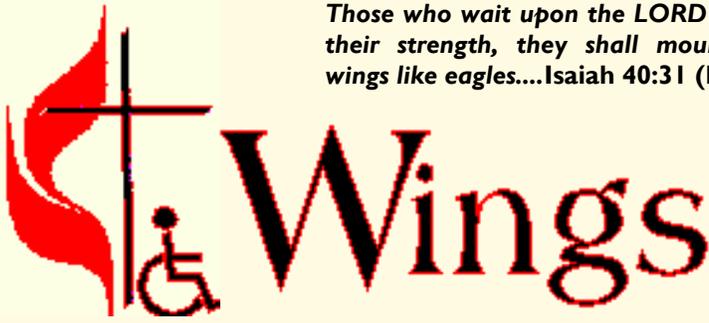
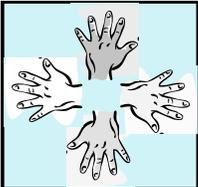


Those who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles....Isaiah 40:31 (NRSV)



**A FAITHLETTER FOR UNITED METHODISTS WITH
DISABILITIES AND THOSE WHO CARE ABOUT THEM
2007 — Vol. 18 Issue 2 No. 70**



FROM WHERE I SIT: GIVE A GREAT BIG HAND TO—HANDS By Jo D'Archangelis

There is a provocative question game going around now in which a person is asked to choose between two unpleasant but hypothetical situations, such as, "Would you rather lose your hearing or your sight?" Supposedly the person's answer, and the reasons given for it, reveal something interesting about that person.

My version of this question game goes like this: "Would you rather be disabled in your legs and feet or in your arms and hands?" Given in our society the dread aroused by those four little words, "you'll never walk again," and the perception of life in a wheelchair as tantamount to a death sentence, my guess is that most people would rather be disabled in their arms and hands.

But having spent 57 years in a wheelchair with a neuromuscular condition that has paralyzed to one extent or another all my motor muscles, I have to say that what frustrates me most is not the loss of "normally" functioning legs and feet but the loss of "normally" functioning arms and hands.

After all, the things you can do with your legs and feet are relatively few compared with the thousand-and-one

things you can do with your arms and hands. As a friend, also a wheelchair user, recently remarked, few people seem to realize how "critical hands, arms, wrists, and fingers are to their everyday life satisfaction."

For example, you can use your arms and hands to blow your nose, scratch your head, program your DVD player, crack open an egg, and hold a baby. In church you can flip through the pages of a hymnal, raise your hands in praise, and clap, or snap your fingers, in time to some catchy song. During Communion you can (at least you can in my church) tear off a piece of bread, dip it into grape juice, and pop it in your mouth.

When I was a child, I couldn't throw a ball very far or hang by my arms on a jungle gym. But I could do most of the things that other kids could do with their hands: write with a pencil, turn the pages of a book, color with crayons, cut out paper dolls with scissors. As I grew older, I learned to apply my own makeup and to comb and arrange my hair. I even learned to touch type on a manual typewriter (I can imagine younger readers asking, "On a what?").

In college I was able to take written exams but often requested more time than the other students because I tired easily. This was usually granted—except for one twit of a teaching assistant who decided that I really didn't need it.

Today I do all my writing with a computer using a voice dictation system. I can turn the pages of magazines (with some difficulty) but not the pages of books. I can no longer put on my own makeup or do my own hair. Although I can still feed myself most of the time, it is getting more and more difficult, and I fear that someday soon I will permanently become what nurses in the hospital refer to as a "feeder."

Many of the things I can no longer do with my hands can, of course, be done by other people for me or by assistive devices, and I am so grateful to have all these available to me. But sometimes it's just not the same as being able to do it myself. When a dog comes up to me and beseeches me with his eyes for a pat on the head and all I can do is tell him what a "good doggie" he is, I know he goes away as disappointed as I feel.

Fortunately, humans—at least those humans familiar with my limitations—can understand why I don't initiate or return handshakes, hugs, or pats on the shoulder. Such acts of welcome and affection are, quite literally, beyond my reach.

So in any contest between being able to use my hands or being able to use my feet, hands would always be the winner. Hands down. High five, anyone?

