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# THE HARBOR LIGHTS ALMANAC

Quarterly Women's newsletter of Our Safe Harbor Church

## FEATURED STORIES THIS MONTH

[A Little Bit of Yeast - 2](#)

[Taking Advice - 2](#)

[The Dash - 3](#)

[New Year, New You - 4](#)

[More than Nice - 5](#)

[Collection of Poems - 6](#)



For many of us, we gave up not just coming up with New Year's resolutions but also keeping any we might let slip through the cracks. Yet, a new year is the beginning of new things. A new calendar, a new journal, and a new number to write on checks, if anyone still writes checks. We want new beginnings. We want fresh starts. We want to change, but it's hard to decide to do so, and even harder to do. This newsletter features articles about a variety of things that help us be a better "us" in this new year, already in its second month. It's never too late to turn the corner and be more effective in our lives, in our dash. As Katie says, "New Year, New You" can apply to everyday life. "New Day, New Me": Every day is a fresh slate full of forgiveness and grace. It's all about influence, as Lisa writes in the article about yeast. Who do you let influence you, and who do you influence? Sarah reminds us of the all-important truth of knowing the people you take advice from, Rachel takes us on the journey of being more than just "nice" but being Jesus, and Sherron weaves words in poetry to move us to sit within, where God placed us, and dwell there long enough to let His beauty move our hearts. May these words written from the hearts of women inspire you to make this year, month, day, or hour be one that leaves Jesus all over the people you encounter.

-- *Marette Jorgenson*



# A LITTLE BIT OF YEAST

Written by Lisa Racine

"And again He said, 'To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until it was all leavened'" (Luke 13:20). Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God in this parable. Ladies made bread for their families at this time in history, and they used a little bit of yeast. They even ground their own wheat.

The women would take their flour and mix in oil, salt, sometimes honey, and a little bit of yeast (leaven). To make the dough rise, you need yeast. Without it, you get flat, dense bread. The Kingdom of God is to permeate everything as we spread the good news, just like that little bit of yeast works its way through the dough.

A one-pound loaf of bread needs a little bit of yeast, only ¼ ounce. That's not a lot of yeast, but when made properly, you get a beautiful loaf of bread. This should be encouraging to us. We may seem small, but as we spread the good news of Jesus, we can see great things come about.

I love to make homemade bread. It smells so good when it is rising, and after it comes out of the oven that golden crisp smell is something wonderful. In the same way that's what I can do as part of God's Kingdom—I can help share a little bit of God's goodness with this world and hopefully bring something beautiful to someone else's life.

Are you faithful to the Lord, loving your husband and your kids, do you speak the truth in love, and help others? This way, others will "see" your good works and possibly get interested in becoming a follower of Jesus. Or are you giving off a stinky rotten vibe that no one wants to be around?

Remember, we are to influence those we encounter. For example, even if a little bit of yeast is in a recipe, it will influence everything it touches. This should be true of us. The people we are around should be affected positively by us as we live our lives for the glory of God.

Think about this lady in the parable and how she "hid" the little bit of yeast in the flour. We don't have to be loud and showy as we "hide"



God's truth in others' lives. To summarize, make a difference today, and hide some of God's goodness in someone's life, so maybe they will smell and taste the wonderfulness of God and want to be a part of the Kingdom.



# TAKING ADVICE

Written by Sarah Ziegler

In the beekeeping world, there are always lots of people willing to share their good advice. I am a member of quite a few online forums where beekeepers across the globe discuss and debate best practices of beekeeping. As I have watched and read each question, answer, and position, I am always astonished by the huge array of differing and often diametric answers offered. "Yes, you should definitely feed dry sugar!" "No way! You should never feed dry sugar! Only sugar syrup. Feeding sugar makes you a cheater!" For a "newbee" learning the ropes, it can be confounding!

One of my favorite groups has a rule that has cleared up a ton of confusion for me. This group requires that you post your location and climate information with every question. This rule has made all the difference in getting relevant information! The advice provided by an Arizona beekeeper to a Montana beekeeper, although well-intentioned, might prove to be poor, ineffective, or ill-suited for the conditions.

In beekeeping, good advice is only as good as the common background or backstory of the beekeeper. Advice is contingent upon local circumstances.

So what is the lesson in this? Be careful about where you obtain advice. Choose wise people who have walked where you are walking. Listen to those who have already been through your trial. These warriors are qualified to share their wisdom; they are the ones you should learn from. For example, I have a dear friend who is bearing up under some difficult marital issues. She has been diligent in seeking out women who have had similar struggles and has placed herself in the shadow of their tutelage. This practice has been such a blessing for her and an inspiration to me!

I am thankful for the wisdom that comes from trials as well as the kind people who share their wisdom.

