

*They that wait
upon the Lord
shall renew
their strength;*

THEY SHALL MOUNT UP WITH
WINGS AS *Eagles*



*they shall run,
and not be weary;
and they shall walk,
and not faint.*

Isaiah 40:31

**November 10, 2019
FUMC Portsmouth, NH**

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

***Call to Worship**

L: For everything there is a season:

P: And a time for every matter under heaven:

L: A time to be born and a time to die.

P: A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.

L: A time to break down, and a time to build up.

P: A time to weep and a time to laugh.

L: A time to keep and a time to throw away.

P: A time to be silent and a time to speak.

L: A time to love and a time to hate.

P: A time for war and a time for peace.

L: God has made everything suitable for its time.

ALL: Let us worship our God!

***Hymn** "The Servant Song" TFWS #2222

A Time for the Child in all of Us

Ministry of Music

Prayer (unison)

God, all too often our brokenness breaks into the world, shattering your hopes. As a result, the world still fails to be that place where the wolf lies down with the lamb. We still hurt and destroy on your holy mountain. On this day of memory, we once again vow "Never Again", knowing that tomorrow there will still be plowshares turned into swords, knowing that there will still be conflicts, knowing that we still need to learn a new way. For the ways we, as individuals, as communities, as nations have failed to be peacemakers, forgive us God. In grace, make us gracious, able to work for hope and peace. Jesus comes to us as the Prince of Peace. Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God is nigh. In Christ God reminds us of the power of love and forgiveness. We are forgiven and called to keep working for the Peaceable Kingdom. The time is coming when we will learn war no more. Thanks be to God who gives us this promise. Amen.

Sung Response "Spirit of the Living God" UMH #393

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word Isaiah 40:28-31; 41:10

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

P: Thanks be to God.

Message "Waiting" Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn** "For All the Saints" TFWS #2283

Prayers of the People Litany for Veterans Day insert

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 into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

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)

We offer to you, O God, these gifts of our lives and service. Keep us close Lord, to all who need your love, justice, compassion, and healing; help us to show them that you are known in Jesus Christ, whose compassion lives in all of us. Amen.

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn** "Let There Be Peace on Earth" UMH #431

***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*

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 worshipping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!

