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THE HARBOR LIGHTS ALMANAC

Quarterly Women's newsletter of Our Safe Harbor Church

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AND GOD IS ABLE TO BLESS YOU ABUNDANTLY, SO THAT IN ALL THINGS AT ALL TIMES, HAVING ALL THAT YOU NEED, YOU WILL ABOUND IN EVERY GOOD WORK. - 2 CORINTHIANS 9:8 (NIV)

The decorations are at Menards, and the pumpkins are lined up outside the grocery stores: fall is here! Often we think of Thanksgiving and immediately go to counting our blessings. That's needed and appropriate but our focus should be to be thankful all year round not just when the orange leaves show up and the pumpkins adorn our front steps. So as a preface to Thanksgiving, let's count our blessings before November. Take the time to thank God before the rest of the world recognizes the beauty of being thankful.

-- *Marette Jorgenson*



SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 103:1-14 (NIV)

Of David.

1 Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
2 Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
3 who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
5 who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6 The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.
7 He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
13 As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;
14 for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.

BECOMING GRANDMAMA

Written By Barbara Cassilly

They say your life changes when you become a parent. And that is true. But nothing prepares you for the moment you become a grandparent. When



I held my sweet, beautiful granddaughter for the first time, I knew my world would never be the same. Things were new and different in a wonderful way. Priorities changed along with a new and magical outlook on life. Looking at her tiny, perfect face, my heart filled with a kind of love I had never known before. In that quiet moment, I felt the unmistakable presence of God. His love truly filled my heart and my soul. She is a reminder of His perfect timing, His goodness and the beautiful way He weaves generations together. Holding her, I realized that grandchildren are not just a continuation of our family tree; they are a direct gift from Heaven, a piece of God's grace and love that you can physically hold in your hands.

This new chapter in our lives is a beautiful journey of watching my own daughter become a mom, while also getting to love this sweet little girl with a pure unconditional joy.

I look forward to watching her grow, praying over her future, and teaching her about the God who created her so wonderfully. Being a grandparent for the first time is a sacred privilege, and I am endlessly grateful for this beautiful blessing.

POEMS BY SHERRON FIELDS

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW

Can you hear me now?
I'm speaking in the crickets' hum,
Out in the pasture field, lowing of the cow,
The geese in flight migrating on,
The September warmth upon your skin,
Dewy grass in coolness of morning,
The squirrels busily gathering in
In prelude to coming frost warning.
Are you listening to the distant caw
Of a crow anticipating corn harvest,
Seeing Sweet Annie standing so very tall,
Grasses and flowers preparing to rest?
Can you hear the hum of busy bees?
Are you watching the berries of the dogwood
Turn crimson on the hunter green trees,
Falling leaves clinging as long as they could?
In the breezes can you hear me at dusk
In faded and fewer sweet songbird sound,
The corn ears rustling downturned in the husk?
Can you hear early dew drip from leaf to
ground?
Are you listening--can you hear?
I wonder, do you take the time
To listen for movement of a deer
To pause before the day unwinds.
Can you hear me now? He asks.
If you will listen, I'm all around
In silent stillness as you begin your tasks.
Just hear My voice; listen for the sound,
Drink it into your soul as a sacred hymn
Sung from the hills, valleys and peaks,
Life going on in cadence and rhythm.
Listen closely as our Creator speaks.
Can you hear me now!

HOW MANY MIRACLES

How many miracles do we witness,
As we go about our daily life business?
Do we stop and watch a flower unfold
In early morning sunlight; this miracle
behold?
Did you notice the call of Jenny wren
As she tirelessly brings food again and again,
To her nest of babies begging for more,
While she sweeps up worms from the garden
floor?
Daddy, what's that? he asks for the seventh
time,
Curious little boy with the inquiring mind.
Miracle of speech from one so small,
Wanting to learn from any and all.
On the way to work, made it through safely
To your destination this morning unscathed.
That alone a miracle when in one second or
dash,
It could have been you in the next crash.
Aware are we of all that transpires,
Life going on to enrich and inspire?
Look to the miracles unfathomable to grasp;
Catch them and hold them for soon they will
pass.
The morning bloom fades by sunset;
The bluebird fledglings will fly and forget.
The children grow and also leave the nest.
After many days of work we are at last home
to rest.
Let's thank Him for the morning bloom,
The sound of wrens outside our room,
The children under our protective wings,
Praising our Father for miracles unseen.

I HEARD A SWEET SONG

From a high limb came a sweet song.
So pure was the melody and joyful to me
That it lifted my heart, and before long
I was singing with her so happily.
Blue were her wings and gold was her breast
As she sang from the limb in a tree,
Giving all she had to be her best.
She truly is an inspiration to me
As she coaxes her young to try their wings
By calling them out of the nest to fly.
In melodious voice we hear her sing
From branches way up high.
Yes, I heard a sweet song from a bluebird
today.

So melodiously beautiful to see and to hear
The love in her voice as if to say
The Lord hears our song and is always near.
So sing a sweet song, you precious bird.
Delight us with your voice
and blue wings.
Lend us your joy, let it be
heard,
For your love is profound
as you sing.
Sweet little bluebird,
God's precious creation,
Brighten this world and
be heard,
Your sweet song of inspiration.