INSIDE

WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN...? (PART TWO)	2
FOUR LITTLE WORDS	3
THE FAITH OF JOB	3
I STILL LOVE YOU	4
FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES CELEBRATES 25 YEARS...	5
INTERPRETING AT CHURCH: A PARADIGM...	5
AWARENESS	6
HONOR ROLL OF APPRECIATION	6
MAY GOD LIFT YOU UP...	6



WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?: A COMMENTARY By Richard Daggett

Editor's Note: This is the second part of a five-part series adapted from an oral presentation given by Daggett in 1994. It is based on Daggett's own experiences as a person with a severe disability and on his review of Harold Kushner's book, *When Bad Things Happen To Good People* (originally published by Schocken Books in 1981).

PART TWO: JOB'S STORY

One of the most often used biblical texts for talking about tragedy is the Book of Job. Here is Job, a righteous man. His children are killed. He comes down with a terrible disease. He loses all of his possessions. Job asks, "Why me? Why my children?"

Three friends come to cheer him up. They comfort him by saying that nobody

suffers unless there is a good reason for it. Job doesn't find this very comforting.

There are three propositions underlying the Book of Job. Proposition One is that God is in charge. He is all-powerful. Nothing happens unless God wants it to happen. Proposition Two is that God is good. He is kind and fair and just. He gives us what we deserve, he gives us the benefit of the doubt,

and he gives us a second chance. Proposition Three is that Job is a good man.

As long as Job is wealthy, healthy, and respected, we can regard all three of the propositions as true. But when Job's children die, he gets sick, and he loses all his money, we find it doesn't work. Any two together will work but not all three. The dilemma of the Book of Job is finding which of the three propositions you have to give up.

The three friends who come to visit Job had been taught that Proposition One and Proposition Two were absolutely necessary to their understanding of God. Therefore, if God is good and God is all-powerful, then Job is a sinner and must deserve what is happening to him.

God, they believe, doesn't make mistakes; people make mistakes. Job must have done something terrible in his past, and now it's catching up with him. He may not remember what it was, but it must have been really awful. But God knows what it was and has visited these awful and terrible things upon him to chastise him for his sins. According to his friends, Job had better get down on his knees and ask God for forgiveness.

Job's friends are doing what many of us do—we blame the victim. You must have done something to deserve this, we say, or God wouldn't do this to you. We put a double burden on the person. Not only do they have to suffer the illness, the injury, or other tragedy, but they have to suffer our condemnation as well.

I have a Christian Science friend who told my parents and me that I contracted polio because I wasn't thinking the right thoughts. She wasn't trying to be hurtful, but it was not a very welcome comment.

Let's take the example of someone who gets mugged while using the automatic teller machine. Instead of saying, "What a terrible thing has happened to you. You must be feeling awful," we say, "Why were you using

(BAD THINGS continued on page 3)



A non-profit, non-official quarterly newsletter for United Methodists with disabling conditions and all others interested in the issues of disability, accessibility, and the church

FOUNDER/EDITOR COMPUTER LAYOUT/GRAPHIC DESIGN

Jo D'Archangelis

CORRESPONDENCE Send all correspondence—including feedback, original writings, items from other sources, and changes of address—to Jo D'Archangelis, Editor, at: **Mailing Address** 592 West Ammunition Road, Apt. 1 Fallbrook, CA 92028 **Telephone/Fax** 760-723-2668 (please call before faxing) **E-Mail** jodarlis@aol.com

E-WINGS Two e-mail versions of *Wings* are available for those with vision impairments and computer "reading" devices; those who have difficulty handling paper and print pages; those who live outside the USA; and/or those who just prefer computer viewing: (1.) A document version in partially formatted text without graphics available to those able to open attached files in Microsoft Word Document 2000, and (2.) A newsletter-formatted version with color graphics available to those able to open attached files in Microsoft Publisher 2000. E-mail Jo D'Archangelis at jodarlis@aol.com to request one, or both, of these versions.

DONATIONS *Wings* is an all-volunteer effort, but financial assistance is needed for printing and mailing costs. Most of our funding comes from reader donations. There are no subscription fees. If you think *Wings* is worth it, please make out a check or money order payable to the "Fallbrook United Methodist Church" (or "FUMC"), mark it "Wings Newsletter," and mail it to: **Church Address** Fallbrook United Methodist Church 1844 Winterhaven Road Fallbrook, CA 92028 **Church Telephone** 760-728-1472 **Church Fax** 760-728-7433 **Church E-Mail** FUMC1887@tfb.com

(BAD THINGS continued from page 2)



the ATM alone at night?"

Job cannot accept the reasoning of his friends. Is he really so much more of a sinner than the man across the street whose children are still alive and who is still in good health? Job doesn't think so. So his answer to the dilemma is to deny Proposition Two—God is *not* good.

Job knows he is not a terrible sinner, and he has been taught that God is all-powerful. But if we could simply command God to give us health and wealth based on our righteousness, then God wouldn't be so powerful. If we could say to God, "Look, God, I've gone to church; now you must give me a week of good health and make my stock portfolio go up," we would be limiting the power of God.

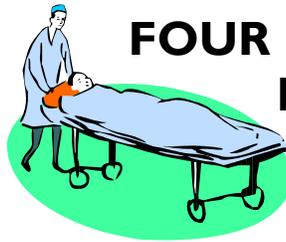
Job's conclusion then is that God is so great and powerful that he doesn't have to be kind or fair or anything else. Is this a good answer? I don't really think so.

At the end of the Book of Job God tells Job that this was all just a test—a test to see if Job was really worthy of God's favor. God tells Job that he has passed the test, and he gives Job back his health, restores his wealth, and allows him to have twice as many children as he had before. I don't pretend to be a theologian, but in my opinion this is a truly rotten story about God.

Could this be the same God who elsewhere in the Bible admonishes us to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God? A God who tells us to help the widow and the orphan? If this has nothing to do with God, then who is it that teaches us to love righteousness, to reach out to those who are suffering?

(See **PART THREE: GOD'S POWER** in the **Winter 2007** issue)

For anyone who missed Part I of this series in the Summer 2007 issue and would like to receive an e-mail reprint, please contact the editor at jodarlis@aol.com.



FOUR LITTLE WORDS

By D. Elizabeth Robinson

I woke up in the ICU trying to remember the sequence of events that had landed me there. Vague memories of a ride in an ambulance and the scene in the emergency room came to me. A nurse spoke to me, and I asked, "What time is it?" She told me it was 5:00, twenty-four hours after my arrival, and that I was listed in critical condition.

After pondering this for a moment, I asked, "Did they amputate my leg?"

"Yes," she answered gently.

"Did they take it below the knee or above?" For some reason I remembered the ER doctor shouting at me that he didn't want to take the knee but if he had to he would.

"Above," said the nurse, and she watched for my reaction.

"Oh," was all I said. I was on IV morphine and just coming out of a 24-hour sedation; I don't think I was capable of feeling or expressing emotion.

After twenty-four more hours in ICU and another operation, I was taken to an inpatient room where I stayed for two weeks, receiving IV antibiotics and an education on to how to handle the diabetes I had just learned I had. I had learned the hard way—by going into a diabetic coma with gas gangrene in my right leg.

Soon after the second operation I discovered that I couldn't read the

(**FOUR LITTLE WORDS** continued on page 4)

THE FAITH OF JOB

By Connie Carillo

[Job] said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." — Job 1:21 (NRSV)

A couple of years ago I felt like Job. After losing a cherished family member in the Oklahoma City bombing, I set out to be a mother to his three headstrong, orphaned teenagers. At the same time, I was also caring for my own mentally handicapped daughter and recuperating from knee surgery. I became ill from the physical and emotional stress I was under, lost my hearing due to health complications, and had to adjust to a hearing aid. Already suffering from asthma and high blood pressure, I was then diagnosed with diabetes. My once rock-solid marriage suffered from the strain of blending a new family and trying to recover my health. I was starting to feel like Job.

I turned to the scriptures for support, reading about Job's trials and tribulations. I decided to embrace my suffering and, like Job, to keep battling. I turned to prayer, the Bible, and the sacraments. I asked for and was comforted by the prayers of our church community.

I survived that time of difficulty and so did my marriage. My faith is now stronger than ever, and I am grateful for the many blessings in my life. Like Job, I can again say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

From *The Upper Room* (March/April 2000).

