Up!

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up! Pick up your mat and walk” (action taken). Healing ensued (grace given and miracle).

The purpose for human beings is to come to know God, to understand him, because he doesn't want to carry us forever—handicapped, unable entities. No, God wants to walk with us hand in hand, side by side throughout eternity. That is why I must “Get up!” Why I must stand. Why I must walk. Why I must develop my muscles physically. Why I must develop my muscles spiritually.

It's a new day, and I will “get up.”



Sharie and her husband John live in northern California. Their life is full, even taking into account the needs of a handicapped person and her caregiver. That husband-caregiver calls himself her “Domestic Services Care Provider.” Sharie keeps threatening to have a T-shirt with that title made for him. You may email Sharie at smeyer1@mindspring.com.

Nothing in all nature is so lovely and so vigorous, so perfectly at home in its environment, as a fish in the sea. Its surroundings give to it a beauty, quality and power which is not its own. We take it out, and at once a poor, limp dull thing, fit for nothing, is gasping away its life. So the Soul, sunk in God, living the life of prayer, is supported, filled, transformed in beauty, by a vitality and a power which are not its own.



—Evelyn Underhill

Old and in the Way

Maggie—Not Too Big, Not Too Small

By Joyce Catherwood

The day my mom passed away I was standing by the French doors in our bedroom, looking out toward our backyard. I wasn't really focusing on anything specifically, just staring, when I noticed a small scruffy, rusty-brown dog trot by, tail and ears down, looking abandoned. We lived in a semirural area, about a mile from the main highway, so it was not unusual for people to dump unwanted animals on our road. Often these scared little creatures would show up on our doorstep.

Just another forsaken dog left to fend for itself, was my original thought. Then for some reason out of the blue it struck me. Could this be what my dad might need—a furry companion to help ease the powerful sense of loneliness that would only intensify with each passing day?

We were all going to miss my mom something fierce, but as my dad would be living in their house all alone now, he was to bear the brunt of it. He and my mom had been together for 70 years. Now she was gone.

As I expected, the deserted dog hung around our house, especially as I began to feed her. She was such a sweet gentle thing, not too big, not too small. Huge brown eyes! And longish wavy fur that needed a good brushing. Her reddish hair made her appear somewhat “Irish” to us, so my husband and I named her Maggie. It was evident she'd had puppies, which was probably her big mistake

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Old and in the Way

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(as if she could help it). That's often the reason people decide they don't want to be bothered with a pet any longer and ditch it on a country road.

It was as though Maggie had been dropped into our lives from heaven. We hadn't yet had time to assess the ripple effect of the loss of my mom. My dad was going to be painfully lonely. We could have predicted that. But it is not something one thinks about in the midst of the emotions and stress of a lingering illness and subsequent death of a loved one.

Before I saw the little stray, I had no thought of getting a pet for my dad. It became clear to us God lovingly arranged all the circumstances for Maggie to enter our lives on the very day of my mom's death. He knew how much my dad would need company.

So many good, longtime friends and beloved family attended my mom's funeral. For our grandchildren, it was the first funeral they had ever been a part of. They loved their great grandma so much. The casket was open during the memorial and they each carefully laid a rose next to her as they said goodbye. Tears flowed.

My dad was so grieved he could not bring himself to attend. But he had been strong enough to spend some time alone with my mom in the funeral home the previous evening.

After returning from the funeral, we brought Maggie next door to my dad's house for a proper introduction. Initially Dad was a little dubious about the name we had given her. I suppose we should have let him name his own dog, but he soon began to call her Maggie too. They quickly became fast



friends. Maggie was well behaved, didn't bark and slept inside on a throw rug on the floor next to my dad's old green recliner.

Each morning, when we saw Maggie playfully running around the yard, we knew Dad was up. She blended seamlessly into the family as though she had been hand-picked.

Thirteen months after losing my mom, my dad passed away. Hospice staff had been coming by to assist him since my mom died and one male nurse in particular, whose name was Ali, became exceptionally attached to my dad and to Maggie.

During one visit to see Dad, Ali told me if anything should happen, he would love to take Maggie as a souvenir of the warm friendship he and my dad had formed. We had mixed emotions about letting her go, but it seemed to mean so much

to him.