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# THE DASH

Written by Marette Jorgenson

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*Birthdays come and go, reminding us of the fragility of life. Not just how fragile life is, but how quickly the years go by. As a kid, our birthdays were never a big deal; in fact, I don't think I had a birthday party until I was well into my adult years. When we were kids, we got to choose our own cake. Mine was chocolate with white fluffy frosting between the two round layers, with chocolate drizzled on top. My birthday has been amid interesting events. Being stalled in Kansas knowing no one, breaking my foot on my birthday, being sick, seeing friends, my father passing*

*and the year I turned the same age my father was when he died (that was sobering). Why should this year be any different? I spent my birthday this year caressing the arm of a dear friend and praying before I left, thanking God for the 41 years I have been honored to be a friend, and asking God to take him home. His life will be defined by what happened between the year he was born and 2026, the year God took him home. It's a dash that connects the dates.*

*The dash. We see it everywhere in the cemetery. The name, the year they were born, the dash, and the year they died. The dash. Such a short little line, and yet it contains so much. What we do with our dash, the many birthdays we celebrate in this world, cannot be understood by simply looking at the dash.*

*I look back at the years of "dashing"—has done so many things—and if God wills, I will have a few more years before the date is entered, ending my dashing.*

*Jesus lived 33 years. In his dash, Peter describes how Jesus lived, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him" (Acts10:38).*

*We know more about the "doing good" and the "dashing": healed the blind, raised the dead, made the lame to walk and the deaf to hear, and cast out demons. Jesus turned water into wine, fish and bread into a buffet, and made a simple statement that turned a mob, who came to kill a woman, into quietly dispersing. Jesus taught a bunch of men to listen and see beyond the obvious, look before they leapt, or in Peter's case, look before he drew his sword, and turned a bunch of backwoods hicks into orators.*

*We don't know much about the 30 years before, but we do know about the three years of dashing, and it's quite the resume.*

*How do I dash well? How do I take advantage of every moment, every breath, every opportunity to live so my dash has value, shares my faith, and makes a difference in someone else's life?*

*I might have, perhaps, been slightly hyperventilating over this birthday number. It's not a magical number, and it doesn't end in a 0 or a 5, but it reminded me that I am getting older. Have I made a difference? What else can I do to be effective? Retirement—I don't want to be retired, I want to be moving, and to do so, do I have to be reshod, or retreaded? But I also don't want to be busy, frantic, feeling I have to be effective or rate my dash on my earthly focus. That seems to be a problem with us humans. We need to see success, or at least progress, now. Eternity is where I will truly understand how effective my dash was. Now is the only time I have to be intentional and fruitful. Just one day at a time. Just one prayer at a time. Just one meal with a friend. Just one supper delivered to*

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people whose life is in chaos. Just one donation to a worthy cause. Just one ... thing at a time. I don't mean to use the word merely as a label, as if it were insignificant. Back in the day, Michael Jordan and Nike made famous the quote, "Just do it." Instead of making excuses why I can't, I need to "just do it," just do something. Jesus looked and saw and did. He went about doing good. He went out of His way to do good. He saw the teary eyes and did good. He heard the stomach growling and did good. He listened to the crowd, and rather than react, He just went about doing good.

I look at the cards I got in the mail, see the birthday notices online and in texts, and I smile. I smile because so many of them represent relationships because I did something, and God turned it into something good. Paul reminds me not to get tired of "just doing it," because Paul knows we get caught up in not seeing our "dashing" through heaven's eyes. "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up (Galatians 6:9).

I won't have chocolate cake tonight—the tradition—but I will enjoy family, have a great supper, and laugh. After all, when we talk about someone living in their "dash," often that's what we remember. The times we enjoyed together, ate meals, and laughed. My challenge is to keep living, keep "dashing" so that my testimony outlasts my life, however long God has determined for me.

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## NEW YEAR, NEW YOU **Written by Katie Green**

It's catchy. It's marketable. And it plays on the natural dissatisfaction that we all feel. I often feel disappointed in myself. You may sympathize... I am my own greatest critic.

As the winter chill wears off, spring opens new. It quickly gives way to summer heat, and before I know what has happened, November chases me into December, and I am standing in church on Christmas Eve, candle in hand, wondering who stole my years. A cup with a chip in the rim and a crack that runs all the way to the bottom. It is a shallow crack—the cup still holds my coffee. It is old, and it has spent many mornings with me as I contemplate life at my kitchen table.

The same four walls surround me.

The same regrets from the past have not vanished.

The same responsibilities wait.

The morning is new, but I am not.

Like that cup, I am worn and tired. I carry the weight of past regrets and the dread of mistakes I know I will make again.