**(FOUR LITTLE WORDS
continued from page 3)**



magazine a friend had brought me. I also couldn't see what time it was. The television screen seemed so small and so far away. And I couldn't recognize the faces of the wonderful nurses and nursing assistants who cared for me.

I was devastated. Although I had never thought of myself as a person with two legs, I totally identified myself

as a reader—a voracious reader. The loss of my vision was almost a death blow.

What had I done, or what had I not done, to deserve this punishment? I thought I had faith; I certainly had lived a generally blameless life. How had I failed? And if I had failed, had I really failed so badly as to warrant taking away the one thing that brought me joy?

Tears poured down my cheeks as I mourned the loss of my vision. The

amputation was almost an afterthought in my grief. Silently, so as not to disturb the other patients, I cried out to God, "Why? Why this? And why me? What did I do? How have I failed you?"

When I had just about cried myself out and was lying quietly in the darkened room, I heard a voice. It was as clear as if the speaker were standing next to the bed, but there was no one there. The voice said, "I still love you."

That quiet sentence—four little words but a world of comfort—has stayed with me for the two and a half years since that lonely time in the hospital. The way has been long and at times very hard, but the strength I gained from those words has seen me through.

I have not regained much of my vision; in fact, my right eye is now totally blind. But I have not had to give up my second love: singing. I sing in the church choir and in a community chorus. At rehearsal other altos sing in my direction so I can learn the music, and I print the words out in very large print so I can learn them.

Ever since winning second prize in an eighth-grade poetry contest, I had been an avid "versifier" writing poems for any and all occasions. But for a long period after the hospitalization no new poems came to me. Almost two years of darkness would have to pass before I began coming back into the light and words for poems started coming to me again. Perhaps it is fitting that one of the first poems I wrote after that was entitled *I Still Love You*.

Robinson lives in East Whittier, Calif., and is a member of the East Whittier United Methodist Church where she was baptized in 2006. She runs a computer-based business as a "virtual assistant" providing writing, editing, and proofreading services. A self-published collection of Robinson's essays and poems, *Aunt Beth's Attic*, is available on request. Website: www.crvoffice.com; business e-mail address: derobins@crvoffice.com; personal e-mail address: bethical214@yahoo.com; telephone number: 714-310-1960.

I STILL LOVE YOU

By D. Elizabeth Robinson

All alone and afraid in a dark quiet room,
With my tears falling down like the rain,
Feeling lost and unsure, full of questions and doubt,
I cried out in my guilt and my pain.

"Oh, my God, I must have failed You.
I am not worthy; how can I be?
I am ill, my body broken,
My spirit humbled. Can You love me?"

Then above all the chaos of pain and of fear,
Of the earthquake, the wind, and the fire,
Came in triumph the sound of the still, quiet voice
That released me and lifted me higher.

"Oh, My child, you have not failed Me.
You are not worthless; your faith is true.
You are Mine; I have redeemed you.
To Me you're precious. I still love you."

Still today when I feel all the cares of this world,
When I think I have made the wrong choice,
I look up, and I pray, and I hear in my heart
That most loving and wonderful Voice.

"Oh, My child, you have not failed Me.
You are not worthless; your faith is true.
You are Mine; I have redeemed you.
To Me you're precious. I still love you."

From *The East Window*, the newsletter of the East Whittier United Methodist Church (October, 2006).



FRIENDSHIP MINISTRIES CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF NURTURING SPIRITUAL GROWTH

It all started with one family and a simple question they posed to their denominational publishing house: "What material do you have to nurture the spiritual growth of our son who has Down syndrome?" The publisher came up empty-handed.

But the problem proved to be more complex than a lack of materials. The whole church was failing to embrace its sisters and brothers with cognitive impairments and their families. And so Friendship Ministries was formed with a mission it has been working to share with churches around the world for the last 25 years. Today, Friendship groups exist in more than 800 churches, more than 50 denominations, and more than 20 countries. But what is Friendship Ministries' mission all about?

Anyone who has been in a Friendship program for long knows it's all about mutuality. As "friends" (both adults and children with cognitive impairments) and "mentors" (those who provide nurture and support to their "friends") spend time together learning about God and each other, they discover community as God intended it to be: welcoming to all, rejoicing together in joyful times, and weeping together in sad times. That's why so many friends and mentors have been in Friendship groups for over 20 years.

