



Wings

...Those who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31 [NRSV]

Vol. 6 Issue 4
No. 24



For, By and About PHUMPS
(Physically Handicapped United Methodist Persons)



Spring
1996

FROM WHERE I SIT

By Jo D'Archangelis

1996 did not begin auspiciously for me. I landed in the hospital twice—first in January with pneumonia and antibiotic-induced colitis for 11 days, then in February with a blood clot in my left thigh, this time for only 5 days.

However, I learned two important things during this time. The first thing was: if you are severely disabled and find yourself a patient in your average acute-care facility with little experience handling people with long-term disabilities, make your special needs clear from the beginning. For the most part, the staff in both hospitals I was in listened and tried to do what was needed for my individual health, comfort and safety. Not always successfully, but they tried.

The second thing I learned was to be grateful for small blessings—relatively inconsequential things in comparison, say, to major miracles like healing, but things that gave me a tiny measure of comfort or contentment or at least helped me avoid a little pain or inconvenience or anxiety.

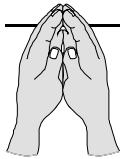
My prayer life tends to become totally unfocused when I am in the hospital; usually all intercessory prayer flies out the window, and personal supplication is reduced to the self-centered mantra, "Oh, God, get me through this."

But this time I resolved to be "thankful in all circumstances" and tried to breathe a "thank you, God" for each small blessing that occurred. Like the hospital kitchen after four days finally getting the message that I was a vegetarian and sending me a grilled cheese sandwich instead of roast beef. Or the roommate who did not snore.

I remember in particular one morning several days after I had been admitted into the hospital in January. I was lying in bed, an IV inserted into my left hand and oxygen tubing up my nose. I had just been taken off the bedpan where I had spent an eternity

painfully eliminating every bodily fluid I had (and some I didn't even know I had). In the process of being lifted off the pan, one of my contracted knees had been wrenched.

Phlegm combined with blood gurgled in my windpipe. Earlier one of the inhalation therapists, to clear out some bronchial secretions, had, against my clear instructions, jammed



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a suctioning catheter too quickly and too deeply into my trachea and punctured some tissue (inhalation therapists seem to feel that they cannot do an adequate job unless they suction out your pancreas as well as your lungs).

People are always telling me how cheerful I am, how wonderfully well I take all the trials and tribulations of what must be my truly miserable existence. Well, that day little Miss Mary Sunshine herself, overwhelmed by utter despair, started to sob--not just cry, mind you, sob. Tears

streamed from the outer corners of my eyes down into my tangled hair and soaked into the pillow case beneath my head.

At that point one of the cleaning persons—excuse me—one of the environmental maintenance workers came into my room. Her name was Ester, and she was Latina, but the way she looked and moved reminded me of the Greek opera diva, Maria Callas, and the '50s Italian movie actress, Anna Magnani, all rolled into one—kind of earthy and maternal and at the same time regal, with strong, dark, dramatic features.

We had talked before, and she had told me that she was a recent widow and that her husband, an architect, had built their house. She was inordinately proud of her four grown children but was afraid that the youngest would starve to death because he wanted to be an artist.

Without a word she took my hand in hers and held it for several moments. My sobs subsided to crying. Then she took a piece of tissue and wiped away my tears. I stopped crying, and still without a word she left the room.

Come to think of it, maybe that wasn't such a small blessing after all.

THE TOP FIVE REASONS TO ATTEND THE 1996 EARL MILLER SPIRITUAL LIFE RETREAT FOR ADULTS WITH ORTHOPEDIC AND/OR VISUAL DISABILITIES:

5. Air, Mountains, Trees, Flowers, Insects, & Other Natural Stuff
4. The 3 F's: Food, Fun, & Fellowship
3. Renewal of the Spirit & Sharing of the Heart
2. The Leadership of Zelle Hammond & the Music of Bill Tell

AND THE #1 REASON TO ATTEND THE EARL MILLER SPIRITUAL LIFE RETREAT (TA-RA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TUM!):

1. Beats staying at home and watching the zillionth rerun of "Gilligan's Island"!

Fri., May 31 to Sun., June 2, at Camp Cedar Glen near Julian, Calif.
Registration fee: \$75. Last day for registration: May 15, 1996.
Retreat Dean: Tom Simmons [Phone: (805) 499-6240].
Co-Registrars: Norm and Helen Stockwell [Phone: (310) 374-1535
E-mail: N6NS@visor.sp.trw.com].

