

THE HARBOR LIGHTS ALMANAC

Quarterly Women's newsletter of Our Safe Harbor Church

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THE BEAUTY OF CHANGE; EMOTIONALLY, SPIRITUALLY, AND PHYSICALLY

I don't like changes, but I love to change. When I was a kid, my mother cleaned the house at night. My father would be gone to a meeting. He would come home after dark, being careful not to wake the house of sleeping children, and he would tiptoe through the house without turning the lights on. My mother loved to change the furniture around. My father would fall into a chair, couch, bookshelf, or coffee table that wasn't in that place when he left earlier in the night. Change. Embracing it is fine for some, excruciatingly painful for others. There is, if we choose to look at it, a beauty in change.

I have changed, thankfully, in the last four decades. Some of the changes were for the better, some were just because nature was taking its course, and others were because of the lessons I learned in those decades of living. I love who I am today. I would like the energy, the youthfulness, the body parts that worked better from my 30s, but emotionally and spiritually change has been such a blessing. God knew that eventually I would get to where I would be a deeper, more meaningful person, but that would include, swallowing and gulping hard. CHANGE.

I love holding my newest granddaughter. She is beautiful in every way. She will change. She will become the opinionated two-year-old who does everything her own way, in her own time, according to her emotions at the present moment. The baby will eventually get potty trained, hopefully so will her older sister, and they will become beautiful young women, but not before a lot of change. Some of the changes will include pimples, opinions, poor decisions, time-outs, and apologies.

God gives us the privilege of changing, although he never does. God gives us the chance to ask for forgiveness, although he never needs to. God also gives us the opportunity to look back and see the meaningful beauty that changes in life brought. Enjoy the writings of these ladies as they share their hearts.

-- *Marette Jorgenson*



THE BEAUTY OF CHANGES IN LIFE **Written by Ruth Bullock**

Change is an inevitable part of life, weaving itself through our experiences and shaping who we become. Sometimes it arrives quietly, other times it sweeps in with undeniable force as we enter the different seasons of our lives. Whether change is physical—like growing older, moving to



a new place, creating new friendships, or adopting new habits—or spiritual—such as evolving our beliefs, embracing inner peace, or developing a closer relationship with God—it brings with it beauty and opportunity. “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Sometimes it is difficult to embrace physical change. Life can evoke nostalgia for what has passed. This morning, as I look into the mirror, I see a woman, older and hopefully wiser, with short white hair shimmering, replacing hair that was once long and brown. This short white hair now frames a face marked by wrinkles instead of just laugh lines. Wasn't it just yesterday that I was pregnant with twins and chasing after a toddler? The passage of time reveals itself not only in the silver strands and gentle creases, but in the memories that fill the spaces of my soul. Each mark is a testament to laughter and tears, to lessons learned and love given. “Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16b).

Spiritually, change prompts us to reflect, adapt, and elevate our sense of purpose. Change can help us to love and trust our Savior more each day. It teaches us to embrace uncertainty and to trust the process of transformation, knowing that every step forward brings new wisdom and insight. “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2a).

The beauty of change lies not only in its ability to challenge us, but also in its power to inspire growth. By accepting the ebb and flow of life's transitions—both visible and invisible—we unlock new perspectives and gain a greater appreciation for the richness of our existence and the plan God has for our lives. In learning to welcome change, we discover the profound joy that comes from evolving and becoming the best version of ourselves, living in the image of Christ. “And we all, with unveiled face,

beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18a).

And so, dear friends, I encourage you to embrace the beauty of change and see what marvelous things God has in store for you!

FAITH, BIG PRAYERS, BIG CHANGES **Written by Loretta McKee**

The attitude and mindset with which we approach the ability for big prayer is extremely crucial. The book of Ephesians gives us great guidance. Listen carefully to what Paul has to say. “In Whom, because of our faith in Him, we dare to have the boldness (courage and confidence) of free access (an unreserved approach to God with freedom and without fear)” (Amplified Bible, Classic Edition, Ephesians 3:12).

