



LPC NEWSLETTER

Lexington Presbyterian Church

February 2012

Notes from the Clergy...

Shane Claiborne is a writer and founding partner of *The Simple Way* community, a faith community that lives among and serves the homeless in the Kensington Neighborhood of Philadelphia. The following is his list of **12 hopes for 2012**. I know we are one month into the new year...but perhaps you will find his list instructive. I became aware of this list through <www.sojo.net>.

- 12. Do something really nice—that no one knows about.
- 11. Spend more money on other people than I spend on myself. Love my neighbor as I love myself. And love myself as I love my neighbor.
- 10. Laugh often...especially at advertisements that try to convince me that I must buy more stuff in order to be happy.
- 9. Learn a new life skill—like carpentry, pottery, or canning vegetables. Teach someone else 1 life skill I know how to do.
- 8. Love a few people well, remembering that what is important is not how much we do but how much love we

put into doing it.

- 7. Write a letter to someone I need to say thank you to. Write another letter to someone I need to ask to forgive me.
- 6. Track down a critic or someone I disagree with and take them to lunch. Listen to them.
- 5. Compliment someone I have a hard time complimenting...and mean it.
- 4. Choose life. Do something regularly to interrupt the patterns of injustice—do something to end violence, bullying, war, capital punishment and other mean and ugly things.
- 3. Pause before every crisis and ask “will this matter in 5 years?”
- 2. Get outside often and marvel at things like fireflies and shooting stars. And regularly get my hands into the garden...so when I type on the computer I can see dirt under my fingernails.
- 1. Believe in miracles. And live in a Way that might necessitate one.

L'Chaim (*To Life*),

Bill

WHOLENESS
& HEALING



SERVICE

Wholeness and Healing Service

You are invited to attend our monthly Wholeness and Healing Service. Generally this service is held the first Sunday of the month at 5:00 in the evening. This 45 minute service will be led by your pastor and will include prayers both general and specific, scripture reading, singing, and silence. For those who may be so inclined, there will be opportunity for the laying on of hands. Everyone interested is invited to attend the February 5 service.

Preaching Schedule for February

February 5	5th Sunday in Ordinary Time Texts: Mk. 1:29-39 & Is. 55:6-9	Preacher: William M. Klein Sermon: <i>The Hiding God</i>
February 12	6th Sunday in Ordinary Time Texts: Gen. 2:4b-8; Ps. 8; Mk 1:40-45	Preacher: William M. Klein Sermon: <i>Grandeur from Pompous Dust</i>
February 19	Transfiguration Sunday Texts: Mk. 9:2-9; Prov. 9:10; Ecc. 12:13	Preacher: William M. Klein Sermon: <i>Loaded With Marvel</i>
February 22	Ash Wednesday	Preacher: Deborah H. Klein
February 26	1st Sunday in Lent Texts: Gen. 9:8-17 & Pet. 3:18-22	Preacher: William M. Klein Sermon: <i>Averting Spiritual Plagiarism</i>



Congregational Meeting—February 12 To Extend a Call to Sarah L. Hill to Become Our Associate Pastor

A Congregational meeting has been called for Sunday, February 12, by a unanimous vote of Session for the purpose of extending a “call” to Sarah L. Hill to become our Associate Pastor.

Since February 2011 she has done a fabulous job serving as our Interim Christian Educator. It did not take long before members of the congregation and members of Session began expressing the hope that she could become our Associate Pastor. A Mission Study Task Force was created last Spring to review the staffing needs of the church. The report of that study (which was facilitated by the Committee on Church Development of Shenandoah Presbytery) was presented to the congregation and Ses-

sion in June 2011.

At its January 3, 2012 meeting, the Session of the church formally approved a job description for an Associate Pastor position. As well, Session approved the calling of a Congregational Meeting for the purpose of extending a “call” to Sarah Hill to become said Associate Pastor.

Her duties will include preaching once every six weeks (on average), assisting with worship leadership on a regular basis, and participating in the worship life of the congregation. Her primary responsibility will be in the area of Christian Education—working with the children and youth programs. As time allows, she will work with the campus fellowship program and adult classes, as well.

If the Lexington Presbyterian Church congregation approves her “call” on February 12, Shenandoah Presbytery will be asked to confirm her “call” at its May 8 meeting which will be held at Lexington Presbyterian Church. Her work as Associate Pastor will begin in May. If the Lexington Presbyterian Church congregation and Shenandoah Presbytery approve her “call”, a date for an installation service will be set.

