

...from the Heart

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Winter 2014



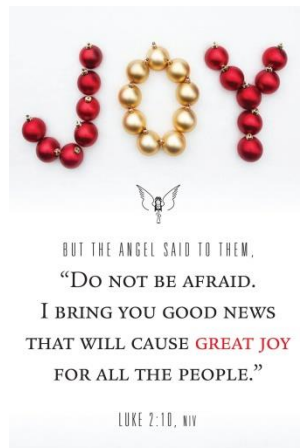
A Great Light

Isaiah 9:2,6

The people who walk in darkness
will see a great light.
For those who live in a land of deep darkness,
a light will shine.

For a child is born to us,
a son is given to us...

And he will be called:
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



Shepherds were on night watch shifts guarding their flocks of sheep. A small fire gave them some warmth from the cool night air and a bit of light in the dark night. Then, suddenly, there was a great light, a blazing light that illuminated all around them. The light was the radiance of God's glory. The shepherders were terrified, but an angel of the Lord appeared and reassured them, "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" (Luke 2:10-11 NLT).

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him. (Luke 2:13-14 THE MESSAGE)


Sometime later *Magoi*, as they are called in the Greek language, wise men from the east came to worship Christ the King. They had seen a star that shone brightly in the heavens and they followed it. Its light was focused on a place in Bethlehem where Mary and Joseph were caring for the baby Jesus.

In the famous Rembrandt painting, "The Adoration of the Shepherds," we see a darkened stable. Joseph is standing behind Mary. Two shepherds are kneeling with hands raised in prayer and astonishment. Two women lift a child so that the child could see Jesus. A man stands behind them with a lantern. There are others in the background including a boy with a dog. Though there is a man with a lantern, the brightest light is radiating from the manger.

Light is a theme in the birth of Christ. God is light. Light represents what is good; it removes darkness, which represents what is bad. Light represents holiness, the sacred, and the Presence of God. Isaiah's prophecy of Christ's birth says that people in darkness see a great light, for those living in deep darkness a light will shine.

I can relate to this. I lived in darkness for a number of years until light broke through the darkness. It made me see that The Savior is Jesus and He was born for me; what great news! It brought me great joy. A child is born to us, He is the Son of God. He has come for all people to give light, life, love, grace, peace - salvation. He is the Savior of the world. This Advent Season we will once again discuss the greatest miracle ever, God became man and dwelt among us. He is Our All-knowing Counselor – Wonderful Counselor; Our All-powerful Deliver – Mighty God; Ever-present Comforter – Everlasting Father; and The Lord and Giver of good, kind, compassionate wholeness – Prince of peace. Merry Christmas!

And that's...

F.T.H.
Pastor Jerry 

"...From the Heart"

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Stay Connected to Your Forever Family!

Pastor Jerry's Good Morning message includes updates and announcements regarding church activities, prayer requests, a devotional, jokes (of course ☺) quotes, trivia, news and so much more! To begin receiving "Good Morning", send an email address to: pastor.jerry@verizon.net to be added to the distribution list.

Check out our website at www.patchnaz.net for sermons, contact information, bible studies, and so much more!!

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

It has been such a beautiful autumn with the colorful changing of the leaves. I don't like raking them but I do like looking at them! It is my favorite season of the year. On Friday, Dec. 12th the ladies will be having our annual Christmas Craft Night. We will meet at HPYC at 7pm to make our creations and enjoy fellowship with one another. Corinne always finds the nicest things for us to make and helps us along with the process. I will be handing out a flyer as a reminder but mark the date on your calendars and plan to join us.

On Tuesday evenings our In-Touch group has been reading a book entitled Choose Joy by Kay Warren. It is about finding joy in our everyday lives in spite of all the negative things we deal with. The author is honest and open about her own pessimistic attitude and how she is learning to seek Christ more and more. We are all enjoying reading and sharing our hearts together. We have had some powerful times of prayer and have seen many answers. Our God is still in the miracle business!