Rev. Deb Hanson

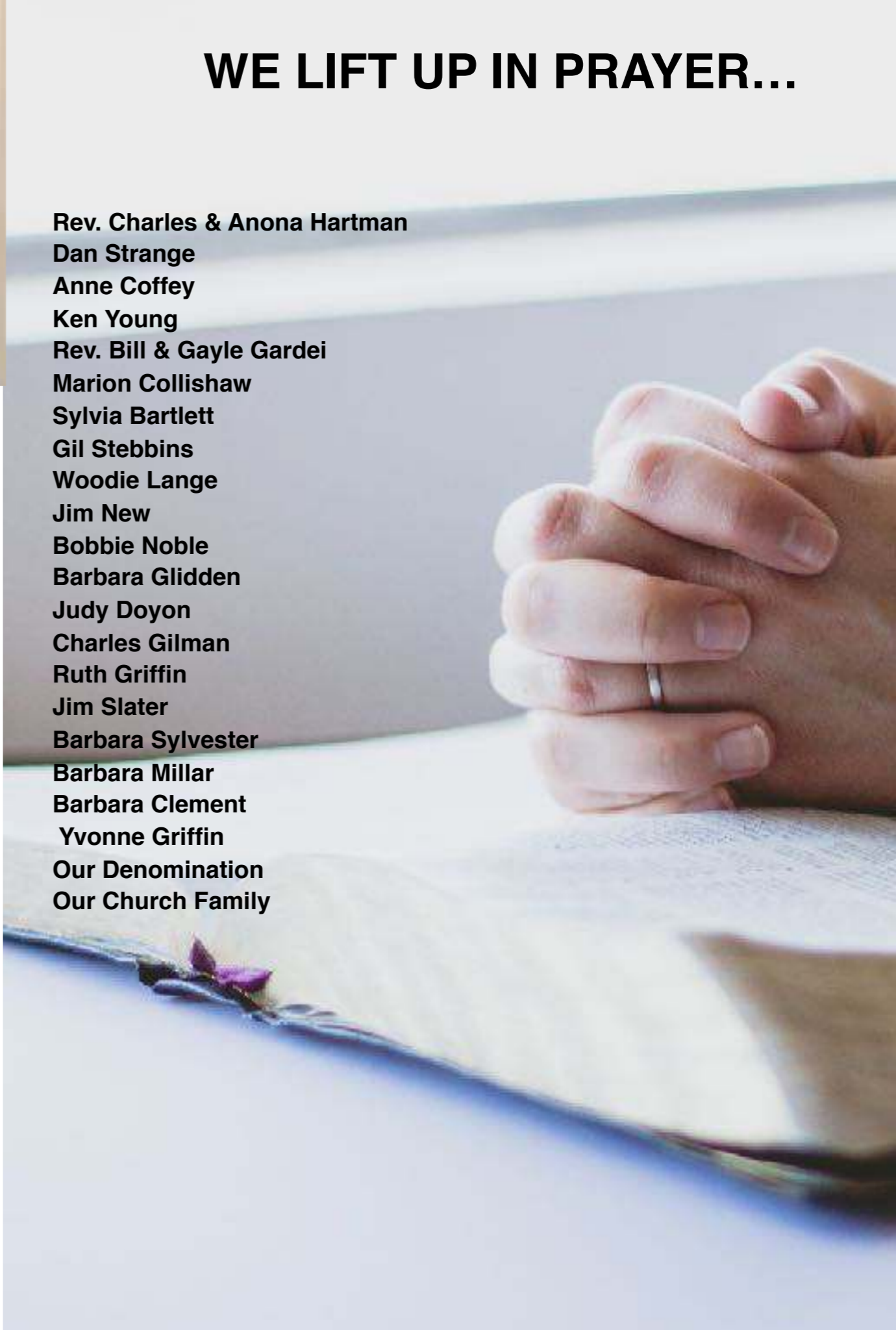


Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson
Pastor's Assistant - David Richards
Liturgist - Marilyn Stebbins
Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek
Acolyte - Kaya Sarosiek
Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal
Greeters - Jeanne & Steve Westcott
Ushers - Ken & Jenta Westbrook
Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek
Worship Service Tech - Steve Scott
Photographer - Dave Atkinson
Sunday School - Dave Atkinson



WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER...

Rev. Charles & Anona Hartman
Dan Strange
Anne Coffey
Ken Young
Rev. Bill & Gayle Gardei
Marion Collishaw
Sylvia Bartlett
Gil Stebbins
Woodie Lange
Jim New
Bobbie Noble
Barbara Glidden
Judy Doyon
Charles Gilman
Ruth Griffin
Jim Slater
Barbara Sylvester
Barbara Millar
Barbara Clement
Yvonne Griffin
Our Denomination
Our Church Family



Come join us for coffee hour after church service in Sanborn Hall. We'd love to catch up with you and see how your week has gone.

UPCOMING EVENTS

11/12, Peace Circle meets at 9:30 am at FUMC. All are welcome.

11/13, There will be an 11 am Wentworth Senior Living service. All are welcome to join us.

11/13, Bishop's Day on the District is here at FUMC.

11/15, Set up Sanborn Hall for Turkey Dinner. Help is needed.

11/16, Our turkey dinner is fast approaching and we still need food donations. Volunteers for cooking and serving are still needed. Sign - up sheets can be found on the kitchen counter. This is a great way to get involved and meet your fellow church members and neighbors in the area. \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under.

11/19, Church Council meeting will be held at 6 pm.

11/20, Annual Church Conference is at 6 pm.