This Associate Pastor position is a full time position. Her salary for 2012 will be \$45,000 (prorated in 2012), \$4,500 professional expenses (travel, continuing education, books), and moving expenses to the field. A negotiated portion of the \$45,000 cash salary will cover her housing costs. Per Shenandoah Presbytery policy she will receive four weeks vacation and two weeks study leave annually. Also by presbytery policy she will receive a compensated sabbatical of at least three months in length after every six years of service.

**News Items for
the
March 2012
Newsletter**



People like to know what is going on in the church. Write an article for the newsletter and share the information. Please email to Mary Atthowe at <matthowe@rockbridge.net> by February 15th in Word format please, or leave your information in the church office.

Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings

Alcoholics Anonymous has proven to be a life-giving tool to many folks seeking to manage alcohol addiction. But in order for AA to be useful, people must be self-reflective enough to know when they have a problem with alcohol. If you would like the support an AA group can provide, you are welcome to attend one of many meetings that occur at RE Lee Episcopal Church. AA meets:

- Sundays: 6:30 PM (women only)
- Tuesdays: 8:00 PM (step meeting)
- Wednesdays: noon (open meeting) & 8:00 PM (closed meeting)
- Fridays: 8:00 PM (open meeting)
- Saturdays: 10:00 AM (open meeting) & 8:00PM(big book meeting)
- Sundays at the hospital at 8:00 PM (open meeting)

Open Door Al Anon Meeting at Stonewall Jackson Hospital Conference Room A on Sundays at 8:00 p.m.

All meetings are non-smoking meetings. Call 463-3411 for more information.



To Sandy Nye
(her father)

To Gaye Johnson
(her mother)



**Ash Wednesday
Supper and Service
February 22**

Our Lenten journey begins on Feb. 22. We will mark this day with a fellowship soup supper, prepared by Curt Fredin and helpers, to be followed by an Ash Wednesday service in Dunlap Auditorium, beginning at 6:30 pm. The \$5 per person/\$15 per family collected for this meal will be given to RARA to help with their mission in our area.

The service, led by our clergy, Bill McCorkle and members of the youth group, will include scripture readings, hymns, responsive prayers and the imposition of ashes for those who would like to do so.

Please make plans to join us.



www.lexpres.org

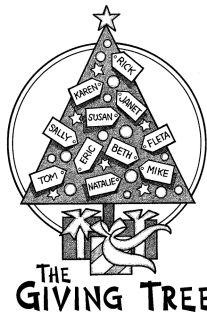


February Food of the Month,
Donated to the RARA
Food Pantry:

Canned Tuna and Salmon

Please leave the food in boxes in the front hallway outside of the church office.

**Please notify irogers@lexpres.org
when you have a change
of mailing and/or e-mail address.
Thanks!**



The Jesse Tree 2011

A few days after Christmas Mary Beth Baker and her daughter Ellie went to the sanctuary to unwrap and sort the gifts. Pat Miller and her daughter happened by, as the Bakers were hard at work in the new entry space, and joined in. Linda Moreschi recorded the checks. This is what they found under the Jesse Tree.

For **Lisa's House** – 22 of tissues, 6 boxes of diapers, 6 boxes of bags, 8 boxes of pasta, 8 boxes of beverages (tea, coffee, juice boxes) 20 rolls of paper towels, 8 boxes of wipes, rice and 30 cleaning supply items, and \$100. For **Roanoke Mission** -18 winter coats, 4 down vests, 20 hats, 12 scarves, 34 pairs of mittens, 24 pairs of socks, 17 sweaters \$100. For **Rockbridge Area Food Pantry** - 7 very full boxes of food items, and checks totally \$1,415. Donations to **Heifer International** were \$815, and gifts to **Rockbridge-Haiti Medical Alliance** came to \$1,005.

Thank you to all who participated in the Jesse Tree. Women, men and children in many different places and many difficult circumstances will benefit from your generosity. Thanks and glory be to God!



Hospice Class

Gentleman's Cooking Class for widowed men interested in learning to cook and meet new friends will meet 2nd Thursday of each month. Sponsored by Rockbridge Area Hospice. Call Tony Nix, 463-1848 for more information.



Shep McAllister graduated from Trinity University, Magna Cum Laude, in December 2012 with degrees in Political Science and Communications. He works for the San Antonio Spurs as Web Content Coordinator



Saturday Morning Men's Fellowship Group

The Men's Fellowship Group will be meeting again on the second Saturday each month. They will meet on February 11th from 7:30-8:30 a.m. The group will meet this month at Matt Paxton's house at Kendal.