With the change of season, we will be ushered into the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday: A time when we remember the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus, and thank Him for all the blessings He has bestowed upon us. It seems like it is earlier and earlier each year that the stores are crammed with holiday gifts and decorations. Sometimes by the time Christmas arrives, we are so exhausted that we just want it to be over. Thanksgiving and Christmas are only celebrated once a year, but we are called to be thankful and rejoice at what the birth of Jesus means to us every day of our lives. I pray that we will all simplify our holidays and focus on the best Gift we could ever receive. May God's love and grace surround each of you as we celebrate Jesus.

In Christ,
Mary Ann

Upside down?

Even amid increased secularization, God makes the core Christmas message known. Take, for example, the story of a "winter pageant" a mother attended at her son's grade school. Songs of reindeer, snow and Santa included one titled "Christmas Love," in which the youngest performers held up letters as the song progressed: "C," "H," etc.

When a little girl unknowingly held her "M" upside down, the older kids snickered and the adult audience smiled acceptingly. But as the song drew to a close and all the letters were revealed, surprised recognition struck the Christians in the room.

"CHRISTWAS LOVE," read the string of student-borne letters. God's truth had penetrated the human clutter and confusion around Christmas — as it has power to do throughout our lives: "Christ was love." And of course, he still is.

Men's Retreat 2014

This year's men's retreat was in a new location, The Inn at Pocono Manor, Pa. This should be closer than Taconic Retreat Center; however, the drive took us 4 ½ hours instead of the expected 3 hours due to crazy traffic on the Cross Bronx parking lot. We left at 1:30 and arrived in the dark at 6:00 – Did I mention the snow? Yeah, there was a white out just as we arrived in the Mount Pocono area. Then, I backed up into the corner of a stone building and broke my taillight lens and cracked my bumper. So far, a great start to a great retreat ☺

I looked up their website and was elated to see all the activities we could enjoy on our Saturday afternoon free time: skeet and trap shooting, horseback riding, a golf driving range, as well as two 18 hole golf courses... Now that's R & R where I come from! However, the snow, as well as the freezing temperatures, put a squish to all that. Plus, now I would have to do some repair work on my car in order to drive back home on Sunday. Instead of fixing stuff at home or the church, I would be fixing stuff at the retreat ☹ It was great to see some old friends up there though. Jerry Manning drove me to Lowe's to get tools and glue and duct tape (arrh arrh arrh). I spent my free time in my room gluing my fingers to the plastic pieces of the taillight lens and complaining to God – who loves me anyway ☺ Friday evening there was no dinner offered, so we drove to the fast food district with my taillight hanging out of its socket to get dinner. Then, the first session of our retreat – at last, something spiritual to sink our teeth into. We arrived to find a book on each seat – *Follow Me* by our guest speaker, Dr. David Schroeder, who authored ten books and "pitched" three of them all during the retreat with a book sale table in the back of the room during every session. I was not too happy about all that at first. Almost every man goes to the retreat hoping to hear from God in an area they are seeking direction, or guidance, or just a special touch or word from the messages or the fellowship. All I heard during that first session was \$15 per book, set of two books and workbook \$25, and all three for \$35.

After the first session there was snack time and our group gathered together in a room off to the side to sing songs and fellowship together. Chris Bier led us on guitar. Our guys are very welcoming, and we adopted Paul from the Bridge, and Benjamin (second year for him to join us). The conversation shifted from casual to a very serious discussion about being unequally yoked, etc. The guys can prompt some pretty deep discussions and topics. It was better than the first retreat session to me. I love to hang back and listen to our guys singing to the Lord and discussing spiritual things. I don't participate much – just listen and thank God for them and their desire to serve our God more fully. I excused myself around midnight or so and went back to my room to read, complain some more, and look over the passage for this week's sermon at our church.