And sure enough, the day my dad was put to rest, I watched as Ali drove away from my father's house with little Maggie snuggled next to him in the front seat of his car, looking confused but not unhappy. The unexpected gift from heaven named Maggie, which had helped fill a void in my dad's broken heart, went on to her next assignment—bringing more memories, love and loyalty to a compassionate nurse and his young family.



Joyce says: "As if officiating at the wedding of our own three daughters was not poignant and wonderful enough for Papa (their dad), now we are starting the eight grandchildren countdown. Wedding No. 1 was in May, 2011, and No. 2 is forthcoming in January, 2013, with Papa standing before them as they recite their vows. So amazing!" You may email Joyce at joyce.catherwood@gci.org.

A Walk in Faith

By Sheila Graham

Have you ever had a lapse in faith? Unhappily I have, and more than once. Only a few times was it a serious questioning of God, maybe once or twice in my lifetime. Times when I asked God: If you are God and all powerful, why did you let this happen? You knew my concern, Lord. Why didn't you do something about it?

It makes me think of Psalm 13 where the psalmist asks, How long O Lord? Forever? Have you ever felt that way? Those times can be heart wrenching. But usually, my lapse of faith is not like that; it's just a thought that flits through my mind.

Ed likes to listen to Elvis Presley's gospel music on the way to church. I like to hear Elvis on occasion, but for an hour's drive, every Sunday? Well—! Anyway, Elvis was singing about when he died he looked forward to seeing his mother and father again.

Suddenly I thought, can that really be true? Is that really going to happen? Will I see my mother and father and son and sister again? Is there really life after death? Or is it

just some idea we religious people use to comfort each other when we lose a loved one?

But what if no eternal life—just death and then eternal nothingness, and I thought, Oh well, I won't know the difference anyway. And that was discouraging. Of course, all this went through my mind in probably a second or so. I began to rewind my thoughts back to Christ and his sacrifice and his promise of eternal life, and I put those negative thoughts out of my mind.

But it made me think about faith, my faith in particular. Just how strong is my faith? Hebrews 11:1-2, *Good News Bible*: "To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see. It was by their faith that people of ancient times won God's approval."

Abraham is the epitome of a faithful person and the author spends a lot of time writing about Abraham's faith. Abraham knew that God's faithfulness to do what he said he would do was part of who God is. Abraham was a believer! When I stack my faith up by Abraham's, it looks a mite puny. But I don't have to worry. I'm not depending on my im-

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Nurturenet

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



Do we
have
your
email
address?

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

A Walk in Faith

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perfect faulty faith to save me. I'm depending on his perfect faith.

Have you ever disobeyed God? I have. But I'm not depending on my imperfect obedience to save me. I'm depending on Christ's perfect obedience.

Am I lacking in my prayer life sometimes? Afraid so. But I'm not depending on my puny prayers to save me. I'm depending on his perfect prayerful relationship with his Father.

I was baptized as a child of 12 and again as an adult, thinking maybe the first baptism didn't take. But I didn't have to worry. I'm not depending on when or how I was baptized to save me. I'm depending on his perfect baptism. I'm in Christ. You're in Christ. We're in Christ. Makes you want to shout *Hallelujah!*



Sheila and Ed live near Gainesville in north Texas. When they retired, they decided not to buy a dog as a dog would tie them down too much. So they bought a horse and two donkeys! Sheila says at least they don't have to be walked several times a day. Ed and Sheila attend Hope Community Fellowship in The Colony. You may email Sheila at grahams@ntin.net.

Worship and worry cannot exist at the same time in the same heart. They are mutually exclusive.



—Ruth Bell Graham

Zorro and Me

Life Is Grand!

By Barbara Dahlgren

Grandparenting is not a responsibility Zorro and I take lightly. After all, we have only two grandchildren (and they are *grand*), which would not exactly qualify us for a full quiver, but hey, we'll take what we can get!