The book is "The Return of the Prodigal Son" by Henri Nouwe. If you have questions, please call Bob Moreschi at 463-6984.



Faith Village Looks at Baptism

The second month of Faith Village begins on Feb. 5 and we will explore the Biblical story of John the Baptist, the meaning of baptism and how water is part of our physical and spiritual life. The workshops will be in Dromedary's Drama and Puppets, How Great Thou Art and Crafts Room, and Caesar's Palace Cinema. We also are adding a workshop based on the mission/outreach of Living Waters to the World. The children will explore what it means to anyone to have accessible clean water. If you would like to help in any way with Faith Village, please contact Sarah Hill at shill@lexpres.org.

Thantastic Thursdays



- **February 2**—“**Whatever Happened to Dinner?**” – Melodie Davis, author and Clerk of Session, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Harrisonburg presents the second in the series about how family dinner time can have a positive affect on children's success in life!
- **February 9**—“**Dancing with the Stars – the LexPres Way**” – Bob and Francine Ludt will show us how to “cut a rug” – whether you watch or participate – everyone will say “they could have danced all night!”
- **February 16**—**Youth Time and Talent Auction** – Come support the youth raise funds to furnish their new “Youth Rooms.” Come bid or donate something yourself! A great time of food and fellowship to support our youth.
- **Wednesday Feb. 22** —**Ash Wednesday Service with dinner.**
No Thantastic Thursday this week.



News From the Congregational Life Committee

The start of the new year is in full swing and the Congregational Life Committee keeps on rolling out the events. The Open House Luncheon and Thantastic Thursdays in January went well and now it's time for the February festivities. We will continue to gather for Thantastic Thursday and will also have an Ash Wednesday meal. The meal will start at 5:45 p.m. and the service will begin at 6:30. A simple meal of vegetable/bean soup, bread, tossed salad and quartered oranges for dessert will be served. Cost of the meal will be \$5 per person and \$15 maximum per family and will be given to RARA for their food pantry. Reservations for the meal will be due on Monday, February 20; sign up on sheets in Murray Hall or by emailing lr Rogers@lexpres.org. Any help with food preparation or clean up will be greatly be appreciated. If you can't help, please just come and enjoy the food, fellowship and service. (There will not be a Thantastic Thursday meal on February 23.)



Youth Events - February 2012



- **February 5th** – The Souper Bowl of Caring at both services. This special offering benefits RARA, Meals on Wheels and the Blue Ridge Food Pantry. After the 11:00 service, we'll have lunch and then take the canned goods we've collected and go over to the new RARA food pantry on Spottswood Drive for a tour by Chip Honsinger.
- **February 12th** – Youth Group dinner 6:30 – 7:30
- **February 16th** – **Youth Gifts and Talents Auction – 5:45 dinner** followed by the auction. The money we raise that night will go not only to supporting our mission programs but also to furnishing/decorating our new youth recreation room! (p.s. we were able to get an Air Hockey table with the money raised from the babysitting night)
- **February 19th** – Youth Group dinner 6:30 – 7:30
- **February 22nd** – **5:45 dinner, 6:30 service** - Ash Wednesday – the youth will participate in the service and help with the table clean-up
- **February 26th** – **5:30 – 7:30** – Movie Night! We'll have dinner and watch Soul Surfer. (no teen bell practice)



MONTREAT

Are you interested in free lodging for our Church's week of Retreat at Montreat? You have such an opportunity June 24-30 during the Worship and Music Conference.

The Worship Committee (for the third consecutive summer) is providing a cottage at Montreat free for members of our church and their families (to include relatives not in Lexington). This particular cottage has uniquely just become available. It is air conditioned, recently refurbished, and has 5 bedrooms with 13 twin (beds which makes sleeping arrangements flexible). It is located just beside the cottage rented last summer so there will be a "LPC compound," across from the tennis courts, within walking distance to Anderson Auditorium (and pool and playground). Preschoolers have daytime supervision, children have planned/supervised "clubs", teens have their club, and adults have choices, to include "time off." And of course the possibility of spiritual enrichment.

