



**With All Your Heart
Lenten Series 2019**

“GOD’S GENEROUS HEART”

**March 10, 2019
FUMC Portsmouth, NH**

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Celebrations

***Call to Worship**

L: Here, in this place, God welcomes all the dreamers, as well as the doubters:

P: here, the worriers and wanderers can call on God by name.

L: Here, in this time, we can remember all the ways God has graced us:

P: here, in these moments, we are reminded that God is with us, always!

L: Here are gathered those daring enough to step out of comfort into the unknown:

P: here, in this faith space, we will find the courage to cry out,

'God, save us!' in every situation.

***Hymn: "Into My Heart"**

TFWS #2160

Ministry of Music The Children's Choir - *There is A Friend*

Prayer (unison)

God most beautiful, God most holy, God most loving, we ask for your blessing as we begin this journey through Lent. Let us see through the triviality and deceptions which accumulate in our daily living, and rediscover our spiritual truth, that with integrity and vulnerability we may worship you with humble wonder and joy. Through Christ Jesus your true Son, and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sung Response

"Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying"

TFWS #2193

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word: Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Romans 10:8b-13

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message: "God's Generous Heart"

Rev. Deb Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn: "I Love to Tell the Story"**

UMH #156

Concerns and Joys

Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

40 DAY 40 ITEM LENT CHALLENGE

Bevan Bloemendaal

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

***Doxology:** *(Please join in singing the following:)*

UMH #94

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***Prayer of Dedication (unison)**

Holy Source of all good things, we bring our tithes and offerings to your altar in gratitude and in full knowledge that we are not deserving of the many blessings you have poured into our lives.

Our offering cannot begin to repay the many gifts we have received, most clearly the gift of our redemption through your son Jesus Christ. May our act of giving be the proclamation of our hearts to all the world that we are so desperately in need of a savior; and in love you provided Jesus. By your love alone, we boldly pray in Christ's holy name. Amen.

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn:** "Christ for the World We Sing"

UMH #568

***Choral Benediction** *(Congregation encircles the Sanctuary)*

May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek His face, and His grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.

***Pastor's Charge**

Postlude

**Please stand as you are comfortable
Large print bulletins are available from the greeters*

Welcome!

Whether you are joining us for worship for the first time or after many years of attending here at First UMC, we want you to know that you are welcome!

We are an inclusive community that invites everyone to be part of our church fellowship. Thank you for being here, and we hope that you have had a meaningful experience of worshiping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!



Rev. Deb Hanson

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Pastor's Assistant - David Richards