Friendship Ministries' most visible work has been helping churches start new Friendship groups and keep existing groups vibrant and healthy. But it also consults with churches in other areas that are critical—such as the recognition and use of the spiritual gifts of children and adults with cognitive impairments in Sunday school, in the process of church membership, and in worship.

In addition, Friendship Ministries has worked with countless group homes,

and other organizations to facilitate spiritual growth and inclusion outside the context of church.

Friendship Ministries' mission has also been inter-denominational from the beginning. Friendship materials focus on the central message of the Gospel recognized by all Christians which churches may supplement with information specific to their own traditions. This is one reason Friendship programs thrive in so many different churches today. In fact, many programs are collaborations between churches of different denominations.

A highlight in Friendship's 25-year history was becoming not only multi-denominational but also multi-lingual with the establishment of Amistad, Friendship's Spanish-language ministry. Amistad communities may be found in Spanish-speaking cultures throughout the world.

The following resource materials, many of them groundbreaking, are available from Friendship Ministries:

Friendship Bible Studies—helps friends come to know the complete-

ness of God's love shown throughout the Bible

Expressing Faith In Jesus—helps friends become full members of their faith communities through baptism, confirmation, or profession of faith

We of All Have Gifts—helps friends discover their spiritual gifts and share them with their community (one of several Friendship Life Studies)

Autism And Your Church—helps churches integrate friends with autism spectrum disorders into the full life of the church

Amistad Bible Studies—helps friends in Spanish-speaking cultures come to know God's love through this Spanish translation of Friendship Bible Studies

For further information on how to develop and maintain a Friendship group in your church, parish, or group home; when and where to attend workshops given throughout the country; or how to obtain resource materials, contact:

Nella Uitvlugt, Executive Director
Friendship Ministries
Mailing Address: 2215 29th Street SE
#B6, Grand Rapids, MI 49508
Telephone: 888-866-8966 (ext. 2-1)
E-mail: friendship@friendship.org
Website: www.friendship.org

Adapted from Extras—Special Edition, the newsletter of Friendship Ministries (July 2007).

INTERPRETING AT CHURCH: A Paradigm For Sign Language Interpreters By Leo Yates, Jr.

Written by an active member of the United Methodist Congress of the Deaf, this book gives guidance to new and seasoned interpreters who primarily work in churches. Not only is the book helpful for interpreters but it also enhances deaf awareness for churches who wish to begin a deaf ministry by providing an interpreter. Resources are plentiful throughout. Just a few of the chapters are: Scripture Analysis, Ethics, and Funerals And Weddings. The appendices are helpful as well and even include a religious sign dictionary for those learning the craft. The book may be purchased through Amazon.com for \$19.77.

From Signs of Change, the newsletter of the UMCD (April 2007)

AWARENESS By Elsa Tice Ellis

Each one must adjust
In his or her own way
To new awareness of disability
In oneself
In others

Awareness of barriers
Of steps
That become insurmountable
Of narrow doors
That become brick walls
To a person who cannot walk

Awareness of silence
Of the many implications
Of unheard or misunderstood
communication
By a person
Who cannot hear or talk

Awareness of emotions
Of the fear of doing or saying
The "wrong" thing
Of hurt for them and for oneself
That this could happen

Awareness of people
Of who they are
Of their wants and needs
Values and goals

People with disability awareness
Need to be comfortable enough
To relate to people with disabilities
As fellow human beings
But uncomfortable enough
To be disturbed by barriers
And to become involved
In removing them

Honor Roll Of Appreciation

We thank the following people or organizations whose gifts of time and/or money have made possible the publication and mailing of *Wings*:

- Bill & Ruth Bevil**
- Jill Halley**
- Bill & Wilma Chain**
- Don McIntosh**
- Rev. Ed Hoffman**
- Jenny Duboucheron**
- Harold & Coral Greene**
- Pat Donehoo**

May God lift you up
on eagles' wings
and hold you in the
palm of his hand.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 35
Fallbrook, CA

*"A Faithletter For United Methodists With Disabilities
And Those Who Care About Them"*

Fallbrook United Methodist Church
1844 Winterhaven Road
Fallbrook, CA 92028