There is no better "deal" around. You can talk to Barbara or John Winfrey and others who have been: Bill/Deb Klein, Amy DeHart, Don/Jeanette Jeffer, Nancy Whiteley, Lorri Dawes, Sandy Nye, Frank/Sandy Harrelson, Ruth and Jamie Floyd, Beth Thompson, and others I might have missed. It is a perfect plan for a single family, a 3-generational family, or any combination of family. The cottage is free; the only cost is providing food in/out of house, and conference registration if you choose to sing or play in a choir.

You can register on line at Montreat Conference Music and Worship, or get a booklet from Barbara or Sara Hill, or call Barbara at 463 5500 or Lila at church 463 3873, to get started for summer planning.



Presbyterian Women

- The Ecumenical Women's group will meet February 7th at 9:30 a.m. at Lexington Presbyterian Church. Please feel welcome to join us. We will be planning the World Day of Prayer.

- The Team meeting will be March 1st at 9:45 a.m. Please let me know if you cannot be there.
- Circle members need to be thinking about a Lifetime Membership candidate.
- The Search Committee will be working to fill the Slate of Officers for elections in May. Please prayerfully consider their requests.

Pat Browning—463-6367

Mission Project



Rafiki Report

Metsenanat Tages is the seven year old Ethiopian orphan the Sunday School is sponsoring. This is a commitment to pray for her and to make monthly payments of \$25 plus \$20 each payment for birthday and Christmas. Metsenanat was rescued from "the Bush" where she was living with her imprisoned grandmother who was unable to feed, clothe or school her.

The Sunday School received a Christmas card from Metsenanat with her handprint, picture and a map of Ethiopia on which was printed Matt. 25:40, "as you did to the least of these my brethren, you did to me." Her national mama enclosed the following note: "Thank you for being a sponsor, for your gifts and your prayers. As we say in Ethiopia—Malbam Gena, or Merry Christmas."

The offerings last year exceeded the amount required for sponsorship. This meant a \$1000 check could be sent to the Rafiki headquarters to cover additional expenses such as those for unsponsored orphans, the widows program or the cost of day students.

Prayer Requests: For students: that they would be good listeners, appreciative of the opportunity they have been given, grow in the grace and knowledge of God and be diligent in their studies.

December offerings:

- Sunday School Classes = \$5.30
- Deb's Sunday School Class = 51.26
- Total = \$56.56

For more information see www.rafikifoundation.org.

THE PROBLEM OF ROCKS

Is there anything more ominous than a road sign warning *Watch for Fallen Rocks*? There is indeed; try *Watch for Falling Rocks*. It is one thing to weave your way around an obstacle already in the road; it is quite another to watch for ones descending from above. That's when anxiety becomes pathological, yet we are all tempted to engage in it. Security is what we crave--not just today, but tomorrow also.

In his sermon on October 7th, 2010, our pastor Bill Klein quoted Gilbert Meilaender in *The Christian Century*: "Every time we have some national 'tragedy', we trot out the therapists and counselors who advise us on how to help our children feel secure. Perhaps Christians need to say something different to their children...something like: 'My child, the world is always a dangerous and threatening place where death surrounds us. When I brought you for baptism I acknowledged I could not possibly guarantee your future. I handed you over to the God who loves you and with whom you are safe in both life and death. There is no security to be found elsewhere, certainly not from me or those like me. Therefore, live with courage...and be prepared to die as one who goes forth to live.'"

On pg. 19 of his little booklet *Prayer Introspections* our former pastor, Randy Harrison, quotes the first two verses of Psalm 91: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress; my God in whom I trust.'" Randy goes on to write, "How miraculously (the psalmist) assumed my frail humanity! How well he perceived my desire to avoid the battles of life, to escape the hurts and pains of this human experience, to flee from the terrors of this world. O my Refuge, my Fortress, show me the way of obedient trust. Don't remove me from the hard reality of life, but in the midst of the night, let me not fear the terror. In the thick of battle, let me know your presence. In pain and death let me know your victory.

"If I cannot claim a magic security, neither can I offer a cheap trust! I must abide in your shadow. I must walk with you, face all that life may bring, and in joyous obedience, seek to do your will. This is the true security I seek. My God, in whom I want to trust, help me this day to cleave to you in love."

Watching for falling rocks is truly to live with uncertainty, to live with a type of death. For uncertainty always means insecurity, and insecurity always threatens the self, and a threatened self can only mean the self that faces the termination of the boundaries of its own existence, as it now knows and understands them. And as when faced with imminent physical death, the self threatened by insecurity has open to it two choices, two diverging paths: it can struggle frantically for a slippery hold on more "security", as it understands that word, or it can trust.