Liturgist - Steve Langs

Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek

Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Acolyte - Jenya Westbrook

Greeters - Jane Richards & Marilyn Stebbins

Ushers - Kevin Fickenscher & Suzanne Ulbricht

Sunday School - Aerial Silanpaa & Kaya Sarosiek

Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek

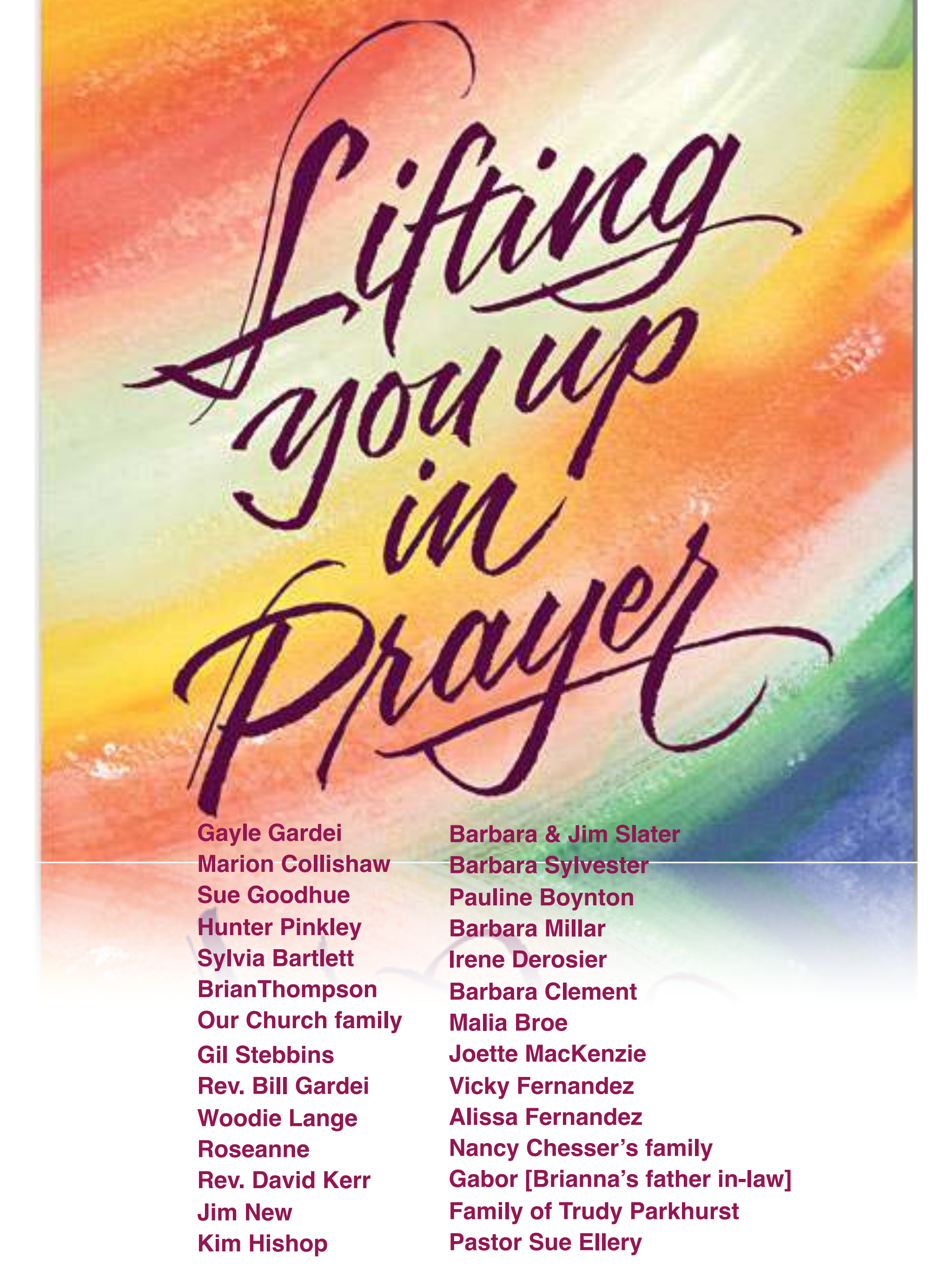
Worship Service Tech - Steve Scott

Photographer - Dave Atkinson



Sunday Worship Team

Today's altar flowers are in celebration of our congregation.



Lifting you up in Prayer

Gayle Gardei
Marion Collishaw
Sue Goodhue
Hunter Pinkley
Sylvia Bartlett
Brian Thompson
Our Church family
Gil Stebbins
Rev. Bill Gardei
Woodie Lange
Roseanne
Rev. David Kerr
Jim New
Kim Hishop

Barbara & Jim Slater
Barbara Sylvester
Pauline Boynton
Barbara Millar
Irene Derosier
Barbara Clement
Malia Broe
Joette MacKenzie
Vicky Fernandez
Alissa Fernandez
Nancy Chesser's family
Gabor [Brianna's father in-law]
Family of Trudy Parkhurst
Pastor Sue Ellery



Today, Sunday March 10th marks the the first Sunday of Lent and our Lenten Series “With All Your Heart”. It is through your heartfelt kindness that we continue our community outreach with the “Give Hope” campaign and a challenge...the 40 day - 40 item challenge!

Each day of Lent, remove one item from your closet/home that you longer wear or need and put it into this bag. At the end of Lent we will gather all the bags on Easter Sunday service and donate the items to the community who can really use them. Thanks for being part the Lent Challenge of giving hope to others...With all our heart... Thank you!

Month of March is Women’s History Month. Celebrate and learn about Women’s History throughout the month of March. Reaching out and learning about each others experience makes us all stronger together.

Offering envelopes are available on the kitchen counter for those that would like them.

March 10th SPRC meeting after worship.