But scripture tells us something steady and sure.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Not new circumstances.

Not a new season of life.

Not the removal of yesterday's consequences.

But His mercy.

Unblemished. Untarnished. Unused.

As the fire flickers in the hearth, I am reminded that God does not promise a new life each January. He promises faithful mercies each morning. Mercy does not roar in all at once—it is tended, steady, and sufficient for the day. He does not discard what is cracked and worn. He fills it. He warms it. He keeps it.

This is my promise to my future self: I will not strive to be it all, do it all, win it all. Instead, I will live faithfully with the mercy God places before me today.

Time will pass quickly. It always does. But when I stand again at a Christmas Eve service, candle in hand, I do not want to measure the year by what I failed to accomplish. I want to know that I lived within the mercy God so freely gave. I hope my resolve encourages you as well as we face the new year together.

His mercy is new.

This year, I intend to live in it.



# MORE THAN NICE

Written by Rachel Younis

Today, we often confuse kindness with being nice (in Latin, nice means “ignorant” or being highly tolerant toward all sorts of things. Before we engage in any conversation, we should be kind with our words. Sadly, this behavior has led us to be fake and cowardly. The way our culture defines kindness differs from its description in the Bible. In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul identifies kindness as a virtue that results from the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person. It is not merely a trait but a sign of spiritual maturity and God’s presence in one’s life. Kindness in Hebrew is “hesed”, which is God’s lovingkindness and commitment to His people, even when they stray from Him. In Greek, kindness —“chrēstotēs”— means goodness, uprightness, and honesty. It was the lovingkindness of God that grafted the Gentile believers into the olive tree. In reflecting on this, Paul encourages us to be kind (Romans 11:22).

As God’s image-bearers, we are called to reflect His kindness through our lives. His kindness moves us to care for and tend to others. A powerful example of this is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Despite being an outcast, the Samaritan showed compassion when he saw a wounded man who had been robbed. He picked him up, brought him to safety, ensured he received medical attention, and paid for his care. Jesus praised this act of mercy and encouraged us to show the same kind of compassion to those in need. Furthermore, God’s kindness moves us to be upright and forgiving. For it is not a weakness but a strength of God’s Spirit. For example, David was repeatedly harassed, chased, and almost fatally attacked by Saul on several occasions. But when he found Saul in a weakened state, he spared his life, stating, “The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord” (1 Samuel 24:6). Thus, kindness leads us to forgive our enemies, especially when we have the opportunity to get even with them.

Kindness also makes us honest. In 2 Timothy 4:3, Paul writes, “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will



gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.” This is a sad reality, as we live in a culture where we cannot call sin “sin”, nor can we call abomination “abomination”. We

cannot discuss difficult issues without apologizing, tailoring our words, or heavily censoring ourselves. If we do, we risk losing friendships and family or being canceled.

But is silence always kind? Would a doctor be unkind to provide the correct diagnosis for life-saving treatment? Would a mother be unkind to prevent her baby from touching fire or a knife? True kindness speaks the truth for the good of others, even when it’s uncomfortable. Jesus modeled this when He spoke with the Samaritan woman—He revealed the truth about her sinful life to lead her to freedom. In response, she ran to the town and exclaimed, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” (John 4:29). Jesus was not nice, but His honesty, rooted in love, brought transformation. This is the power of kindness that tells the truth. Kindness is not passive or fearful of discomfort; it is active and courageous, grounded in truth. It does not please others, but genuinely seeks their good, sometimes through hard discussions, bold truths, or loving corrections. It mirrors God’s nature: abundant in grace yet rich in truth, which moves us to places, people, and events where our fallen humanity would not go. It fills our hearts with compassion, prompting us to act responsibly amid despair and animosity. As Christ’s followers, we cannot be superficially nice to avoid reality. Instead, we must embody kindness empowered by the Spirit that uplifts, convicts, restores, and directs others toward God. In a culture that often misinterprets kindness, may we distinguish ourselves through courage, compassion, and Christlike love.

THE STEADFAST LOVE OF THE LORD NEVER  
CEASES, HIS MERCIES NEVER COME TO AN END;  
THEY ARE NEW EVERY MORNING; GREAT IS YOUR  
FAITHFULNESS.  
- LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23 (ESV)

# POEMS BY SHERRON FIELDS

## QUARTER MOON ON A WINTER NIGHT

Quarter moon dangling  
as a cradle  
Above a pure blanket of  
white snow,  
Dots of black on the  
hillsides resemble sable  
Hanging above in a  
blue velvet room to endow  
This peaceful night with a  
vision  
Of comforting respite from this day of  
stress.  
Crescent cradle dangling welcomes me in  
To swing in the comfort of nights' caress,  
Putting this day into perspective.  
Comforting, this scene outside my room,  
Gazing at the glow of the blanket  
reflective,  
Watching winters' beautiful quarter  
moon.