And the phenomenon of trust – whether it comprises one's answer to the uncertainty of death or the uncertainty of life – is always characterized by one shining reality: a quiet, affirmative acceptance of the present.

cdg



The Lexington Presbyterian Church Session “At Work”—January 2012

DATA

- ◆ Membership: 543
- ◆ Death: Bessie Mae Tolley Zollman (12/16)
- ◆ New Member Class on Jan. 15

Lord’s Supper Training

Communion Coordinator, Nancy Pickral, trained all elders in procedures for serving the Lord’s Supper.

SESSION COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Christian Education

- Jan. 8—Faith Village began
- Jan. 15—Campus Ministry lunch at Salernos after church
- Jan. 21—Youth to water park in Massanutten
- Jan. 22—Open House for Murray Hall renovations
- Thantastic Thursdays each week in Jan. except 1/19

Congregational Life

- ◆ Thantastic Thursdays meals
- ◆ Open House Luncheon on 1/22

Financial Management

- Thank you to Cindy Irby, Financial Secretary, for work at end of the year
- Received \$100,000 bequest from the estate of Robert Moses.
- Year ended with pledging above budget
- Church budget finished 2011 strongly

Outreach

- Nick Keeley will be going on a mission trip in April to Guatemala
- Networking with community groups for mentoring and also sharing our experience with New Providence Church to help them begin their own mentoring program
- The Barritt Fund gave support this past year totaling over \$18,000

Personnel

- ◆ Approved the job description for the Associate Pastor position
- ◆ Unanimously approved to call a Congregational Meeting on Feb. 12 to call Sarah Hill to become our Associate Pastor

Planning

- Open House on 1/22
- Approved Betsy Lee as a member of Planning Committee

Property

- Tables for Brady Chapel have arrived
- Steeple leak being investigated
- Plans for handicap entrance to Murray Hall
- Discussing exterior signage; interior signage will be in place by 1/22
- Bulletin Boards will be replaced

Worship

- Elder visits will be considered again
- Recording equipment in the Sanctuary sound system is not working
- Bill McCorkle will be on sabbatical beginning 1/23 for a month and again in May

Major Report

Elder Amy DeHart presented the 2011 major report of the work of the Communications Committee (see page 10).

Exploring Our Calling

The Moderator went through the 2012 Manual of Operations which was approved.

Upcoming meeting dates:

- ◆ **Administrative Council-February 1, 2012—4:30 pm**
- ◆ **Session-February 7, 2012— 7:30 pm**

**Communications Committee---Major Report to Session
January 3, 2012---Amy DeHart, Chairman**

General Duties: The Communications Committee exists to facilitate and enhance the flow of information within the church family and into the larger community.

Members: Mary Ellena Ward (chair-2011), Mary Atthowe, Amy DeHart (chair-2012), Dianne Herrick, Emily Reel, and Jo Ann Wilson

2011 Accomplishments

ACS Programs—JoAnn Wilson maintains information on church members and associates in the ACS database. The existing ACS system offers many additional capabilities, which may be explored in 2012.

Bulletin Boards—Dianne Herrick did a great job of keeping the construction status bulletin board updated by the church office.

Church Computers and Computer Network

- Maintaining the computer network was a challenge during construction. Temporary cabling and wireless connectivity was cobbled together to allow Bill and Sarah to have minimal internet access. Occasional outages due to power issues and cut wires were addressed as needed. This experience led to a decision to have PNS of Roanoke, bid on a professional network installation to provide adequate computer access throughout Murray Hall.
- There has been some computer shuffling during 2011.
 - A very old computer used by the financial secretary was replaced by a rejuvenated computer previously used by Lila. Joe Wilson helped with the migration.
 - Bill Klein's desktop computer will be replaced in early 2012.
 - The ACS Server system, which is the oldest remaining machine in use, managed to survive construction dust and debris. Two malware programs slipped past the antivirus defenses and caused temporary outages, but those problems have been addressed at least in part. It will be replaced by Bill Klein's current computer.
- The church web site and email was moved to a new vendor due to stability problems with RGV's servers.
- High-speed internet is provided by RGV (Other vendors were explored, but a migration would have been too costly.)

Newsletter

- Mary Atthowe continues to edit the newsletter and we are blessed with a dedicated team that assembles the physical copies for mailing.
- In 2011 roughly 60 members elected to access the newsletter online thereby saving postage and printing. This is steady from 60 in 2010.