Church Council March 16th @ 6pm Church office

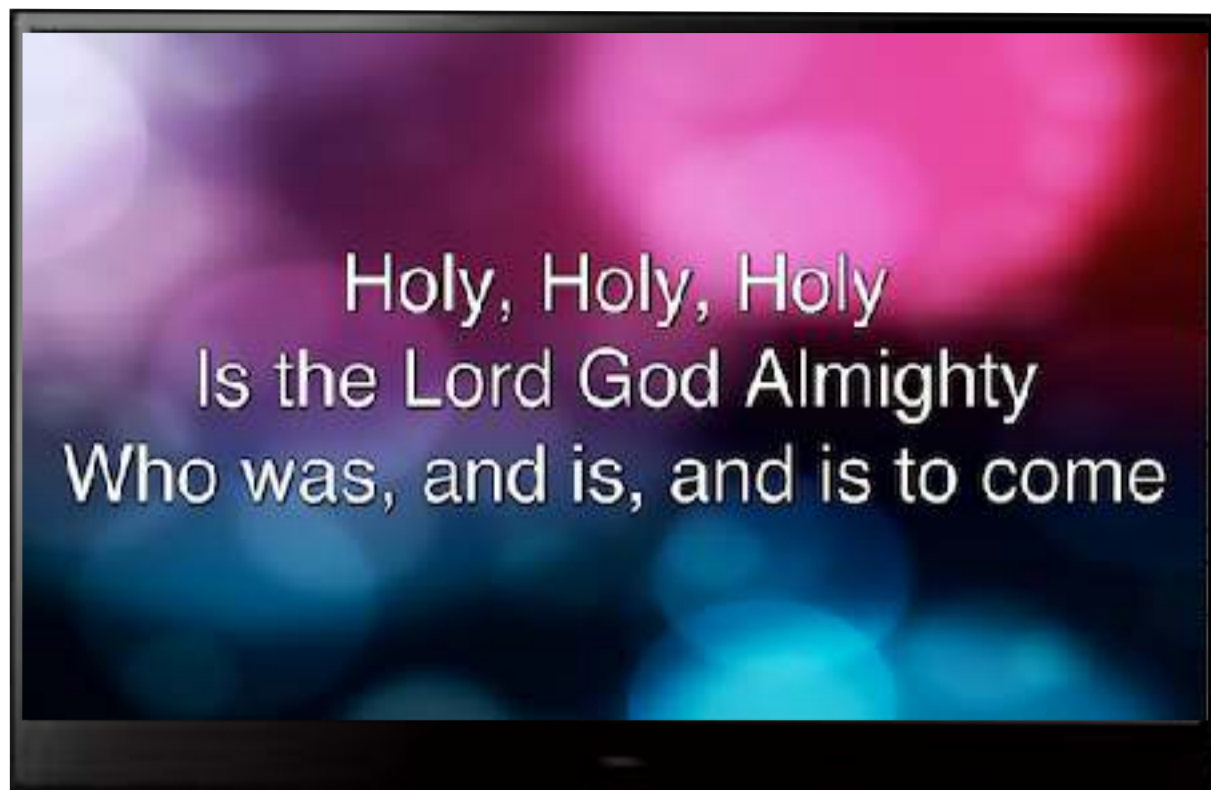
Trudy Parkhurst Memorial March 30th @ 10:30 in the sanctuary

Spring Clean Up April 6th 9-2pm lunch is provided

Lent 40 Day 40 Item Challenge
Remember one item a day!

UPCOMING
EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



The Finance Trustees are looking for donations to replace the outdated screen and projector being used each Sunday with a large LED monitor. Please see John VanReenen for details.



**FUMC PORTSMOUTH
A RECONCILING CONGREGATION**

**We, the congregation of the First
United Methodist Church of Portsmouth,**



New Hampshire, are dedicated to worshiping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors" We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



**New England Annual Conference
Tri-State District**

The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop

The Rev. James McPhee, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801

Office Phone 603-436-6038 office@fumcportsmouth.net

Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm

[call to ensure availability]

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at www.fumcportsmouth.com

Like and Follow Us On:





SERMON GIVEN 3/10/19 BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

SERIES: Give Hope With All Your Heart
“God’s Generous Heart” 3/10/19
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURES: Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Romans 19:8b-13

THEME: Because God’s heart is full of generosity, we model that generosity to others.