11/26, Tuesday, there will be an Interfaith Thanksgiving Service held at the North Church of Portsmouth at 7:00 pm. The address is 7 Congress Street, Portsmouth, NH. If you have any questions see Rev. Deb.

11/30, Greening of the Sanctuary at 9:00 am. All are welcome.

12/1, Advent begins!

FRIENDLY REMINDERS

Donations are being accepted for computer updates. Computers are used in the office, our financial systems, our worship service and the Narthex. The amount needed for this upgrade is \$2,000. Please prayerfully consider donating to computer upgrade. Thank you.

Upper Room devotionals are available near the Narthex monitor.

Just a friendly reminder, please try to keep your pledge up to date so we can meet our financial obligations as a church. Thank you for your faithful giving!

Sal Hughes is our guest pianist today. Thank you Sal!



**Altar flowers are
dedicated to all
the great
volunteers who
helped make the
Pumpkin Patch a
big success!!**

**Thanks to all past,
present and future
veterans for all they have
done and do for us.**



Litany for Veterans

L: God of love, peace and justice, it is your will for the world that we may live together in peace. You have promised through the prophet Isaiah that one day the swords will be beaten into ploughshares. Yet we live in a broken world, and there are times that war seems inevitable. Let us recognize with humility and sadness the tragic loss of life that comes in war. Even so, as we gather here free from persecution, we may give thanks for those who have served with courage and honor.

Please Rise: Those who are in active duty or reserve duty, and the fathers, mothers, siblings, spouses and grandparents of those that are currently serving.

All: God, we praise you for those that are willing to serve. Let all Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen and Coast Guardsmen serve with honor, pride, and compassion. Do not let their hearts be hardened by the actions they must take. Strengthen their families. Keep them surrounded in your love and peace.

Please Rise: Those who have served in the military in the past.

All: God, we praise you for those that have served in the military. We thank you for those that put the welfare of others ahead of their own safety. Let us all be inspired by their self-sacrifice in service to those who needed protection.

Please Rise: Those that who have lost a loved one in war.

All: God, we praise you for those that have made the ultimate sacrifice. We ask that you comfort those that still feel the pain of their loss. Keep us mindful that you have promised to comfort those that mourn.

Please Rise: Those who have gathered in your name in safety because of the sacrifices of others.

All: God, we praise you for granting us these freedoms. Let us honor those who have served by working for peace. Let us never forget those that have served, and let us never let go of your promise of peace.



FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, 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. Taesung Kang, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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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

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“Waiting” – 11/10/19
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 40:28-31; 41:10

THEME: We can trust that God will act even in our waiting.

On a consumer flight from Portland, Maine, to Boston in the summer of 1987, the pilot, Henry Dempsey, heard an unusual noise near the rear of the aircraft. He turned the controls over to his copilot and went back to check it out. As he reached the tail section, the plane hit an air pocket, and Dempsey was tossed against the rear door. He quickly discovered the source of the mysterious noise. The rear door had not been properly latched prior to takeoff and it fell open. Dempsey was instantly sucked out of the jet.

The copilot, seeing the red light on the control panel that indicated an open door, radioed the nearest airport requesting permission to make an emergency landing. He reported that Dempsey had fallen out of the plane and requested that a helicopter be dispatched to search the area of the ocean.

After the plane had landed, the ground crew found Henry Dempsey holding onto the outdoor ladder of the aircraft. Somehow, he had caught the ladder and managed to hold on for 10 minutes as the plane flew 200mph at an altitude of 4,000 feet. What is more, as the plane made its approach and landed, Dempsey had kept his head from hitting the runway, a mere 12 inches away. According to news reports, it took several airport personnel more than a few minutes to pry the pilot's fingers from the ladder.

