

December 16, 2019 Huntley UMC weekly email

Dear friends,

Yesterday in worship at Huntley United Methodist Church our worship theme was joy. It was the 3rd week in Advent, so we lit the pink candle in our Advent Wreath, the candle of joy, or Mary's candle as it is sometimes called. Joy was a natural theme for the day, and I preached on "A Joy that Sustains," using Isaiah 35:1-10 as my text.

The first 34 chapters of Isaiah are all about consequences and judgment for the people of Israel because of their turning away from God. But chapter 35 is all about their redemption. There have certainly been bad times, but better times are coming when they will be restored to a right relationship with God, and when that happens, they will sing songs of joy.

One of the verses in that scripture from Isaiah 35 says, "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, . . . God will come to save you.'" This verse took on new meaning for me when I learned that my mother-in-law, Carole Witman, died early that morning.

Carole lived a long life, and was 93 years old when she died. But she lived about 65 of her years dealing with the devastating effects of polio, which badly affected her whole right side. Carole knew all about feeble hands and weak knees! That was her life from the age of 27. But she lived a good, long active life in spite of her challenges. And she was a Christian believer to the very end.

The closing verses of the Isaiah text on Sunday said, "And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on the Way. . . . the redeemed will walk there, and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

There is always sadness and sorrow when you lose someone we love, but Carole's death was surrounded with gladness and joy. She was ready for the next chapter of her life. She said her good-byes to those she loved. She looked forward to heaven, and being reunited with loved ones who had gone before. She couldn't wait to shed her damaged earthly body, and be clothed in her new spiritual body. She anticipated God's promise of a place where there would be no more limitations, no more pain, no more crying, no more tears, no more death.

Carole believed in a God who could restore feeble hands and weak knees. Carole believed in a God who cared about her, and who had a plan and a purpose for her life even when her life faced many challenges. Carole believed in a God who has the power to heal everything that's damaged and fix everything that's broken and revive everything that has withered and free everyone who is held captive. That's the kind of God who Carole believed in, that is the kind of God that I believe in, and that's the kind of God I hope you believe in.

Thanks be to God for the life and witness of Carole Elizabeth Witman, July 6, 1926 – December 15, 2019. Your joy is now complete!

Thanks to everyone who stopped by Huntley United Methodist Church for the Huntley Christmas Stroll, and congratulations to Baily Brown who won our "Family Game night" gift basket.

Companions in Christ group Advent study will meet on Wednesday, December 18th and on Monday, December 23rd at 7:00 p.m.

Children's Sunday school Christmas program will be Sunday, December 22nd during the worship hour.

Christmas Eve Candle Light Service will be on Tuesday, December 24th at 5:00 p.m.

See you in worship,
Pastor Gary Geiman