SEPTEMBER BLESSINGS



Written by Marette Jorgenson



Blessings. This is something I tend to desire for myself more than for others. Google's definition gives us a somewhat selfish view: "A blessing is a gift, favor, or prayer that brings happiness, divine protection, or approval." If I look back at my life, I am not sure I would use that definition. Some of the biggest blessings were things that, at the time, I didn't see as a gift, a favor, approval, or happiness. God's definition of blessing is his divine favor, life, and power. It's not about happiness or what I may or may not approve of. The things God has blessed me with have been heart-rending, soul-searching, and sometimes physically challenging,

but those blessings have conveyed in a larger-than-life way that God is the creator of all things, and I have nothing to worry about. To be blessed means God reaching out with his favor, presence, and the Holy Spirit. A blessing is what flows from God when I have a relationship with him. It allows me to flourish, spiritually bloom, and do in a mighty way what God has created me to do.

Psalm 103 is a mighty example of responding to the things God has done for us and acknowledging him as the giver of all the blessings he has put in our lives. David begins by saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me; bless his holy name." I love this verse because it means give it all you got ("all that is within me"). It means forgetting what others might think, knowing that God is more important than your ego or your fears, and praising and acknowledging his gifts to you for everything you are and for all God created you to be.

The rest of the psalm tells us what amazing things God has done. Often, we think of blessings as the things we hold in our hands, but the author of this psalm speaks more about the heart's actions.

The author focuses on forgiveness, forgetfulness, healing, redeeming, crowning, satisfying, working righteousness, being merciful and gracious, abounding in love, being slow to anger, and not getting what we deserve, but the best part of the chapter is in verse 14. "For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust."

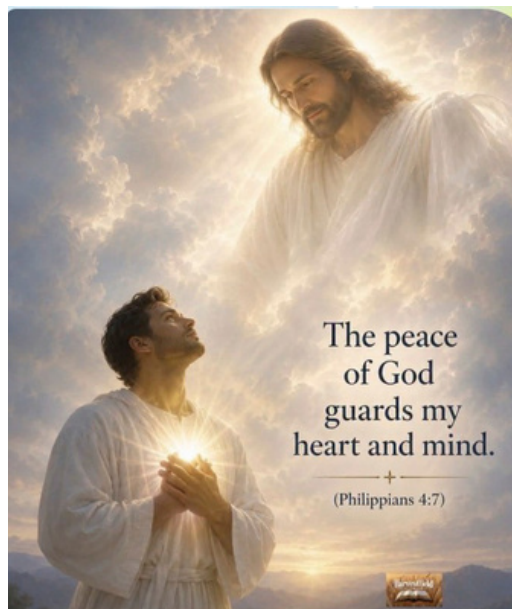
I had to walk slower today because I was shopping with a two-year-old (an incredible blessing named Lucy), who was wearing cowboy boots that I bought her, which are a few sizes too big. She won't take them off, but it affects her ability to keep up with Grammy. I needed to remember I was with a two-year-old. Similarly, I can't match my steps with God's. I can't keep up. I can't because I am dust. I am glad God remembers he is walking with me and matches his steps to mine. The thousands of blessings I could write down in my gratitude journal will never compare to the blessing of God's favor on my life because he knows me. I could name many physical blessings: relationships he has given me; the ability to travel the world; being in third-world countries and coming back healthy, alive, and renewed. I could name things I think are wonderful: running water, electricity, cars, gas to drive the cars, food, Culver's and Chick-fil-A, and Coke Zero. But more important than what God does for my everyday existence is that he knows my frame, and he remembers I am dust. Often, I think I should do more, be more, say more, give more, and have more on the "done list" at the end of the day. I look at life with "earthly magnifiers" rather than "spiritual blinders." Blessings are subtle and deep. Blessings may surprise me or scare me. May I never forget that God knows my heart, remembers my frame, and knows I am made of dust. The way he blesses me goes far beyond the definition I have given of "blessing."

OUR DEAR FRIEND, LAURIE JAQUISS

Written by Marette Jorgenson

Some of us were privilege to receive notes everyday for many years from Laurie Archer Jaquiss. They included pictures and scripture and fun sayings. It was her way of checking in with people and she had told me a while ago, she knew women who felt very lonely and this was her way of saying I notice you, and I care. Often I would send funny things back to her, or comment just so she knew the caring went both ways. I sent her a note back in May asking her to speak on "blessings of life" for the September newsletter. This was her response to me. "Blessings of life. I am kind of in a place where often what seems like a tough sport is actually a blessing. Anyhow, it is under serious contemplation here."

July 22 was the last day she sent out photos. She became ill and was hospitalized. Laurie passed away August 14. Robert, her husband has agreed to in a future newsletter, write what she might have been thinking about and we will share it then. Meanwhile, pick up where Laurie left off. Send encouraging notes to others so they feel loved, noticed and let the Holy Spirit use those simple gestures to move in people's lives. Here is the last picture she sent. May it touch your heart.



COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

What if you started each morning by naming five things you're grateful for? They don't have to be big or extraordinary. Maybe it's a good cup of coffee, a beautiful sunrise, a peaceful moment, or simply the opportunity to begin a new day.

When we intentionally look for the good, we become more aware of it. A simple habit of gratitude can help us notice the little blessings we might otherwise overlook throughout the day.

Try it tomorrow morning: write down five blessings. Then, throughout the day, keep your eyes open for five more. You might be surprised by how many blessings were there all along.

START WITH FIVE BLESSINGS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

HAVE YOU FOUND FIVE MORE?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



*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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WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE AN ALMANAC CONTRIBUTOR?

If so, we'd LOVE to hear from you!
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