That is a picture of endurance - the ability to hang on when it would have been easier to let go. Many people are blessed with certain attributes, but endurance jumps to the forefront for success in any endeavor . . . Endurance "the power of going on in spite of difficulties." . . . [Showing] determination, perseverance, tenacity, plodding, stamina, and backbone . . . Henry Dempsey would just say it is holding on for dear life. (<https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/sermon-endurance-resilient-virtue-romans-5>)

Holding on for dear life means waiting: waiting for something to move, to budge, to change, to improve, to do something – anything. The nation of Israel was holding on for dear life - in exile, mostly in Babylon, and the prophet Isaiah repeatedly had warned them to return to God or they WOULD end up in exile. When they ignored the warnings, that is exactly what happened. Yet, in this part of the book of Isaiah, sometimes called Second Isaiah, the tone of the prophet's words became more encouraging, more hopeful.

While the people's situation remained the same, Isaiah's message was that things WOULD eventually change, but they would have to wait. This certainly was not how they wanted to spend their lives: living in a foreign land, losing their identity as the nation of Israel, wondering where God really was in their lives and IF God even cared about them anymore. Their questions are ours, too, when we are waiting:

Does God really care? Why doesn't God do something to fix the injustices in our world? Why does God allow war, murder, evil, and diseases? When is God going to do something?

The Israelites in Babylon didn't understand, and they faltered in their belief thinking that they worshiped a God who just didn't care about them.

Then along comes Isaiah. His words in chapter 40:28 aren't really begin sounding like an accusation, "Have you not known? Have you not heard?" In other words, listen up, folks! You have heard this message over and over again, and you still don't get it! You really haven't been listening! Pay attention! Hear what I have to say! But who could blame them?

It's so interesting that many people have rejected God or say that there isn't a God because of the bad things they see in the world or the challenges they face where God hasn't intervened for them. We can ask the questions over and over again, but so often the only answer is to wait.

Years ago, I read a book by Joyce Landorf called, *God's Waiting Room*. The book is apparently out of print now, but I remember her story about having TMJ. *The temporomandibular (tem-puh-roe-man-DIB-u-lur) joint (TMJ) acts like a sliding hinge, connecting your jawbone to your skull. You have one joint on each side of your jaw. TMJ disorders — a type of temporomandibular disorder or TMD — can cause pain in your jaw joint and in the muscles that control jaw movement.* (from the Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tmj/symptoms-causes/syc-20350941>)

Joyce's livelihood included speaking engagements, and the doctor told her that she might have to stop her them. When the word went out about her TMJ, a few people started telling her that she must have done something so terribly wrong that God would punish her with this disorder. She prayed and prayed, and the only answer she received for a long time was "wait." Wait. Oh how we hate to wait, and Joyce was no different, the Israelites were no different, we are no different.

We want answers now, and we don't want to go into that cold, dark waiting room with its uncertainties and fears and "why, why, why's". For Joyce it was heartbreaking and full of wondering if her friends were right. Maybe she really had done something bad, and God ***was*** punishing her. We ask ourselves all kinds of unreasonable questions when we end up in those waiting rooms because our faith falters, and our sense of God's presence leaves us. But Joyce had an experience that turned things around in her waiting. A friend came to her and said, "I know you are going through a tough time, and you feel like you are having to wait to see what will happen. I will wait with you."

The friend prayed with her, supported her, checked in on her, and sat with her. God was with her even in her waiting because of a friend who cared and brought the love of God to help her through the situation. Joyce recognized God's presence through the friend, and she was able to get through the diagnosis and recovery.

What seems to happen in our lives when the answer to prayer is "wait" is that we become impatient; we stop looking for help from a friend or friends; we give up on God coming through for us; and sometimes people just give up on God.

But I think it helpful to recognize Isaiah's words that follow verse 28 in today's passage: "God is the Creator of the earth, doesn't faint or grow weary. God never sleeps; God understands and gives us the means to keep on keeping on. God will provide ways for the powers of the world to be overcome, and for the weak and powerless to be lifted up – on eagle's wings and carried until they can run and not be weary, walk and not faint. Isaiah 41:10 holds such assurance: *Do not fear; I am with you, do not be afraid; I am your God; I give you strength; I will help you; I will hold you up!* (paraphrased)

Waiting can be hard, but it is not a reason to give up on God. Think of the times we wait: for the birth of a child, in line at the store, in traffic, for a friend's birthday party, for vacation time, to heal from illness, to find healing from loss, for a loved one to visit, for a special occasion. There are so many ways we wait, and God is with us in all of them, even when we don't recognize it.