One pastor told about a time when he visited an elderly woman in his parish. While he was there, she asked him to get a box of letters from her dresser. As he was getting the letters, he saw a beautiful quilt as a wedding gift years earlier. When he asked her about the quilt, she said he could take it out to look at it. What a masterpiece! She told him her grandmother had made the quilt in the drawer. When he asked her why she did not have it on her bed, she said, “Oh, it’s too beautiful to use!” He thought it was sad that she felt her gift was better hidden in a drawer—preserved—rather than being used. God gave humanity a beautiful gift, the most beautiful gift in the world. Do we consider this gift something that should be tucked away in a drawer, “too beautiful to use?” (Illustrations Unlimited, p. 237, #8)

I understand why this woman hadn’t used the quilt. When we left the last two church appointments where I had been serving, we received a quilt from each. The ladies had been so careful to make sure it would fit on a queen size bed, and, even though I liked the quilts very much, I was afraid that our cats would ruin them. So, they sat in the trunk until we moved down here. What finally pushed me to put them on the bed? I think it was the realization that there was a lot of love, care, and hard work put into those quilts, and the expectation was that they would keep us warm as well as add a beautiful addition to our home. We have started using them, and, even though I still put a “cat hair” cover over them, I feel that I am honoring the people who gave them with so much love, and we rejoice in their generous giving.

When we think about God’s generosity, it, too comes from the loving heart of God who wants what is best for us. The scripture from Deuteronomy is a reminder to the nation of Israel – and to the church today – that God is with us on this journey, not because we have really done anything to deserve it, but because God, who created us, LOVES us! This passage is a recounting by Moses to the people of Israel about the history of their journey to that point. Moses already knows he will not be crossing into the promised land with them, but he reminds them that they were led out of slavery in Egypt by the grace of God; they had been led through the wilderness with God’s guidance; and they will continue to know and experience God’s presence with them. Not only will they do this together as God’s “chosen” people, but they are instructed to join with those who live in the promised land as well as the aliens among them. EVERYONE is included!

Sometimes it is good to take a look back at our history – individually, in families, and as a church family. Patterns may emerge that teach us about what works and what doesn’t. And in the ebb and flow or the ups and downs of life, we may begin to recognize where we are headed. We may learn some interesting things about our traditions. For example:

A little girl noticed that every time her mother cooked a roast she chopped a piece off the end of the roast before putting it in the oven. Intrigued, she asked her mother why she did this.

“Well to be honest, I do it because that’s the way my mother always does it” came the reply. “I’m sure she must have some good reason for it.”

At the next family gathering, the child decided to satisfy her curiosity. “Grandma, why do you always chop the end off the roast before cooking it?”

“Well to be honest, I do it because that’s the way my mother always does it” came the reply. “I’m sure she must have some good reason for it.”

A week or so later the little girl was visiting her 90-year-old great grandmother. She explained that mommy and grandma always chop the end off the roast before cooking it, but couldn’t remember why. Did she know?

“Really!” said Great-grandma. “Imagine the two of them doing that! Why, I only cut the piece off because my pan was too small!” (sermonsforpreaching.com)

We can become so caught up in traditions or doing something a certain way, that we forget how to break out of the nice little box we have tied up for ourselves. Our generosity in being open to new ideas and new ways of doing things may be blocked by how tightly we hang on to the “way things are supposed to be.” When we enter that mind set, we only see what is wrong or what needs to be “fixed” to meet our own expectations. How can we find a generous heart in that? Sometimes, as I said, it helps to think back over the history of our lives to remember the positives and the celebrations rather than clinging to the past, which is apparently what some of the Israelites were doing. We also will discover God’s guiding hand with us, and recognize God’s presence in our lives throughout everything that we have experienced. The last verse in Deuteronomy is a directive from Moses to the people: “. . . you shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.” (v.11b).

God’s generous heart helps us to receive the gifts God gives us, including the people in our lives, and helps us to celebrate, to count our blessings every day. Lent provides a wonderful opportunity to think through our lives, to reflect on God’s generosity and how we will live with that generous spirit in our lives. One opportunity we have is our forty days of giving, which encourages us to do some sorting and cleaning out of items that we no longer use, but that someone else may need. We have entered the wilderness of Lent, the forty days when we find ways to turn back to God, to be more connected with God and each other, and to open ourselves to God’s love that is far beyond our own understanding.

Sometimes that journey is hard and difficult because some of us have such a hard time believing that God could love even us. We see this reflected in some of the older hymns: Verse 2 of Beneath the Cross of Jesus reads, *“Upon that cross of Jesus mine eye at times can see the very dying form of one who suffered there for me; and from my stricken heart with tears two wonders I confess: the wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness.”* (UMH #297) The generous heart of God has made us worthy through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus – by the grace of God we are accepted, forgiven, loved, and cherished – *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved,”* (Romans 10:13b) the apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans. God’s generous and accepting heart.

“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.” (UMH #378, v. 1) *“Depth of mercy! Can there be mercy still reserved for me? Can my God his wrath forbear, me, the chief of sinners, spare?”* (UMH #355, v.1) *“It’s me, it’s me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.”* (UMH #352, refrain).