See flyer insert for more details.



LISTEN UP! COMING EVENTS IN DEAF MINISTRY

Task Force Meeting

The Task Force Exploring United Methodist Ministries with the Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing has rescheduled its next meeting for Saturday, May 4, from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church of Redondo.

The resource person will be the Rev. Kathy Reeves, Executive Secretary of Ministries with Persons with Disabilities and the Deaf on the General Board of Global Ministries (Health and Welfare) in New York. Legally blind and sensitive to special needs, Rev. Reeves is currently involved in writing a mission initiative for the General Conference (worldwide) establishing a National Commission for Deaf Ministry.

First UMC of Redondo is located at 243 So. Broadway, Redondo, Calif.,

telephone [310] 372-8445. Lunch is included.

For registration forms or more information, contact Nancy Burns, P.O. Box 667, Julian, Calif. 92036, telephone [619] 765-1027.

Course on Deaf Ministries

Dr. Kathy Black, Associate Professor of Homiletics and Liturgics at the School of Theology at Claremont [Calif.], will teach a course on Ministries With the Deaf May 20-24 at STC. Intensive class sessions will be from 9-12 a.m. and 1:30-4:30 p.m. for 5 consecutive days.

Morning classes will be devoted to basic sign language in church settings for beginners. Afternoon sessions will deal with outreach and advocacy, pastoral care and counseling, religious education and worship as they relate

to the deaf community.

Pastors and lay persons will be provided with the vocabulary to communicate with current and prospective deaf members and with the knowledge needed to train Sunday School teachers, worship leaders, and others in ministry with the deaf.

The cost is \$250 for the entire course, but one may choose morning or afternoon sessions only. Call Dixie Zimmer at [805] 648-7642 for information about available scholarships or housing. Contact School of Theology at Claremont, 1325 N. College Ave., Claremont, Calif. 91711, for flyer-registration forms.

Western Jurisdiction Conference

Keep in mind that the Western Jurisdiction United Methodist Congress of the Deaf is planning to hold a conference August 2-4 at the Los Altos United Methodist Church, Los Altos, Calif. The church

(DEAF MINISTRIES continued on page 4)

REACHING OUT By Lila Metcalf



As a result of childhood polio, I have been a 24-hour ventilator user for over 4 years, i.e., I am on life support. In 1990 I felt it completely impossible to accept and adjust to this foreign and undesirable way of living. After giving consent to be trached and artificially respirated, I hadn't any idea how traumatic it would be learning to "cope", [to exist] day by day. Emotionally, I was at an all time low, and I thought I would die.

However, eventually, it was apparent that God had sustained my life, and, no matter my thoughts, I was very much alive, even though my hopes and fears of a "normal" future had been shattered. Unwillingly, I was forced to gather the crushed pieces of my heart, tuck them into the recesses of my mind, and dwell on more important matters. Life goes on.

By reaching out via written and taped letters to others who are physically challenged, I've discovered that I am not an island and I am not alone. A new and real world has surfaced before my once stargazing eyes—a world that has always existed and that, yes, I am even a part of, not a fantasy world but a world of reality.

Since April 1994, I have received nearly 400 tapes, letters, and cards from over 100 people. Ninety percent of my correspondents are physically challenged. Until recently, it was beyond my comprehension how much support and therapy was obtainable by corresponding with quite normal people who happen to be limited in a "normal" (?) world. We who are physically challenged are men and women who can think, feel pain, enjoy sunshine, share the joys of accomplishments, suffer in sorrow, laugh at play.

I conclude [that] "handicapped" is an adjective that befits all mankind. Nevertheless, those of us who are handicapped, disabled, call it what you will, need to reach out and lend a hand, an ear, our eyes, and our hearts to help each other. Corresponding is a beneficent way to communicate, a means to offer ourselves.

There is a difference [between] the words "sympathy" and "empathy". I've found the more I'm willing to encourage my comrades to be courageous, the more I am rewarded with encouragement. I, Lila Metcalf, have decided to lend myself to be a friend...by correspondence.

Truly yours,
Lila

Lila Metcalf can be reached by writing her at P.O. Box 124, Elwood, IL 60421.



Wings is a quarterly newsletter published by and for United Methodist adults with physically disabling conditions and is available free of charge.

