

Dearest Friends and Family,

"Let not your heart be troubled. God alone is sufficient." 1 Corinthians 10:13

We really don't know how to thank you for your out pouring of love through your prayers, phone calls, emails, cards and gifts to my mother's memorial fund. We have no way to thank each of you nor to adequately express our gratitude or explain how your caring has wrapped us in love and how God's presence us sustained us. May God bless you as you have blessed us.

My mother's Memorial (Celebration of Life) Service was wonderful in all ways. Approximately 300 people were in attendance so obviously she did not out live all her friends. All her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren were present along with her sister and niece and their families. We hosted a luncheon at mother's home for friends and family before the Memorial Service. We had about 40 people come and it was so good to see everyone and talk to them. Friends and family helped so much before and after the luncheon.

For mom's service Rev. Larry Heacock, her son-in-law, officiated, Brent Kern, her grandson-in law sang, Jeannie, my sister, read a poem that she had written that served as the eulogy, I shared what mother had meant to me and other friends and family told stories of how she had touched their lives. After the service women of the church did a lovely reception that allowed us to hug and talk to many who attended. That night the family sat in the living room and shared stories about mom, laughing and crying sometimes at the same time. The next day my sister, brother and I went through a part of her desk and had a wonderful time of sharing old pictures, love letters between mom and dad and our memoirs.

By Monday morning all our family and friends had headed for home and Bill and I began to seriously work on clearing the house. My mother has a 3-bedroom home and is a keeper of the things she held dear. Thus there is much to do. Several people had expressed their sorrow for the work we had to do but please do not feel sorry for me. The past 10 days have been a great joy to me with much healing, learning more about my mom and thanking God for the treasure and gift she has been to me and so many others. I have been told so many stories about mom that I never knew and am in awe of her kindness, care and love of others. More than ever I want to live the rest of my life as she did – always for others.

As our family walked into the sanctuary of St. John's UMC, mom's church for the past 80 years and my home church, I remembered that as a youngster I could see the wings of an angel above the cross due to the glass windows on the side and the lights above the cross. When I looked up I saw them but it was so different. As a child I had always wondered what that angel looked like with those big wings but now I knew. Above those wings I could see my mom and felt her presence throughout the service.

As I shared in my earlier email mom communicated with me daily for the last 46 years. To my amazement and delight she has continued to communicate with me daily. There was the draft of a letter she had written me in the late 70's that brought back so many memories. She had saved every card I had sent her and my letters from Belize and Nigeria and often written notes or underlined certain phrases. There were her Bibles with scriptures underlined and comments made with many poems and stories tucked into the pages. There was the Cokesbury Hymnal with her favorite songs marked. Mother was always humming and all that day I could hear her humming her favorite hymns. There was a letter from Bill to my parents for my hand in marriage. He wrote the letter while I was away so I never had read it. Then there was the draft of their letter back to him. My sister and I have been going through her recipe boxes – mom taught to me cook and it has always been one of my favorite things to do and usually I find it relaxing and a stress reliever. There were literally hundreds of thank you cards written to mom thanking her for the visit, the care, the food, the prayers, and the help she provided for so many people over so many years. My fear of not hearing daily from mom has been replaced by a renewed faith in God who loves each of us so dearly and can bind us together around the corner, around the world and into the Kingdom of Eternal Love.

We have experienced some amazing weather while staying here in Santa Fe. The entire US has had very cold and unusual weather. Last Wednesday night it was -18 degrees F. (-28 degrees C.), the coldest temperatures here in 40 years. For the next few nights the temperatures were below 0. Today it is snowing and blowing again. My sister and brother-in-law, who work at McCurdy Mission School in Espanola, NM, have been with us since Sunday eve as New Mexico had many towns without any natural gas, without any heat and Espanola is one of those towns. The gas was turned off on Thursday, 3 Feb. and is still not on today, Tuesday 8 Feb. The cold along with the lack of humidity has presented us with many challenges but also created some good stories and memories.

We leave for Kenya next Wednesday, 16 Feb. I had hoped to totally clear mother's home but I realize that will not be possible. In the past 10 days I have made more decisions than I thought I ever could. Thankfully Bill has been at my beck and call all day and night and has helped me so much. He is at my side whether I am laughing, crying, humming, or sighing. I am so blessed.

For the last four days we have not ventured out to send or receive email. I have read email but this is my first email to write since we started to work at mom's house nine days ago. My lack of communication is not due to lack of thanksgiving for all you have done but rather an urgency to complete as much as possible of mom's house to help my sister and brother.

I will end with one of the several poems mom had requested be on her Memorial Service program:

I'm Free

¹ Don't grieve for me, for now I'm Free
I'm following the path God has laid, you see.
I took His hand when I heard Him call,
I turned my back and left it all.

² I could not stay another day
To laugh, to love, to work, to play.
Tasks left undone must stay that way.
I found that peace at the close of day.

³ If my parting has left a void,
Then fill it with remembered joys.
A friend shared, a laugh, a kiss,
Oh yes, these things I too will miss.

⁴ Be not burdened with times of sorrow,
I wish the sunshine of tomorrow.
My life's been full, I've savored much,
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.

⁵ Perhaps my time seemed all too brief,

Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your hearts and peace to thee
God wanted me – He set me free.

Our deepest gratitude for your loving kindness, prayers, and care.

In His grip,

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"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, upon the Lord." Psalms 27:14 (My mom's note next to this underlined verse: 'I admonish myself that I should indeed be patient with God as He has been so patient with me for so many years.')