

“Blessed are you who weep now”

Luke 6:20-31

Once in a while it is good for all of us to receive words of affirmation. I received the following e-mail on August 20th of this year.

Pastor Gunkelman, were you Pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Fargo, ND in 1991?

If so, I would like to send you an email or letter by post, please send address.

Bonnie Munson
Lake Park, MN

I texted her that I was the pastor. This is what she texted back.

My name is Bonnie Munson. 28 years ago on August 26, 1991 you officiated at the funeral service for my husband, Walter Munson. I am sure you don't remember as we were not members. For the past 28 years I have read the transcript of your sermon on the anniversary of his death. It was and still is the best funeral sermon I have heard, made even more so since you had never met him. It has given me great comfort over the years and I thank you for your caring and this very special tribute to Walt and for the way you infused the words of Jesus making them even more meaningful.

Sometimes I've known the person for years and have listened to their stories. Sometimes I've never met them and depend on you, their families to share your stories.

As always on All Saints' Sunday, I share with you excerpts from their funeral sermons and a picture.

We remember. We give thanks for their life and their faith.

Bob Goff

Bob's favorite picture and story is that of four young men sharply dressed in suits making music with a drum, guitar, accordion, and saxophone. The placard on the front of the drums says, "The Ohioans". Bob is playing the saxophone and his best friend, Leonard, is playing the accordion. Bob and Leonard had been together since confirmation class at St. Marks and would play for hundreds of weddings and other events for 25 years. When they added a female vocalist for weddings, they were paid \$50, \$10 for each member of the band!

Fred Junker

I can tell you from experience, the most fun Fred had was being blessed with 3 grandsons, spending time with them, and watching them begin their journey. Fred would definitely say, "Go for it". Fred's last words on Sunday afternoon after hearing the Browns destroyed the Bengals . . . "How 'bout those Browns."

David Krauss

We both have big hearts, Dave having the biggest, and we would lend, or loan our last couple of dollars, or food, or give clothes that we didn't necessarily have to give, just so others could be comfortable. They loved to take advantage of our generosity because they knew if they didn't pay us back we weren't going to come find them with baseball bats. We couldn't watch others suffer. We would rather be the ones suffering instead. Dave was very godly in this way.

Thomas Miller

Tom's soul was restored with his marriages to Donna, Fran and Renda. Tom's soul was restored with the blessing of two children, Austin in 1997 and Ilene in 2005.

He was proud of both, continuing his parent's tradition of taking them on vacations whether it be to the Grand Canyon or on the Nautica Queen. He was proud of Austin being in the Army Reserve and Ilene following in Dawn's footsteps in the Singing Angels.

Joanne Ison

Joanne found green pastures and trails at Camp Cheerful every summer where she loved horseback riding. She no doubt enjoyed the feeling of sitting up high and seeing through the lush greens of the woods during the summer in the Metroparks. The feeling of being able to look down at people instead of always looking up to people. The powerful feeling of a horse carrying her with no effort at all. Horseback riding gave Joanne and her friends those kinds of fun experiences that they otherwise would not have had.

Mary Dunning

In her retirement, Judge Dunning spent some years serving as a trained spiritual care volunteer at Parma Hospital. "I miss that service. You were there to console others in their time of need. It was very rewarding," she said. An injury prevents her from being on her feet for too long at a time. However, that does not stop her from attending judicial conferences, traveling around the country and world, and spending time with her beloved children and grandchildren.

Jim Stephan

Rachel and Mark visited each summer. Jim would take them on special camping trips. He would carefully plan everything. One year we went on a "College Hunting" trip when Mark was

getting ready to graduate from high school. There were 5 of us in a Toyota Camry with a storage box strapped to the roof. Mark, Rachel and Libbi were crammed in the back seat.

We were on a tight budget. We bought food at local grocery stores along the way and cooked our meals at roadside parks along the way. We stayed at inexpensive motels. There were constant struggles for space and control in the back seat. It is still referred to as “the trip from hell” by the now-adult participants.

Scott Schumacher

Where Scott found love that was genuine, what made his spirit glow, and where he found the most joy began at the 98th Street Gallery where he met a young woman named Dawn in 2006. Scott and Dawn were joined together in the covenant of marriage on September 5, 2009 and were blessed with the birth of Oskar 8 years ago.

Martha Yanuzzi

Marti’s soul was revived when singing in our Divinity choir, singing in the Lutheran A-Capella choir, and singing together at family gatherings. Marti’s soul was revived at Barry Manilow and Neil Diamond concerts, singing along with Lydia and niece Kathy.

Marti’s soul was revived when Dianne Mims would bring her Holy Communion, keep her updated on Divinity news, and would deliver our Divinity made nut rolls in the fall and winter.

Alyce Mudra

Alyce told me they didn’t join Divinity at first because she thought Pastor Hacker was “too worldly”. But Pastor Don arrived and he was a “shining light”. The Mudra family joined Divinity

on March 27, 1955 worshipping in the Parma Park School just as construction began on the new sanctuary, now fellowship hall.

She always fit in at Divinity she said because we don't wear our religion on our sleeves but have it in our hearts. Alyce said she didn't like me at first because I was too hard to get to know, but now she likes me.

Robert Patterson

His 4 children, 10 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren, were gifted with the love of Christ and taught to live for others through their father and grandfather. Bob providing for them through working 32 years at Republic Steel and teaching Economic classes at Fenn University, now Cleveland State, after receiving his bachelor's degree in economics at Baldwin Wallace.