Saturday morning brought a great breakfast buffet and two sessions from our speaker, but still using his book as the source. I did get

more out of it with a fresh start and maybe a little help from hanging with the guys the night before. As I mentioned, I spent Saturday afternoon free time fixing my car and praying that our guys would get something meaningful out of this retreat. Saturday dinner was great with another grand buffet. The guys enjoyed a great meal and fellowship around the table talking about their free time adventures as well as other stuff.

The evening message was a breath of fresh air for me. The speaker went off script and talked about relationships with fathers and to fathers and with our Father. He didn't have any notes and didn't use his books as the lesson plan. It was an impromptu sermon that nailed our guys between the eyes. It was a Holy Spirit moment to me. After this session there was another snack time, and then our group met in the same space as the previous night. I didn't stay long, but the guys always enjoy these late night sessions. When I returned to my room to pray and read, I was impressed that God is speaking to our guys, whether I feel it or not. He has something to say to each of us when we are willing to listen to His voice. The confirmations were overwhelming. Every one of our guys was touched in separate and different ways during this retreat that I was not aware of or considering. No one came away empty-handed this weekend.

Sunday was the highlight for me. Even though the speaker used one of his books as the source for the teaching, he spoke about being baptized in the Holy Spirit and the gifts God promises to his followers. This resonated with me since I will be preaching from 1 Corinthians 12 this Sunday at our church. He brought a fresh look at the gifts of the Spirit. There was a time of prayer afterwards where pastors were asked to assist in praying for those seeking this baptism and the blessing of a gift from God. I was honored to be a part of that prayer time. God is so good.

Of course God humbled me during this weekend. From the traffic, to the snow, to the messing up my car, I was being trained. From the speaker selling his books to seeing how God can use this type of message, I was being trained. Seeing our speaker change gears and speak off the cuff as led by God, I was being trained. Finally, as he spoke to my passage for this week's message at our church and the prayer time that followed, I was being trained. God is always teaching His servants in the area they are called by Him to serve. I am constantly learning from God, but I also am constantly always revolting, in a sense, to what is happening that I don't understand. I think we need to always keep an open mind and heart to the things of God. When we have things all figured out, we are probably wrong ☺ He is a living God. That means He can change things up to suit His will and our needs at any moment in time. I experienced this all weekend. God is good, all the time.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Nick

Calling All Teens!!

Annette Neff, Director of the Teen Ministry has announced that the teens are meeting on a new night, have a new name and new leaders. Michael and Nichole Messina are the new leaders of our Monday night teen night now called the JPJ (Just Praise Jesus) Youth Group. Join them every other week from 6:30pm to 8:30pm.

Weekly Schedule

Sundays	9:30am	Prayer Meeting
	10 am	Worship Service/Children's Church/Teen Message
Mondays	6:30 pm	JPJ Youth Group (Every Other Monday starting Dec 1)
	7 pm	MEN-Fellowship Hall (Every Other Monday starting Dec 8)
Tuesdays	7 pm	Ladies-in-Touch - MaryAnn Malcolm's house
Thursdays		Ministry at McPeak's Assisted Living (1 st and 3 rd Thursday)
	7 pm	Ladies' Sewing Circle - HPYC (3 rd Thursday ONLY)
Saturdays	8 am	Men's Breakfast-Fellowship Hall (1 st Saturday ONLY)
	10 am	Feed the Hungry with Lighthouse Mission on Terry St., Village of Patchogue
	7 pm	Good News Bowlers (1 st Saturday ONLY)

Ladies' Sewing Circle

The ladies have been busy with their sewing projects, and as Christmas draws closer, more projects are sure to be on the horizon.

We met early on Saturday, October 11th, to create two beautiful "Quilts for Kids." They turned out great and will be donated locally to children dealing with serious illness. Thank you to MaryAnn M., Donna K. and Elaine K. for donating your time and talent!

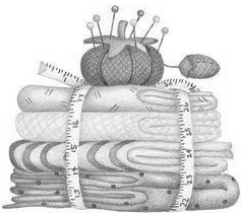
Several ladies continue to work on our table runner project while reading through the book "Women of Christmas." The book focuses on Elizabeth, the mother of

John the Baptist, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Anna, at the age of 84, a widow for many years, fasting and praying in the temple, waiting for the promised Messiah. Her prayers were answered when Mary and Joseph brought the infant to the temple. Read about them in Luke 1 and 2.

We are planning our Christmas Craft Night for December 12th at the Youth Center (more info to follow). This is always a fun time, hope you will join us.

Keeping you in Stiches,

Corinne Franco



Will You Be Locked Out??

A couple of months ago, I had the privilege of watching my granddaughter Myla for the day. I took her for a long walk in her stroller into Bellport Village where we enjoyed craft vendors, a petting zoo and music with her aunt, uncle and cousin.

After we were there for a while, it started to drizzle a little bit so we headed home. By the time we turned onto our block, it was raining a bit harder. When we got home, I quickly got Myla into the house and went back to empty the stroller and bring the items inside. As I turned the knob on the screen door, I realized that Myla had locked me out! There she was inside, nice and dry, smiling out at me. It would be a few hours until her dad got home and no other way for me to get inside. I encouraged her to turn the latch in the other direction but she didn't seem to be too interested. I felt so helpless at not being able to be with her, and I prayed that she would stay right where she was. As I tried the knob once more before panic set in, I realized it opened easily. I got in quickly, hugged her to me, and we headed up for lunch.

After I had put her in for a nap, I started thinking about what it had felt like being locked out of my home. It was not my decision, but there I was. Those thoughts brought me to the realization that many are going to be "locked out" of Heaven because they refuse to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. We all have a choice to accept or reject the promise of spending eternity with Him in heaven. There are many Scriptures that back this up, including John 6:40 which says: "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day". The alternative is life in hell, separated from God forever; the decision is ours to make. Don't wait until it is too late. Accept Jesus now and live your life for Him. Then the door to heaven will be unlocked, awaiting your arrival.

In Love and Thanksgiving,

MaryAnn Malcolm

Fill a jar

Need a new tradition to begin the new year? One way to reflect on your blessings as the days and months pass is to fill a Blessing Jar. Simply find a container (ideally with a lid) and place it in a prominent place in your home. Next to it, set slips of paper and writing utensils.



Encourage every family member to jot down one thing they're grateful for every day. If you have a large family, you may need one jar for each person. You can also use different-colored paper slips for each family member.

Every week, sit down together and review the many ways that God is present in your lives.

Winter Events Calendar

Communion served the first Sunday of every month



DECEMBER

7 2nd Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

11 7pm Church Board meeting

14 3rd Sunday of Advent – the Children's Choir will be performing

21 Winter begins

4th Sunday of Advent – Christmas Cantata
& Christmas program for the children
(Fellowship Hall)

24 5pm Christmas Eve Service

25 Christmas Day – We celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ



*Sounds
of the
Season*



january

3 8am Men's Breakfast (Fellowship Hall)

7pm Good News Bowlers

4 First Sunday of the New Year – Holy Communion

8 7pm Church Board meeting

Welcome!
2015!



Alabaster Month

8 **Annual Meeting** (after the Worship Service)

12 7pm Church Board meeting

14 Saint Valentine's Day



Our Prayers are with

The Ollett Family for the loss of Dorothy Strand, Laura's Mother

The Marra Family for the loss of Pascquale's Father

The Button

A Christmas Tale by John Mercurio



James stood up squaring his shoulders, his back making a popping sound as the digits in his spine moved back in place. He'd been sitting in his rocking chair thinking of his life, or at least the way it once was. The passing hours seemed to vaporize. Looking down at his closed fist, he smiled; turning his hand upward, he opened his fingers to reveal a heavily tarnished military button. He'd been so occupied in thought he'd lost track of it, even though it never left his tightly clutched fist. Jiggling it in his palm, he flipped it in the air as if he were guessing its weight. Turning it over with two fingers and a thumb, he tenderly caressed the aged memento. His accidental unearthing of the button had transformed his rocking chair into a time machine.

"I haven't forgotten," speaking aloud, as if he wasn't alone in the room. "I'll never forget; I remember that day as if it were yesterday!" A single tear runs down his cheek squeezing the button even tighter in his aged hand. Earlier that evening, while searching for an old letter, James' hand bumped into something hard in the top drawer of the roll top desk. It was a bluish box adorned in scrimshaw. Blowing off the dust, he removed the cover to find several precious treasures, including a brass Civil War button. It had belonged to a Union soldier in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, one of the first all black infantry units in American history.

Gazing at the tarnished pin, James sat back into his rocking chair, unable to take his eyes off it. Suddenly, he was no longer in his room; he was back on the battle field, in July of 1863, where he first crossed paths with the button's owner. The War had turned one nation under God into two nations, ripping apart the fabric of its own civilization. James was one of the 36 white officers assigned to the regiment. The 54th was an all-volunteer unit, and in the minds of many, an experiment that was doomed to failure even before its first mission. Its formation infuriated the Confederacy, fanning the flames of sectional hatred. In response, they issued a threat, hoping to frighten and disband its members. This unit seemed to embody all that the South hated about the North, and so the word was spread: Any black soldier in the 54th captured by Confederates would be sold into slavery; white officers were to be immediately executed.

When being interviewed for an officer's post, James lied about his true feelings toward the black volunteers. He was more focused on the promises of promotion and pension. In truth, he regarded these soldiers as inferior, less capable, and treated them as such. There was one particular soldier that James made a career out of treating badly – a former runaway slave named Zedekiah Jones. He wasn't sure if it was Zedekiah's conscientious work ethic, or cheerful personality that annoyed him, but he went out of his way to make Zed's life miserable.

On July 18, 1863, the 54th Regiment unsuccessfully tried to take Fort Wagner in South Carolina. Because of bad military intelligence, six hundred soldiers charged a fort of 1,700 Confederates through hellish cannon fire. The troop sustained heavy casualties and was temporarily disbanded after the battle. James and Zedekiah's paths did not cross again until Christmas Eve later that year. On the evening of December 24th, a rogue Confederate patrol caught the union camp napping. Taken completely by surprise, the rebels killed dozens of men before anyone realized what was happening.

Barely alive, James was surrounded and alone when a union soldier came to his rescue. Jumping between James and his executioners, Zedekiah fought off three men, saving his life, but was mortally wounded in the process. Even as his life was ebbing away, he mustered the last of his strength dragging James to a medical tent, before collapsing into a heap. Struggling and grunting, James turned himself around so he could see Zedekiah's face. He couldn't understand why this man he'd treated so cruelly would give his life to save him. Clutching at Zed's uniform, in excruciating pain, he pulled himself up to the fallen hero's face. While grabbing onto Zed's uniform, one button came off in his hand. Tears running down his face, James whispered, "Why'd you do it, Zed? I didn't deserve it! Why'd you save me?"

Barely able to speak, Zed whispered back, "Jesus done it for me when he died on the cross." Gasping and struggling he pushing out each word. "Christmas ... ain't just about a baby ... born in a manger. Lord Jesus said ... 'when you done it to the least of these, my brothers ... you done it to me!' That's ... why... I ..." Zed's last words pierced James' soul as he held him tightly.

Rising from his rocking chair, James fell to his knees, thanking God for Zedekiah's life. Forty five Christmas Eves had come and gone, and James had never been the same. The only possession he held more dearly to his heart than that tarnished brass button was the cross he wore just below his white collar identifying him as a minister of the Gospel. As someone once said, one life truly can make all the difference.

Wishing all a Merry Christmas,
John

Who Is My Neighbor?



Josh and me on Halloween

This quarter I felt it was appropriate to interview Sue Herrmann. She has done a wonderful job since taking over our Newsletter, and there is much she is involved with behind the scenes. Let's get to know our Editor!

Q: Sue, tell us about yourself.

I am the happy and proud wife of Joe, and mother of Josh and Timmy; I love and adore all of my boys ☺ I am also a high school English teacher at Sachem HS East. I love to read, when time allows (not so often these days ☺), travel, bake, decorate cakes, take pictures, and spend time with people I love.



Here's Timmy,
because the kids are
cuter than me ☺

Q: When did you accept Jesus into your life?

I rekindled my relationship with Jesus eight and a half years ago in a hospital bed. I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma in July of 2005, and with the love and support of my now husband, Pastor Jerry, Ann, Jesse, and this incredible Forever Family, I found my way back to Him. It was a frightening and painful journey, but a part of my life that has shaped who I have become. I don't know where I would be without Him. Who thanks God for getting cancer? I do, because it is what brought me everything I cherish in my life now.

Q: When did you first come to Church of the Nazarene? When did you become a member?

I came to church on and off, but I became a regular attendee right after Joe and I were engaged in 2006. I became a member about 5 years ago.

Q: I'm sure there are many, but what has been the most memorable experience since being a part of this church?

There are so many! I will never forget when Pastor Jerry announced that we were expecting Josh. It was the week before Olivia DeVito's dedication, and he "predicted" that there would be another dedication in about 9 months ☺ I know that a lot of people prayed for us after my treatments were completed, because there was a distinct possibility that children may never be a reality for us, but God is so good, and he has blessed us immensely! My boys' dedication days were also very special moments; there is nothing better than thanking God for these precious gifts while surrounded by family and friends.

Q: What areas of ministry are you active in?

Right now I volunteer in the nursery, I am the newsletter editor, and I am an offering counter.

Q: I remember when I first met you that you were a dancer. Which form did you study? What was that experience like?

I danced from the time I was 4 until I was 25, and I taught dance for 7 years. I studied everything but ballroom, but my strength was ballet and contemporary. I loved dancing so much, and I do miss it from time to time. I was very shy, and it was a great way for me to express myself without talking. Dance taught me a lot about discipline and creativity.

Q: You mentioned you are a Teacher. What do you enjoy most about teaching? Least?

Teaching is a trying, but very rewarding experience. I love to watch a student's face completely change when a concept finally clicks, or when we have a great discussion about literature as a way to understand each other. It can be difficult because you don't know the results of your lessons most of the time. Sure, they may score well on tests, but you never really know what the students take away from their experience with you.

Q: What do you wish to instill in your students?

I want my kids to understand what it means to be a good person, and why they should want that themselves. Being in a public school, I cannot freely express my faith, nor can I teach it in a practical way, but I can use the characters as models of what to do, and more so, what not to do, to be someone you can be proud of.

Q: Any advice for those who want to pursue their degree in Education?

Be ready for a lot of late nights, emotional roller coasters, and constant change. Be ready to sort of adopt your students for at least the year, if not longer; you will think about them a lot more than you know! Be sure that you love teaching, because if you don't your students will know it, and they will call you on it!!!

Love all of God's Creations

The year 2011 was a 'black hole' year for me. Major life changes and medical issues occupied the entire year. After moving into my tiny cottage in December 2011, alone for the first time in my life, I was grateful that I had my two cats with me. Less than two months later, on January 24, 2012, I had to euthanize my beloved Cinder due to an unknown and inoperable stomach tumor. Knowing he was sick, but not knowing why, I went in that late afternoon thinking he needed some antibiotics and he'd be okay. Instead, I came home and buried Cinder in the dark by flashlight, Leo keeping vigil beside me. Six months later, Leo went out in the morning as usual, but never came home.

"Why Lord?!" I cried! I swore I wouldn't have another pet, but as the weeks went by, I found I was terribly lonely. Early on the cold, drizzly morning of October 9, 2012, as I was exiting a store parking lot, something small and black caught my attention on the road. It was a tiny kitten, its eyes not yet open, wet and shivering. As soon as I picked him up, he began to mewl faintly. Wrapping him in an old shirt, I rushed to the 24hr emergency vet near where I work.