## WINTER PEARLS

Sunset tonight the color of pearls  
Round the neck of a beautiful girl.  
Heightened in color by candlelight soft,  
Ice crystals breathed in the air hovering  
and aloft.  
Above her neck the sky near night  
Was clothed in a pink and heather  
delight.  
Below the earth glistened with diamonds  
of white.  
For a brief time as day bid us adieu  
Giving us pearls in candlelight hue,  
Above a blanket of diamond white and  
sky blue.  
Glorious winter pearls round a neck of  
white,  
Bidding us all a peaceful, welcome night.

## WAITING FOR SPRING

It's mid-February and  
I noticed that Mother Earth  
Is starting to awake.  
She rolled over in bed and  
Up popped tulip leaves.  
She wiggled her toes and  
Snowdrops appeared.  
She sneezed and daffodils  
Awoke and stretched upward  
Through her frozen skin.

It's mid-February and  
The sun shone through  
The blizzard of snow flurries  
And in minutes the wind swept  
Her face clean of leaves and  
Carelessly tossed paper cups.  
It's cold outside but Mother Earth  
Is starting to awake  
From her needed rest  
To resurrect life hiding under her folds  
And under her frozen white breast.

When February is over and March begins  
Her skin will soften and allow  
More life to escape from within her  
Blankets of brown and gray  
And quilt them green again  
Renewing our hope and remind us we  
can  
Depend upon her.  
Faithful, constant and sure.  
She pours forth her bountiful love  
In color and sound below and above  
As she leaves her bed  
To her miracles we are led  
To walk God's earth for  
Three seasons now her floor and walls  
And ceiling, are dressed in royal clothes.

But it's mid-February and  
We wait in anticipation  
And we watch her each day  
Awake from her slumber  
Her stirrings we number  
Waiting for spring.



## LOOKING AHEAD

*We would love for you to share your heart, using words, that we may encourage each other and share our faith and our faith walk with each other.*

*The topic for June is “**Changing life**”, Septembers theme is “**The Blessings of Life**”, and for December we will be sharing “**The gift that changed our life**”.*

*200 words, poetry, reflections on Bible verses or a short testimony would be welcome!*

*Please send an email to Marette at the email address below or to any of the OSHC staff. Please send the writings a month before the scheduled month for the newsletter topics be sent.*

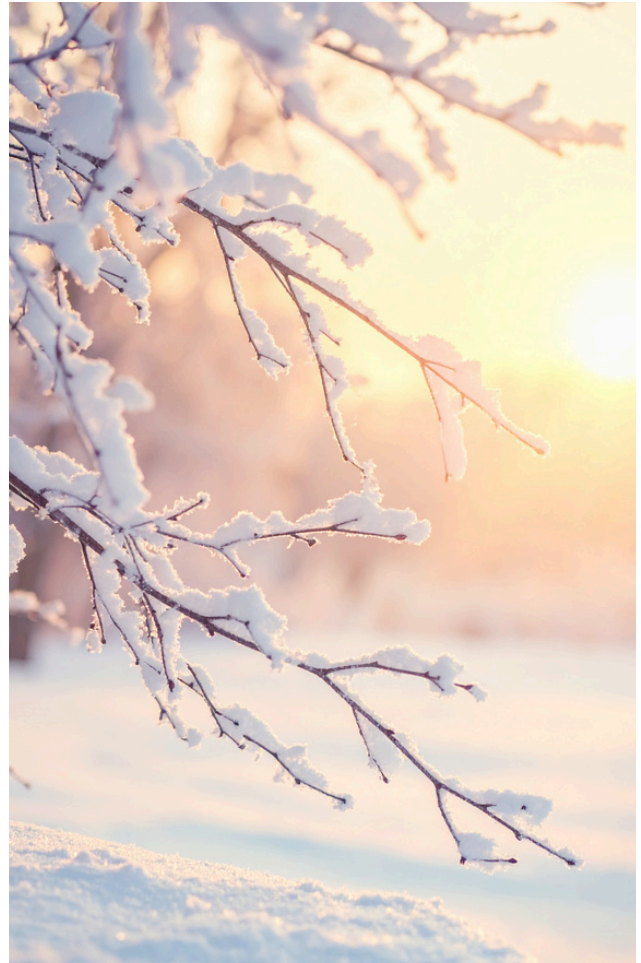
## WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE AN ALMANAC CONTRIBUTOR?

If so, we'd LOVE to hear from you!  
Please connect with Marette via e-mail [\*\*marettejorgenson@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:marettejorgenson@gmail.com)



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