Note that at the beginning of this passage, we encounter the word “faith”. It all starts with big faith. Now, envision yourself entering the Throne Room and coming into the presence of the almighty God. How are you walking in? Quaking, shaking, apologetically, scared to death? That had to be before reading Paul's directive for our posture. Let's replay that scenario. This time, see yourself entering that same room boldly, fearlessly, confidently, excited for a one-on-one conversation with a Father who is extending a welcoming hand. Remember all these privileges enabling big prayer are available because of our faith.

So what about that third aspect of this trilogy? Again, we turn to Ephesians. “Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams—]” (AMPC, Ephesians 3:20)

Wow!! What more is there to be said? Are you absorbing the enormity of this passage? Are there any more superior descriptions of the big results of our big faith and big prayers? Could there be anything more we could possibly want? Far over and above anything we could dare hope for; infinitely—I repeat—infinitely beyond the highest or biggest prayer we could utter; way, way more than what we desire or imagine or dream or even hope for. It does not get better than this. And you know what else? It cannot get bigger than this.

BIG FAITH BIG PRAYERS BIG ANSWERS





HE'S STILL WORKIN' ON ME... THE BEAUTY OF CHANGE

Written by Rosi Braatz

One of my favorite movies is *Fiddler on the Roof*; and a favorite line is when Tevye (the Papa) is addressing his daughter on the futility of marrying outside the faith, having no spiritual common ground. "A bird may love a fish," he says, "but where would they build a home together?"

As a brand-new Christian, a baby in Christ and a foreigner to the Word, I was thrown headlong into a culture that seemed equally challenging. The worlds collided, as they say.

The only time I had read the Bible was for a confirmation class and, even then, only selected passages. Here I was, an Illinois transplant with little, if any, spiritual background following her Minnesota boy to the prairie and people who spoke openly about God and Jesus and scripture and...get this...prayed before a meal...out loud! On my first visit, engaged and nervous about meeting the family (the very large extended family), I clearly remember an auntie asking us all to join hands for prayer and a hymn before we ate. What?? Because all eyes were on the new girlfriend, there was no hiding my rolling of eyes that said, "These people are so weird. What have I gotten myself into?"

I had grown up in a Methodist church where the only mention of Jesus was at Christmas and Easter. There was no talk of a personal relationship with Him and certainly nothing about being born in sin and needing to be saved from it.

But here I was, hundreds of miles from home and all things familiar. I was here to stay. I don't know if maybe God gave the fish wings or the birds gills, but gradually I began not only to understand, but to crave and desire more teaching, more truth, more of this Jesus and what He wanted for me and expected of me.

A precious and sagacious mentor led me along in baby steps over the years, answering endless questions and feeding me spiritual gems to memorize and treasure in my heart. Of all the advice she gave and the time she invested in me, one thing stands out above all else: "Ask God for two things: first, a love for His Word and ears to hear when He speaks to you; secondly, for something He wants to change in your life. Then do it. If reading the Word doesn't change you, then it is nothing more than reading the words."

Sorting through some of my journals recently, I came across one where I would write down a particular verse and reference, followed by a one- or two-line response. It was like finding an old friend! At the top I had written "God's promises and instructions for Rosi." As I skimmed the pages, I was struck anew with the joy of God "speaking" to me through the scriptures and then claiming it through my avenue of truth...my pen.

I share a few of them here as a reminder of His strength in my weakness, His faithfulness in my doubts, His comfort in my pain, His light in my darkness.

"FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU, PLANS FOR GOOD AND NOT FOR EVIL; PLANS FOR A FUTURE AND A HOPE" (JEREMIAH 29:11).

RESPONSE: *It doesn't matter that I feel no direction or see a purpose in the way things are happening. I need to trust His plan in growing me and His hand in guiding me.*

"I WILL INSTRUCT YOU AND TEACH YOU IN THE WAY YOU SHOULD GO. I WILL COUNSEL YOU AND WATCH OVER YOU" (PSALM 32:8).

RESPONSE: *God knows what I need and when I need it. I need to wait for the prompting of the Spirit. I need to wait for instructions. If I jump ahead, I will not only miss the target, but the blessing of the journey as well. Learn to wait, Rosi.*

EACH NEW DAY IS A GIFT

Written by Janice Roesler

Scripture: "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord" (NRSV, Lamentations 3:22-23).

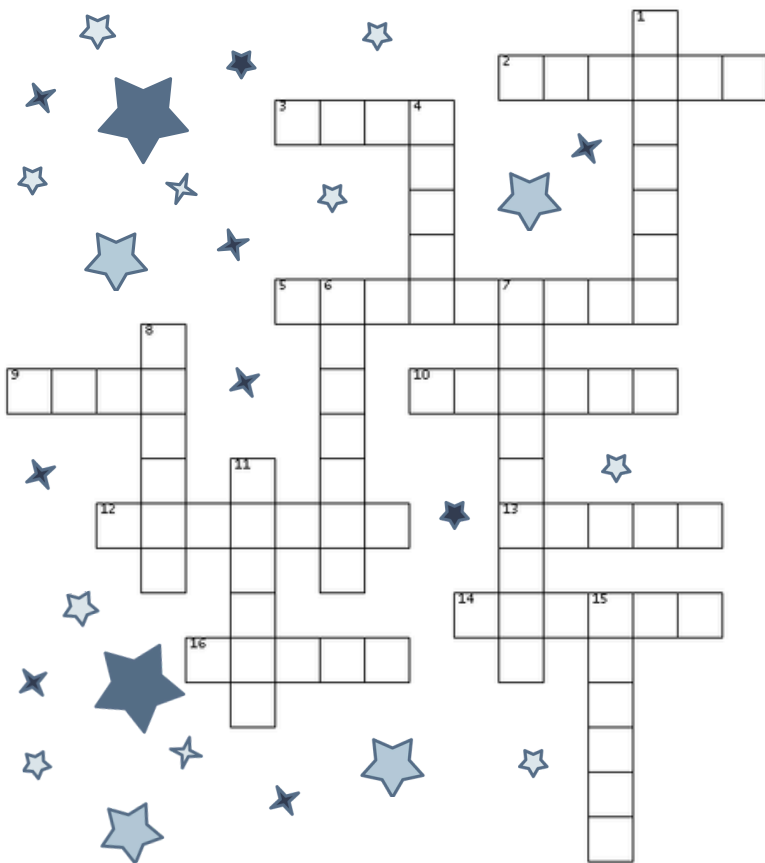
Thoughts: Each new day is a gift, a fresh opportunity to embrace life's possibilities and blessings. When we approach a new day with gratitude and openness, we unlock the potential for growth, joy, and fulfillment. I've learned to start each day with a positive mindset. The new day brings renewed hope and opportunities. I know we all can recall difficult seasons in our lives. Each morning, I remind myself of God's unfailing love in the fresh mercies he provides daily. This gives me the strength to meet the challenges of the day with faith and optimism.

Question of the day: How do you embrace a new day?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of each new day. Help us to embrace it with gratitude and joy, knowing you are always loving and caring for us. Guide us to live for you faithfully. Amen.



WHAT DID YOU LEARN?



ALL THE ANSWERS TO THIS PUZZLE CAN BE FOUND IN THE ARTICLES ABOVE

ACROSS

2. Found even in life's transitions
3. Something believers are often called to do
5. Appropriate response to a new day
9. Future-focused gift from God
10. What every article celebrates
12. The process of spiritual growth
13. Essential ingredient for big prayers
14. Result of embracing change
16. Fresh every morning

DOWN

1. God's plan for our lives
4. Needed when we cannot see the plan
6. Made fresh again spiritually
7. To change from one state to another
8. "To everything there is a ___"
11. Conversation with God
15. Often gained through change



*How can we help you? Being alone, or the feeling of being alone keeps us from doing things in life that bring us joy and keep us from loving others. Please let us know how we can pray for you, befriend you and help you in your faith walk. Be sure to visit the **Mornings With Marette** page for inspiring devotionals. Be a part of Sunday Worship along with the ministry of teaching each Monday and Wednesday morning with Patrick Mead. Our Safe Harbor is here to serve you. Let us know how we can help! — The Harbor Lights*

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WEBSITE

oursafeharbor.com

EMAIL

info@oursafeharbor.com

PRAYER REQUESTS

prayer@oursafeharbor.com