While filling out some forms, I noticed a large cage on the floor. Inside was the "adoptee of the month", a large orange tabby named "Vinnie". He looked up at me with grey-green eyes. "Hi guy," I said. He stood and rubbed his body along the cage bars so I scratched his side.

The veterinarian came out to see me. She said the kitten would not have survived another day if I hadn't found him. He was dehydrated and very hungry, but otherwise okay. I thanked her and left for work, feeling very blessed to be his initial rescuer.

Two days later, on Thursday morning, I went back to check up on the kitten. He was already responding well to treatment. They asked if I was interested in adoption when he was old enough. I said I'd think about it. As I left, Vinnie, still on "display," stood up again, so I gave him another side-scratching and talked to him a little bit, then left. I wondered if I should adopt the kitten. Unexpectedly though, Vinnie kept interrupting my kitten-thoughts! Late Friday night, I called the vet and asked about Vinnie. The two year old "adoptee of the month" had been there for three already. His life story was almost as sad as any I'd heard. I knew Vinnie and I needed each other. I told the vet I would be coming the next afternoon to adopt him. The whole staff was thrilled, and he had quite a send-off, complete with a bag of medical supplies, his surgical collar and his toys.

It's been two years and we've meshed into each other's lives perfectly, even from the first day! In fact, Vinnie has taught me many spiritual lessons along the way, expanding the ways in which I hear God through His creation. Animals praise Him in their own languages, just like humans who speak different languages. "For God so loved the world (cosmos- meaning entirety of creation, not just humans) that He gave His only begotten Son..."

Although he was an ardent missionary and helper of the poor, St. Francis is most remembered for his relationship with the non-human sentient creatures that shared his world. His feast day is October 4th and each year churches worldwide celebrate the life of St. Francis by organizing a "Blessing of the Animals" ceremony.

The song which honors St. Francis, "Make Me a Channel Of Your Peace" is widely known, and the words were printed in the 11/5 Good Morning. Philip Yancy quoted St. Francis in a recent "A Holy Experience" interview with Ann Voskamp.

In the Bible itself we can read about the many ways animals play important roles in God's world, and our responsibility to care for them is obvious. Some biblical laws concerning their care are found in Deut 25:4 and Prov 12:10. The deep relationship that can develop between an animal and a person is love at its most basic and selfless level. I didn't find the kitten "by accident". I truly believe God ordained that I should find him, exactly when I did, and in doing so, God rescued not one, but three lives that day.

Isaiah 61:1 "...he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."



*We love because
he first loved us.*

1 John 4:19

Blessings,
Sue Cerruto

The Power of Prayer

"I must continue my testimony – because it shows how God is continually working in our lives."

I was delayed in coming to Ecuador. It reminds me of the story in Daniel 10, when the divine messenger was delayed – verse 12.

Then he continued "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me 21 days...then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me because I was detained there."

Well – I was not detained for 21 days – but for 4 days.

I was to leave with my team on October 9th, which was a Thursday. At 7:00 am I had my bags in the car, the dog was let out and ready for me to go, I went to get my passport, and it was nowhere to be found. The last time I had it was the night before – around 7:00 pm – when I got my boarding passes for the plane ride. I looked everywhere. I tore my house apart – I even went through the garbage. I even looked through all the plastic container covers in my kitchen cabinet.

Finally, I had to call my team members and tell them to go to the airport without me, because I could not find my passport – I could not leave the country without it. I called the airlines to cancel my flight, and the attendant told me I could go to the Federal Building in New York City and get a new passport. So I e-mailed Chris in Ecuador and told him what was going on.

I went and got a new passport picture taken, I got all my original documents, I got my old expired passport, and headed out on the road to New York City - So much traffic, so congested, so much construction and people everywhere.

But I knew that God was with me - so off I went with the address in hand.