Erika Rehner

Erika's soul was revived when she was being a mom and grandma. She loved to host holiday family gatherings, birthday parties, cook-outs with neighbors, card parties, and get together at the German Club. When hosting one of those meals, I'm told she'd prepare several meats and side dishes, lots of pastries, and "pulled it off flawlessly while looking elegant". In these last years, Erika missed cooking for those get togethers that so "revived her soul".

Jim Norgrove

There were his Springer Spaniels like Elvira and Scar that he took to trials winning trophies and plates on Sundays in Lodi, Columbia Station and other fields sheltering birds. A poem . . . "A graceful sporting breed. Loyal and devoted with elegance and speed. So patient and intelligent. A charmer from the start. When that spaniel looked at me, I quickly lost my heart. Sprawled

beside my chair at night with cans of Busch on the table and Gunsmoke on T.V., or sharing fun outside, I can't imagine life without my Springer by my side”.

Robert Wallace

Robert and Elizabeth always sat with their family, daughter Debbie and granddaughters Rachel and Nicole on the aisle where they continue to worship without Robert. He loved worshipping with his family and coming to the kneeling rail where his faith was strengthened with the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

Joedy Schumacher

Eric and his family gathered at Hope Cemetery on a sunny day in May to grieve a wife, mother, and grandmother. Sometimes I think our families are like the sea.

Our secrets are oceanic. Grief shimmers below. If we do not grieve what we miss, we are not praising what we love. Grief is praise.

Olga Retsch

“A time to love”. Olga was very proud of her 3 children, 5 grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter. The love and adoration between Dick and Olga and for their family was mutual.

Olga summed up her life with these words: “We achieved the American dream. We have always honored and respected one another and continue to give back through our children and our church”.

Gene Filipow

Gene came over every morning to Steve and Leslie's house to help get Evan ready for school. There's no frozen breakfasts for grandsons. There were real scrambled eggs with a secret

ingredient. Evan's first reaction to hearing of Gene's death. "I'm gonna miss Papa's eggs. Nobody makes eggs like Papa". Evan has been praying for Uncle Wally in his bedtime prayers. Now it is "God bless Papa and Uncle Wally in heaven".

Lucy Carol Stazzone

When Carol began walking through the valley of cancer in 2001, radiation and chemo, open heart surgery, and other complications, she experienced her family and her Lord walking beside her and supporting her. Carol received the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through all who walked with her.

Bill Rettig

Many of our Divinity members have experienced Via de Cristo weekends during which our faith is renewed and deepened.

We have prayer groups that gather as a result of the weekends. I've been part of our Saturday morning group for 16 years; Bill longer. We kneel at the kneeling rail and take turns praying, pray the Lord's Prayer together, pass God's peace while trying to hug each other the best we can, and then ride together to the Whip where our breakfasts are brought to us without ordering. Our lives have changed without him.

Toni Dietz

Even when times were tough, Toni held on to the truth that God had great things in store for her. Toni knew that when looking to a future faced with uncertainty, it helps to remember how God has provided for us in the past. That's why Toni kept a special box of memories. Over the years, Toni compiled a list of treasures, a box of things that helped her remember how God

provided for her in ways that were beyond her deserving. That box was filled with greeting cards and love letters. It contained the datebook that marked the Holy Name dance where she met Karl for the first time. It contained year books, newsletter articles and pictures. There are tokens in that box that hold meaning only for Toni, and yet each item was a testimony to how God had been faithful to her all the days of her life.

Kay Marvin

There's no doubt that Kay enjoyed and valued most of her time with her family – sons, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, especially at her 90th birthday party here where she greeted each of us with a big smile.

We have a stone in our courtyard in memory of Ron, her son. The verse Kay chose on the stone are the words from the man hanging on the cross next to Jesus.

The man confesses his faith in Jesus at the last minute of his life. Kay's faith in Christ grew and deepened throughout her life, but especially when she temporarily lost Ron and Ed.

Bill Frantz

Bill started out at 13 years old in a German polka band playing at German clubs, Oktoberfests, and eventually weddings. The band of 4 stayed together almost 30 years and in the last years were known as "The Expressions". He enjoyed being with folks having a good time. He was proud to show me a recent picture of Ashley, Adam, Amanda, their spouses, and five grandchildren, two just born in June of this year. Bill very much loved his family.

Rita Dregalla

Like her mother before her, Rita proudly enjoyed the green pastures and still waters of being a stay-at-home mom when she was blessed with the birth of Debra in 1955 and David in 1961. Debbie described her as a “fun mom”, a great cook, and the best baker ever”.

Jack told me that he was sold on marrying Debbie when Rita invited him over for a dinner that included multiple meats and side dishes with a lemon meringue pie for dessert made from scratch that really made you “pucker up”.

In these last years came Alzheimer’s disease and a radical change in lifestyle. Her family supported her on her journey into memory loss. Rita’s old friend from Puritas, Judy Jacobson, visited her regularly with Holy Communion as her Stephen Minister.

Herbert Kordis

Wife Elaine tells me “he could fix anything, he was a good hearted soul with a heck of a sense of humor, a hard worker”, a German not comfortable with hugging and only saying “I love you” when Elaine said it first. At Danny and Sharon’s wedding in Divinity’s courtyard last June, Herb came up to me and proudly announced with a smile on his face, “I’m a Druid”.

I responded, “So you really feel the spirit with all these trees and flowers around you”. I played along. I didn’t know Herb was fighting cancer. I didn’t know that 5 months later we would be here mourning his death. A time to mourn.

Alice Radefeld

In the words of Dad’s German Morning Prayer that Al had me pray with him and that I prayed with Alice . . .

Help me, Lord, this day to be

Thine own dear child to follow thee.

And lead me, Savior, by the hand

Until I reach the heavenly land.

May the peace of God . . .

#608 – Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling