

Preached by  
Bush Hill Presbyterian Church  
Alexandria, Virginia  
February 14, 2010  
Presbyterian Women Sunday

Psalm 99  
Hebrews 13:1–3

## **MY PERSONAL JOURNEY OF FAITH**

Today, I will be sharing with you my personal journey of faith and how it lead me back to this church and the Presbyterian Women.

My adult journey of faith began when I was 23 years old. It was preceded by 6 years of illness. I went from one doctor to another, but none could determine what my physical illness was. Fortunately, however, one of my doctors managed to get me accepted by the National Institutes of Health, and the first day I was there, the NIH doctors discovered what my illness was. Then I stayed at the Clinical center for 9 weeks for testing and treatments. After that long period of hospitalization, the doctors released me and told me I should live a relatively normal life but to contact them if I had blurred or double vision.

Finally, after all those years, I was feeling well. The life I wanted was starting to fall into place—I had my health, a wonderful husband, a home, and the following year, a beautiful baby boy.

One evening several months after our son's birth, however, I developed blurred vision—the warning sign that something was going wrong. I was terrified, and I wondered if my good health was ending. Being so upset, I couldn't sleep that night, so I went into the living room and prayed to Jesus all night long. I cried and beseeched the Lord for help saying "Dear Lord, I can't handle this; please, please, pick me up and carry me through this ordeal."

After an entire night of begging Jesus for help, an incredible sense of peace and strength came over me, and then I had a vision and words entered my mind. The vision was of people on both sides of me as far as my eyes could see. Some were on the hill-tops and others in valleys; some were walking upright and others were disabled, struggling to move forward. But everyone was going toward the same place—toward The Light.

The words that entered my mind were, "IT IS NOT FOR ME TO DO THE WALK OF YOUR LIFE, BUT I WILL BE WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY." Receiving this message was an awe-inspiring experience for me, one that I shall never forget. Over the following 29 years, my faith was fortified by this remarkable happening, and, year after year, that inspiration saw me through the ups and downs of life.

There came a day, however, when even this wonderful experience wasn't enough to see me through. On that day, 8 years ago, someone very dear to me developed a potentially terminal cancer. After learning about this illness, I went into denial and was extremely upset. My anger and disbelief eroded my faith, and I began feeling lost and very alone.

I was at Walter Reed when the surgeons performed the second operation. I walked out into the hallway and sought a place where I could be alone. Then I sat down and looked out of the glass windows; I covered my face and wept. After a while, I felt a touch on my shoulder. I turned around and saw a military officer standing there—a complete stranger. She said, “I can see that you are upset.” Then she asked me what was wrong, and I told her. After listening, she asked me if she could take me to the Chapel. I agreed, and when we arrived, a Chaplain and a few other people were there. We prayed together and, thus, my faith was renewed.

Looking back on that experience, I've come to think of the military officer as what I call an “earth angel”—someone who reaches out to a stranger and shows genuine concern; someone who cares enough to spend the time to help a stranger regain her faith. I believe she truly reflected the love of Jesus Christ.

With my faith renewed, I returned to this church. During one of the services, a very special woman, Lilian Kesler, noticed that I was alone. She reached out to me—a stranger—and asked if I would be her guest at the Joanna Circle. I went there and became very fond of all of the women. Then I met women from other circles and from other church activities, and after getting to know them, I came to believe there are many “earth angels” in this church.

These women frequently reach out with Christian love to those within and outside of the church. They contact members who are ill or in need and offer support. They serve God in so many ways—by singing in the choir; by working through Women's Circles; and by serving as officers, committee members, elders, and deaconesses. I have witnessed them helping the needy people in our community by offering them Thanksgiving dinners and by giving gifts to entire families at Christmas. They also buy stamps as part of an effort to provide all of the women in U.S. jails an opportunity to write letters. Through their annual SERRV gift sales, they even reach out to the under-developed parts of the world. I could go on and on, but the most important thing is that, in so many ways, they reflect the love of Jesus.

I invite those women in the church today who are not actively involved with a Presbyterian Women's group to take a step and join one. You will be welcomed with opened

arms. From my experience, I can tell you that you won't be disappointed, and it could be a joyous turning point in your life.

On this Women's Sunday, may we all ask God in our prayers to look graciously upon the women of this church, and may the members of this church give their wholehearted support to these women who minister in the name of Jesus Christ.