Oh, by the way, the ticket agent warned me the Federal Building closes early, so I had better hurry. The trip into NYC is about 1-1/2 to 2 hours depending on traffic, but I did not count on another problem: my car. On the way in, my car started to "buck," like it wasn't getting enough gas. When I put my foot on the gas, I didn't have any acceleration. But I was in such a hurry, and the traffic was kind of slow, so I just ignored it. I put the address into my GPS so I could find my way around the maze of streets, but half of the streets that my GPS had me turn down were one way streets, so I had to go down alternate blocks, which added to my anxiety.



I said to myself "I can't do this." I felt so alone; my husband, whom I relied on - he was my strength, my heart, my helpmate, my companion - passed away in March of this year. I started to panic; the Bible verse "You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you" (Phil 4:13) came into my mind. OK, with Jesus, I can do this.

All of a sudden, in the middle of the road, Lexington Avenue to be exact, my car stalls. It stops – cars all around me beeping and beeping – I waved them around me and just prayed: Lord please let my car start. I turned the key, and yes! My car started! Thank you, Jesus! Finally, I found the building; but then, to find a parking spot. I went around the block a couple of times, and finally found a spot. It is now 2:15...the window closes at 3:00.

I got my number, went upstairs to the 10th floor, and they called me at 2:50. I made it; now let's see if everything is OK. I gave the gentleman all my documentation. But the picture I had taken earlier was too "fuzzy": He could not accept it. So I had to have another picture taken.

The gentleman was named James – same as my beloved Jim – and he told me where to go to have my photo taken (which he is not supposed to do). I went out in the middle of Manhattan looking for this photo place, found it, and had my photo taken. I rushed back, and James approved my passport; I just had to wait for them to process it, which they did. I was out of there by 4:30.

Now for the trip home, in rush hour traffic, with a car that was not running properly. Well, to make a long story even longer, my ride home was very difficult. My car kept stalling out in the middle of traffic on the LIE. I wound up riding home in the right lane with my hazard blinkers on, pulling over when it stalled (or having someone push me over), restarting the car, drove a few miles and repeat. I didn't get home until 8:30 that night.

Well, my dog was happy to see me when I got home. But the dog sitter was very confused when she came to let the dog out and all the lights were on. "What are you doing home?!" she said. My next step was to call the airline and try to get another flight out to Quito. I contacted the airline I originally was on, and the attendant told me to get a ticket for Saturday, but it would be \$908. I could wait until Monday and get a ticket that would cost \$268, but I would not be able with the rest of my team; I would land in another airport in another state. By this time, 10:30 at night, I said "I don't have to make this decision now. I will call you back."

I know my God is stronger than any obstacles that Satan can put in my way. I know that God is able to protect us, and keep us safe.

The song that was in my head all day was Chris Tomlin's Song "God of Angel Armies"

"I know who goes before me / I know who stands behind / the God of angel armies / is always by my side. / The one who reigns forever / He is a friend of mine / The God of Angel Armies is always by my side. / I'm holding on to your promises / You are faithful / You are faithful"

I called my daughter, and she made a suggestion: She said to call back and try a different agent, or even ask for a manager to see if something could be worked out, even just so I could get to return to the same airport as my team so I could get a ride home. (Remember my car is not working property)

I prayed all night – I know you want me to go on this trip God; I won't listen to the people who are saying "Well, maybe God doesn't want you to go"

The next morning before I called the airline, I prayed, asking God please go before me, help me, give me your wisdom, guidance and direction.

The agent I spoke with was much more helpful, she said they would waive the change fee, and I would be able to travel back to the same airport with my team, and it will cost \$223.

Praise the Lord!!!!

Jesus saved me: He restored me, and He showed me His way.

Jesus never let me down.

God is faithful: God loves me, and He loves you.

Even when we make mistakes – and we all make mistakes – He lovingly shows us the correction.

God faithfully gives me everything I need.

I continue to thank Him, worship Him and praise Him.

In His Service, Barbara Brennan