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Wings Needs the Following From You
Ideas and suggestions for articles
Original stories, poetry, cartoons
Personal essays and anecdotes
Appropriate items from another source
The name and address of someone who is dying to be on our mailing list
A change-of-address notice if you are moving and want to continue receiving Wings

Send All Correspondence To
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[Fax Mon.-Fri. 1-4 p.m. Pacific Time]

E-Mail Address
DARLIS@aol.com

Mailing Fund
If you're inspired to send something tax-deductible for the mailing fund, please make it out to "Fallbrook UMC" and mark it "Wings Newsletter".

STEEL WILL By Lynne Peck Rutan

I don't want to give the the impression that my struggle is over. It won't be over until I'm in the next world."

Dr. Ruth Cameron Webb wraps her uncooperative tongue around those fighting words, wrestling with the sentences, syllable by sometimes unintelligible syllable, patiently repeating—even spelling if necessary—each word until she is sure the listener has understood.

It's just another conversation for Webb, but it illuminates the unfathomable depths of determination from which the 72-year-old draws each time she communicates. An accident of birth—too little oxygen during the 29-hour labor—brought Webb into the world with the brain disorder cerebral palsy.

In addition to her speech impairment, Webb's feet cramp and twist in painful spasms, especially when she faces physical or psychological stress.

Bodily limitations notwithstanding, Webb [graduated from Methodist-founded Drew University in 1948, after having been bounced from two other colleges for being too "burdensome",] and received a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. [She] spent more than two decades providing therapy, counseling, and testing for the severely mentally retarded and disabled. In recognition of her achievements she was named Handicapped Iowan of the Year in 1971, was presented Drew's Alumni Achievement Award in the Sciences in 1972, and received an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Drew in 1978.

Although at times frustrated enough to contemplate suicide, Webb recognizes that her disabilities are similar to the sandy irritant that forces the oyster to produce a pearl. "The more difficulties," Webb says, "the more you learn that you would not have learned before."

Neither saint nor Pollyanna, Webb believes her long career of service has not only aided others, but has also fulfilled her own needs. "So many times I was considered an object or a patient," she says, "that my first goal has been to become a person, not only in others' eyes but also in my own."

Her definition of personhood, for which she expects to struggle until death, incorporates both self-sufficiency and helping others. These twin mandates she traces to her

parents' unrelenting belief that she could and should be an independent, contributing member of society....

Even as a toddler, her parents and relatives lovingly pressed her to speak, walk, and develop as normally as possible. Her mother's persistence in particular "was the genesis of my early persistence," Webb says.

When other children laughed at her speech and fearful strangers slammed doors in their faces, Webb recalls her mother's reassurances that "there will always be people who don't understand you. But, then, there will always be those who love you."

Supportive as those words were, Webb says she always wondered why some people were repulsed and others tried to make her out as smarter than

benefit of the school. "I got a really good education," she says, laying the groundwork for her later academic success....

Webb [in her autobiography, *Journey Into Personhood**,] chronicles the way her happiest moments have been edged with pain, her most frustrating experiences have brought new growth, and her most heady successes were coupled often with the most bitter defeats. She draws on her professional talents to show "the psychological impact of an all-encompassing physical disability on mental and emotional growth".

At the same time, Webb's *Journey* serves as a spiritual guide as well as scientific study. She dedicates it to "the Chief Spirit Guide and His many helpers" who appear throughout the book, in the guise of family, friends, colleagues, and even strangers, to offer direction and support at her most difficult

"So many times I have been considered an object or a patient that my first goal has been to become a person..."

she was. "Why can't they take me for what I am," she would puzzle, "a 10-year-old girl who can't walk?"

At 12, Webb entered one of the few boarding schools then available for disabled children, encouraged by her family's prediction that education would lead to a job and self-worth. The experience "marked me for all time", recalls Webb.

She was tormented by the staff and less-handicapped students; her supposed therapists paraded her naked teenaged body in front of other doctors, introducing her as a specimen, "a spastic child with poor speech and involvement of all four extremities...Stand up, Ruth, and show them how you walk."

Nearly 60 years later Webb is still trying to heal the psychological scars of depression and fear left by such dehumanizing treatment. At the same time, she accepts the bottom line

crossroads.