Posters and Flyers

- Now that we have a color copier, brochures can be produced in-house for less cost than having them commercially printed. Jo Ann Wilson updated the pew cards announcing the web site and Sarah Hill has produced cards for Thantastic Thursdays and other CE events.

Press Releases

- Bill Klein has been writing news releases and providing them to the local media outlets which has resulted in articles about church activities in the local papers.

Website

- Mary Ellena Ward continues as web manager updating the site with timely information, including the newsletter, calendar, and Bill's sermons. We seek photos of church events!

2012 Goals—Membership Directory, Signage inside and out, and Graphic Image adoption

HELPING



HANDS

Helping Hands

Our next sewing meeting will be Monday, February 6th in Westfel Lounge—10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. We will be cutting out and sewing and stuffing animals for sick children and sewing baby gowns and receiving blankets for missions. If you can stay for lunch bring it along!

Thanks to the knitters and those who crochet, for the baby hats and those who sew at home. The Presbyterian Women's table in the hallway leading to Dunlap Auditorium is usable again. The basket for completed items and yarn are there. There is a new pattern for a small knit doll as well as the pattern for it.

We can always use light weight flannel and cotton fabric, thread and bias tape—as well as light weight yarn.

Call Ellen Smith at 464-5141 if you have any questions.

Mini-Retreat: “Climbing Mountains With Elijah”

Saturday, March 3, 8:45-12:00 noon

Grace Presbyterian Church, Greenhouse Road

Paige Brown, Bible Teacher and Conference Speaker

Free—no registration required—Questions? Mary Raine Paxton (463-2075)

Lenten Series—The Full Extent of His Love

Jesus spoke seven times during the time He was on the cross and each time He spoke, He revealed more of His love. In this series of seven CDs we hear Jesus' words and discover more of His love.

Colin Smith, author and teacher, is the presenter. The series will be offered during the Sunday School hour on seven consecutive Sundays beginning February 19, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday and ending April 1st, Palm Sunday. Each CD lasts approximately forty minutes, leaving time for discussion and questions.

Topics are as follows:

1. Praying For the Person Who Causes You Pain
2. Breakfast With the Devil, Supper With the Saints
3. The Day God Turned His Face Away
4. How Mary's Son Became Her Savior
5. When Suffering Takes You to the Edge
6. Crossing the Finish Line
7. What Happens When You Die?

Mary Raine Paxton will be the convener and may be contacted for further information at 463-2075.

God When It's Raining

In February of last year, I made an entry in my spiritual journal in the form of a poem. I titled both it and the entry "God When It's Raining." Here's the poem:

It's dark at four-thirty
in the afternoon—
dreary and raining.
On top of everything,
my gum is swollen and aching.
I don't think God has gone
off somewhere
away from me.
I just don't know
what to say to Him
about all the bad stuff
rolling around in my head.
If He pitches me
the conversational ball,
I'll try and catch it.
I think that maybe,
in spite of everything,
I could pull myself together
right now
if God would
talk to me.

Since writing the poem, I've come to the realization that the "conversational ball" between God and me is always in play. I know that He would, and does, use any and all means to get through to me ... to us. Even His apparent silence at times speaks volumes. You might very well ask: "But what is He saying?" I believe that whatever message He sends in response to a specific situation, between the lines there is always the same plea: "I love you. I miss you. Please come home."

It isn't as if we actually have to travel great distances to do that. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit resides in our hearts, and everywhere else. All we have to say is, "I know you are fully present, Lord, and so am I." But oh how difficult it is for us to say those words—especially when we listen to the little voice whispering in our ear, "You realize, don't you, that saying 'yes' to God will cost you 'not less than everything'?" And so, clinging fast to our possessions—both tangible and intangible—we respond to God's plea to return to Him with things like "I'm busy right now," or "I'm doing just fine on my own."

I wouldn't presume to give others advice about their own conversations with God. All I can tell you is that when I wrote the poem that cold and lonely winter evening, I was neither busy nor doing fine. I wanted, in fact desperately needed, a word of comfort. And lo and behold, it was there, and right in the poem itself—"I don't think God has gone off somewhere away from me."

The amazing thing is that until the very moment I wrote that sentence I actually thought the exact opposite—that He had gone off somewhere away from me. In giving me those words, He told me in no uncertain terms that when life is "raining" down misery, and even when it's not, He is right there with me and that all will be well.

In truth, is there anything else you need to hear Him say?

SMW (Susan Williams)

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