We and our grandchildren are all at different stages of life. Sophia is almost 5 and ready for kindergarten. Dakota just graduated from high school and is ready for life. Zorro and I are old and ready for bed. I guess we aren't exactly old. It's just that we feel old after we spend a couple of hours with our grandkids. Our energy level isn't what it used to be.

I once heard that grandparenting is a gift between two people at opposite ends of their journey. I like that a lot.

Grandparents are in the perfect position to provide roots, make memories, teach wisdom and share laughter. Zorro and I relish this opportunity, but we've decided it needs to be done without dishonoring the parents, changing their rules or undermining their authority.

So this grandma won't be sneaking extra cookies to her grandkids behind their mom's back, although the temptation to do so is great. After all, it's only one itty-bitty cookie. What harm could it do? No, no, no, I say to myself. Be strong, Grandma!

Each of us has a legacy we would like to pass on to our grandchildren. However, sometimes we can feel constrained to do so. For example, we may yearn to teach them about God but can't because their parents aren't believers. A fine line must be walked

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Life Is Grand!

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to appease the parents so we can continue to have access to the grandchildren. Although this presents a challenge, perhaps the greatest influence we can have is through the example we set in how we live our lives.

Children are much wiser than we think and pick up on such things as love, trust, forgiveness, patience, faith and joy. Secretly we might like to be the conduit to their relationship with God, but we know God will ultimately take care of leading them to him—in his time.

The Bible is a book about roots, lineage and grandparents. Just about everyone mentioned is someone's grandparent and their influence was greater than you might think.

When Paul sent greetings to his dear friend, Timothy, he mentioned Timothy's sincere faith that first dwelt in his grandmother Lois (2 Timothy 1:5). Lois had a definite effect on her grandson's life or why would Paul have made a point of mentioning this?

Hezekiah's father Ahaz was one of the worst kings Judah ever had. His son, Hezekiah, chose not to follow in his dad's footsteps but emulate his grandfather Jotham instead. Both Hezekiah and Jotham were kings who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kings 15:32-36; 18:1-8).

Then we have the example of Naomi. Her son, Mahlon, married Ruth but died soon after. Ruth became like Naomi's own daughter. Ruth married Boaz and had a son, Obed, who became Jesse's father who became David's father, in direct lineage to Jesus Christ. When baby Obed was born it was Grandmother Naomi the women congratulated (Ruth 4:13-16, *NIV*). "He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age.... Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him."

Here's an interesting point: Naomi was not

Ruth's mother. She was her mother-in-law from Ruth's marriage to Mahlon. Of course they did have that whole kinsman—bind the deal with a sandal—redeemer thing going on, so Boaz was related to Naomi and Mahlon. And according to law the birth of their first son Obed was to preserve the name and inheritance of Mahlon. Naomi wasn't the biological grandmother, yet it was obvious Grandma Naomi would be heavily involved in Obed's life.

I love this example best of all. You see, we have a similar situation with our grandson Dakota. He's not our biological grandson. He came into our lives at age 2 when our daughter started dating his dad and eventually married. Yet I don't think the love could be greater or the bond closer.

Grandparents and grandchildren are gifts to each other. It's a two-way street. Grandkids soften our hearts, lift our spirits, brighten our lives and keep us in tune with an ever-changing world. In return, we give them money. Just kidding! Well, not really, but in addition to money we give them lots of other stuff including unconditional love and continual prayers. Prayer is paramount. After all, if we don't pray for our grandchildren who will?

So I guess you can tell Zorro and I love this grandparenting thing. No matter how old we feel, we think it's just *grand!*



Doing a Bible study on grandparenting Barbara ran across this scripture in Proverbs 17:6. "Children's children are a crown to the aged." She says, "So what if Zorro and I feel tired and aged trying to keep up with the grandkids, that doesn't negate the joy we have in being grandparents!" You can check out Barbara's blog at www.barbdahlgren.com or email her at bydahlgren@pacbell.net. She loves hearing from you.

Come Drink and Be Refreshed

By *Thelma Davies*

The theme of the *Connecting & Bonding* Conference last September was “Come Drink of the Living Waters and Be Refreshed,” taken from Isaiah 55:1.

This conference was special to me because it had been a tough year for my husband Louis and me on several fronts. The women who spoke seemed to be speaking directly to my heart. They made John 7:37, which tied in with the overall theme, come alive for me and in me.

“On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink” (NIV).

That is exactly what God did for me at this conference.

Some of the salient points I am taking to heart in my life:

- Contentment is an inside job. It is a supernatural gift from the Holy Spirit in a heart that is done telling God what to do. Con-

tentment and relinquishing go hand in hand.

- God loves all of us—even his rebellious children. He has a perfect plan for everyone. Yea!
- Trying to live like Jesus is immature; maturity is Christ living in me, which lets me be more myself.
- Trials promote God’s glory. Trials teach me to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus.
- Worry and anxiety are sins of unbelief.
- God gives us the “gift” of misery when like sheep we wander from him.
- Peace is not a state of mind; it is Christ in me. Christ in me means peace in me.
- Living under life’s burdens is circumstantial living, a cheap substitute for living water that never ceases to flow. That living water is Jesus Christ.
- The Bible is the living Word and offers living water. Do I use the Bible like a cell phone taking it wherever I go? Am I constantly receiving texts from God? God never drops a call because Jesus paid the price for my phone bills!
- Intentional living means to believe and receive God’s love, to trust and obey

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Confidential Peer Listener Line

Shall we talk? We’re here for you!

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Come Drink

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God. I have to be intentional in prayer, praise and thanksgiving. Intentional living allows me to receive the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the joy of the Lord. Living as one with Jesus, moment to moment, helps me love others with his love.

Overall, it was an encouraging and inspiring weekend. This conference was a defining point for us in spiritual maturity. The entire weekend was about Jesus, our Living Water. We looked into the Kingdom of God and into the face of his Son. Our minds were refreshed and renewed through him. Jesus is the Living Water and we are free to drink of him anytime.



Thelma has been married 44 years this April 7th to Louis Davies, an elder in Long Beach, California. They are parents to three children and grandparents to six grandchildren plus three by the marriages of their children. Thelma serves on the leadership team in Bible Study Fellowship in the children's program. She is an avid reader whose favorite book is the Bible. Thelma's biggest aspiration is to see God face to face one day and to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." You may email Thelma at thelmadavies51@hotmail.com.

You no more need a day off from spiritual concentration in matters of your life than your heart needs a day off from beating. As you cannot take a day off morally and remain moral, you cannot take a day off spiritually and remain spiritual.

—Oswald Chambers



Briefly Speaking...

Patriotism and Me

Rand & McNally designated the town of Gainesville, Texas, the most patriotic small town in the U.S. this year. It was well deserved. The townspeople came together in droves to support the effort. As one person remarked, the town was “wrapped in red, white and blue.” But the most significant reason, I feel, is because Gainesville is the only host city to Medal of Honor winners in America. Medal of Honor winners come from all over the nation to be featured in an annual parade, with trees planted in their names. Patriotism is a big deal in Gainesville, not just this year but every year.

I live near Gainesville and I was involved in some of the activities. I consider myself a patriotic American. It hurts me, however, to see the label of patriotism misused to exclude many Americans. For example, does one have to be a member of one certain political party to be patriotic or one race or one religion, to be a true American? Some seem to think so. Some of the issues have created quite an emotional stir, while others, which seem to me more significant, are either ignored or denigrated.

I realize it's an election year. (How could I not with everyone from Sarah Palin to the local sheriff calling several times a day to remind me to vote!) But as a Christian, I'm trying not to get my politics mixed up with my patriotism, or with my Christianity, for that matter. Elections come and go, and this one has certainly stirred up the hate mongers, but Christ's command to love God and our neighbors, that's eternal.

—Sheila Graham
sheila.graham@gci.org



Creation's Echoes

By Cathy Emerson

A wonderful program on our PBS station titled the “Echoes of Creation” made me pause and consider the creation of the world. The gentleman who scripted the video engaged an award-winning musician to write a soundtrack featuring the glorious splendor of our Pacific Northwest and our Alaskan neighbors.

Ethereal human voices rose and fell to blend with streams of water tumbling down massive cliffs, then lulled into soft melody as the plane’s camera panned out over the still waters of the Puget Sound. Next they erupted into joyous shouts as the plane skimmed above dolphins and whales jumping and twirling in the tumultuous waters off Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

As I pondered these things, I thought of the scripture in Job 38:7 that talks of the morning stars (angels) rejoicing and singing as the mighty power of God formed an earth of pristine beauty for his children.

Can you imagine the excitement of the angels as the mountains were pushed up? The thunder of their voices would have blended with the tormented sounds of rock screaming in protest as tons of earth crept up against other tons. Basses probably thundered out the most on that one, though the sopranos must have joined in with fervor.

The aurora borealis was like an ethereal light show pulled off by the Triune family. Angel voices rose and fell as the light showered down out in the cosmos, wave after wave of sound to coordinate with ribbons of color undulating through the frosty skies. (I wonder if the angels, like so many earthly choirs, had to practice to perform perfectly.

Perhaps it was extemporaneous.)

I can see the angels peering down, maybe elbowing one another, to get a better view of the funny looking platypus being formed by the one who later became Jesus (John 1:3). What laughter and joy and more songs of amazement would have followed these events. I am convinced heaven is not a solemn place to live—noise and laughter and music are going on regularly. The silence of heaven for half an hour was an exception as noted in the book of Revelation.



God must have microscopic sight, as he created a vast realm teeming with workings of a miniature world. Not to be outdone by the tiny world, the mind-numbingly vast universe includes our small solar system as the realm reaches out to the great unknown. How awesome is our Triune God and no wonder the angels sang.

We come next to the creation of man and woman. But something was missing at the start of creation. Even though the first man’s and woman’s bodies worked to perfection, they had not yet been tempted. They had not yet sinned. Grace wasn’t yet needed. Though Jesus had not lived and died as a human, Scripture tells us he was slain from the foundation (conception) of the world (Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 9:26, 1 Peter 1:20).

How do we reconcile our beautiful, pain-racked world with another to come? In Romans 8:21-22 we see: “Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens. All around us we observe a pregnant creation” (*The Message*).

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Creations Echoes

(Continued from page 12)

As wonderful as this world is, our Creator has something even better in mind. It's called a new heaven and a new earth! We will be a new creation too and will have the power and heart to work with Jesus to correct the wrongs of thousands of generations of mankind who haven't done well by the first world they inherited. Not that we shouldn't do what we can to care for our planet now. We are to care for this physical world just as we are to care for the people in it!

Yes, someday the angels again will sing with astounding beauty, joy and love. I can't help but think they will be joined in a standing requiem by their once human counterparts who rejoice because they can at last contribute to the healing of our wonderful planet.

May God speed the day when his whole creation reaches the perfection planned for us all. What a superlative party we will have then!



Cathy says: "I have my Misty kitty but now am getting involved with an outside cat. This one looks like one of a pair that came to our home just before we got Misty. It has a lame foot (which is why I started to feed it) and is smaller than my kitty. I can almost touch it but it skitters back if I am too close. Misty and the cat have glaring contests through the screen. I have named it Simie, short for Simeon, because I still can't tell if it's a he or a she." You may email Cathy at ceewee@juno.com.

Being a Light...has a lighter side!

For a romantic touch, I washed our sheets with lavender-scented fabric softener. When my husband got into bed, he sniffed. "What's this?" he asked.

"Guess," I said coyly. "I have no idea," he said. "It smells like the stuff you use to line the hamster's cage."

The dogs next door get a little noisy, so one day somebody called animal control to complain. When the officers arrived, I heard my neighbor tell them, "Hey, dogs bark. It's human nature."

In my wills and trusts course the professor posed this question to the students: "Why do people choose to have their children, rather than their siblings, inherit their estate?"

After students offered various theories, one fellow raised his hand. "This may be a bit off the point," he said, "but when I was little, when my brother and sister finished playing with me, they would put me into a drawer."

I returned home from my ninth business trip of the year with a severe bout of jet lag-induced foot-in-mouth disease. As we prepared to go to sleep that night, I wrapped my arms around my better half, gave her a kiss and announced, "It's good to be in my own bed, with my own wife!"

—cleanlaffs