Webb's limbs may be weak and uncontrollable, but she has forged herself a backbone of courage as strong as steel during a lifelong fight to convince the world—and herself—that she should be defined by her extraordinary capabilities rather than by her handicaps. At an age when others slow down, Webb is shopping for a publisher for her collection of short stories aimed at the moral development of handicapped children.

Still prone to frustration when CP gets in the way of her projects, she has learned it helps to "argue with God, talk with a friend, and go for a wheelchair ride downtown....My purpose in life may include learning to deal with the anger and frustration and to teach others to do so too".

*University of Iowa Press [1994].

From *Portraits*, Drew University Alumni Magazine [Fall 1995].

JAF MINISTRIES

I. "WHEELS FOR THE WORLD"

JAF Ministries, a non-profit organization promoting Christian ministry with the disabled community, is sponsoring *Wheels for the World*, a nationwide undertaking in which discarded wheelchairs are collected through individual or organization drives, shipped to refurbishment centers for overhauls and repairs, and then distributed by trained teams of disability ministry specialists to disabled people in countries throughout the world. In the final step, locals are trained to repair and maintain the wheelchairs.

For resource materials and step-by-step guides in organizing wheelchair collection drives, contact JAF Ministries at P.O. Box 3333, Agoura Hills, CA 91301, phone [818] 707-5664, fax [818] 707-2391, TDD [818] 707-9709, E-mail 102704.3130@compuserve.com. Note: pediatric or child-sized wheelchairs are badly needed.

II. FAMILY RETREATS

JAF Ministries has announced the dates of its annual retreats for



(JAF MINISTRIES continued on page 4)

AN ECUMENICAL LITANY FOR WHOLENESS

By Reverend Kate Chipps and Ginny Thornburgh

Leader: Let us pray for all God's people--

For the people who are blind and cannot see and for those who can see but are blind to people around them,

Response: Lord, in your mercy help us touch each other.

Leader: For people who move slowly because of accident, illness, or disability and for those who move too fast to be aware of the world they live in,

Response: Lord, in your mercy help us work together.

Leader: For people who are deaf and cannot hear and for those who can hear but who ignore the cries of others,

Response: Lord, in your mercy help us respond to each other.

Leader: For people who are troubled in mind or spirit and for those too proud to admit to having problems,

Response: Lord, in your mercy help us rely on each other.

Leader: For people who learn slowly, for people who learn in different ways, and for people who learn quickly and easily but often choose ignorance,

Response: Lord, in your mercy help us grow in your wisdom.

Leader: For people who have chronic illnesses for which there is no known cure or relief and for people who live in unholy fear of developing a chronic illness,

Response: Lord, in your mercy help us and heal us.

Leader: For family, friends, and caregivers who serve people with disabilities and for those who feel awkward in their presence,

Response: Lord, in your mercy help us see each other with your eyes.

Leader: For people who think they are worthless and beyond your love and for people who think they don't need your love,

Response: Lord, in your mercy help us accept your love.

Leader: For people who feel isolated by their disabilities and for people who contribute to that sense of isolation,

Response: Lord, in your mercy change our lives.

Leader: For all the people in your creation, that we may learn to respect each other and learn how to live together in your peace,

Response: Lord, in your mercy bind us together.

All: AMEN.

Reprinted from *The Advocate* [Winter 1990].

(DEAF MINISTRIES continued from page 2)

facilities are also wheelchair accessible, and transportation from hotel to church will be provided with wheelchair lifts.

Further information about workshops, hotel and other accommodations, meals, and entertainment should be available in the near future, according to Marian Aiker-Forderer of the UMCD.

Aiker-Forderer may be reached at 720 Loyola Drive, Los Altos, Calif. 94024, and via TDD at [415] 949-2849. Voice calls may be made to Fay at [408] 245-4446 or to Jo Ann at [415] 961-3733.

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families which have at least one disabled member. Trained volunteers will help provide some caregiving. The dates and locations in California are:

**July 8-12—Mission Springs, CA
[408] 335-9133
July 15-19—Arrowhead Springs, CA
[909] 886-5224**

Honor Roll Of Appreciation

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

Marie Morse
Roy and Mary Klein
Ruth Sciumbato
Bob & Betty Jackson
Marian Buck



*"For Disabled United Methodists and
Those Who Care About Them"*

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Fallbrook, CA 92028

Non-Profit Org.
Bulk Rate
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