When we recognize God's powerful love, we can be filled with that love that is powerful enough to share with others.

During Lent, we have a chance to take stock of our lives, to see where we might want to change some things, and to count our blessings more often. The nation of Israel continued to move forward – not perfectly by any means. Their journey into the Promised Land was full of challenges and difficulties, and once they were there, they continued to forget about their God who had brought them that far and who continued to remind them that they had strayed and offered them chance after chance to return to God. Eventually they ended up in exile, and when they returned to their homeland, they had been changed and reshaped. Claiming God's generosity and God's love was often clouded by their own greed, sense of spiritual self-reliance and thinking they could do without God's input.

But time and time again, they were reminded that that simply wasn't true. As the church of Jesus Christ in the 21st Century, we can fall into that trap so easily. We come to church to worship God, but so many things can distract us from that. When we become distracted, we might hear the call to return to God, to rediscover God's generous heart and then be sent forth to share that love with others. Some of the most powerful witnesses to God's generous love and acceptance can inspire us and help us remember God's blessings in our own lives. Think of the people whose witness has inspirational, either by the way they experienced God's love or the ways they shared it.

A friend of mine is now retired, but he fished for a living. One day he was on his boat, which began to take on water and sink. As his boat sank lower and lower, he was trapped below, and he began to pray, asking God to send help or for him to at least be able to escape certain drowning. He promised God that he would turn his life around and be a better person. There was another boater who saw what was happening and rescued him, and when he returned to land, he went home to his wife and children, kissed them all, became very involved in his church, supported mission projects, hosted retreats, and never failed to praise God for the love that he felt, believing that God had given him a second chance. God's generous heart.

One day as a woman was crossing a street at London station, an old man stopped her. He said to her, "Excuse me, ma'am, but I want to thank you." She looked up and exclaimed, "Thank me?" He replied, "Yes, ma'am, I used to be ticket collector, and whenever you went by you always gave me a cheerful smile and a good morning. I knew that smile must come from inside somewhere. Then one morning I saw a little Bible in your hand. So I bought one, too, and I found Jesus." (Illustrations Unlimited, p. 491, #4) God's generous heart through someone's seemingly small witness to her faith.

A parishioner in one of my churches was perhaps the epitome of generosity in spirit and in celebrating things that happened in her life and in her church. Grammy Stone was everyone's grandmother, and everyone loved her beyond words. She was in church nearly every Sunday, and if she wasn't going to be there, she would always tell me so I wouldn't worry. Grammy Stone made THE BEST date filled sugar cookies, and even though many people asked for the recipe – which she graciously gave to them – she was the only one who could make them taste the way they did. People would line up at a bake sale to buy Grammy Stone's date filled sugar cookies.

But there was far more to Grammy Stone than her baking skills. She could never understand why people made a fuss over her. She kept saying, “I’m just a plain old person. There’s nothing special about me.” But that was part of what made her special. She was just who she was, and she repeatedly said, “I love my church, and I love my church family.” When she turned 90, we had a big party for her – just like we did with Ken! She worked all the bake sales, stood on her feet for hours to wash dishes at a bean supper, made things for the Christmas Fair, clapped her hands with joy when the children sang a song or presented something, and always donated extra money toward some project we had going. She couldn’t see what a saint she was because she was just who she was: someone who shared the generous love of God with others and with all her heart. When she died at 95, it was a huge loss for the church, but she left behind a legacy of how to share God’s love, of how to be generous and caring and comfortable in her own skin. God generous love through her.

I have seen God’s generosity at work through so many of you. This congregation is loving and welcoming, and we have much to offer. Sure, we can always learn more and practice more generosity of God’s love, but we can also celebrate what we do have here and build on it. As we start this Lenten season, may we take a look at where we can improve, where we might be more generous, how we might have an even better generous spirit toward each other and others, and move forward as we travel toward Easter. Let us clean spiritual house within ourselves and in our congregation. Let us keep remembering and practicing the generous love of God and remember that we are called together to be the church of Jesus Christ in this place, at this time.

Let us pray:

*Come and fill our hearts with your [love].
You alone, O Lord, are holy.
Come and fill our hearts with your [love],
Alleluia!*

*Come and fill our hearts with your peace.
You alone, O Lord, are holy.
Come and fill our hearts with your peace,
Alleluia!*

(The Faith We Sing, #2157, Jacques Berthier, written for the Taizé community)