The Israelites in Babylon needed reminding of that, and so do we. We recognize that we sometimes become weary, feel abandoned by God, and wonder what will happen – IF anything will happen. In the writings we heard today, we have no indication that the people ever denied that God existed, only that they were weary, wondering, and losing hope that God would really act. Isaiah's encouragement lifted them up and brought them hope.

I've talked about my nephew Andrew before, but he came to mind as I was reflecting on this passage. After he lost the bottom of both of his legs in Iraq, now over ten years ago, he has waited a lot. He waited in Germany where he was taken right after the explosion, and then he waited at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, DC to go through surgeries, fittings for prosthetics, physical therapy, and the word that he could finally go home. He waited a year, and during that year, my brother and sister-in-law waited with him, making countless trips to Walter Reed to be with him. People gave them their bonus miles so they could fly without cost, and they were able to stay in a special low-cost motel for families of the military who were at Walter Reed.

People all over the country prayed for Andrew, for his parents and sisters; times were challenging and tough. When Andrew arrived home, he continued rehab, but he also went through a difficult adjustment to a life that was very different from the one he left. He was depressed, had nightmares, suffered (and still deals with) PTSD. He was at a loss as to what to do with his life, and then something shifted for him about four or five years ago, and he decided to go to college to learn how to make the prosthetics like the ones he wore. This is a young man who hated school, and he tried a lot of different things before he went into the service.

Suddenly, he is now in school, getting straight A's and talking about going on to get his PhD! He waited and waited in that dark, cold waiting room, but he has emerged to begin his life anew in a different direction. He still struggles with whether or not God exists, but he continues to be surrounded with a loving family, lots of prayer, and a joyful realization that he had come through one of the worst situations he could have in his life, and he made it out of the waiting room and into the light.

When situations and circumstances in our lives, our communities, our world seem to be the worst we could imagine or drag us down and make us wonder if God truly is at work in the world, it is good to remember Isaiah's words of encouragement and the reminder that comes with them:

From the Good News Version – *Don't you know? Haven't you heard?*

The Lord is the everlasting God; he created all the world.

He never grows tired or weary. No one understands his thoughts.

²⁹ He strengthens those who are weak and tired.

³⁰ Even those who are young grow weak; young people can fall exhausted.

³¹ But those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed.

They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.

It's a matter of hanging on when we feel weary – like Henry Dempsey, the pilot did in the story from the beginning of the sermon. It's a matter of finding trust and sharing with someone who will walk with us on the journey or wait with us in the waiting room like Joyce Landorf did with her TMJ. It's a matter of waiting for healing and going through the things that need to be done during that time of waiting like Andrew did when he was recovering from losing his legs. None of us takes this journey alone. We have a whole church family to be with us, and there are friends and family to uplift us. And most of all, even when God might seem farthest away, God is actually lifting us up on eagles' wings and carrying us so that we can also find our own wings to fly.

How do we know? I think it takes being intentional in looking for God even when things are tough, when we just don't feel like our prayers are being heard or answered. Learning to trust in God's promises is a life-long process of growing in faith and learning from one another and from God. Today, maybe some of you are in a waiting room that is a scary place to be. If so, reach out to someone for support and companionship along the journey. Look for the little things – maybe even the tiniest things – that remind you of God's promise to lift you up and carry you during the tough times. You – we all – are not alone!

Let us pray: (sing)

And God will raise us up on eagle's wings,

Bear us on the breath of dawn, make us to shine like the sun,

And hold us in the palm of God's hand. UMH #143

Amen.