Outreach Center Network News Letter

June 2017

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### June devotion

Editor’s note: In May and June we honor parents with days set aside for them. The following article was written by my wife many years ago. It speaks of a loving Father even when your earthly father was not so.

A FATHER'S LOVE

By Debra Andrus

Taken from “Lutheran Messenger for the Blind”, February 1999

You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Ps. 86:15

How important is a father's love to his child! But what about children who don't experience a father's love? Should we rewrite Scripture verses that say Father to read *mother, parent, caregiver?*

When I was a young child, I was not blessed with the love of a father. My father was physically abusive and I spent my life in fear of him-not the awe‑ful fear one has of the heavenly father, but the awful fear of never knowing if the day would bring kindness or bruises from Daddy. Even after my parents were divorced I lived in fear that my father would come to "get me." Even after I grew up and studied psychology and sociology and understood the dynamics of the abusive situation, the fear remained. Knowing that he hadn't meant to be abusive did not take away the fear. Even today, six years after his death, the little‑girl fear remains.

How then can I understand the concept of a loving heavenly Father? One who cares for me so much that He knows the number of hairs on my head (Matthew 10:30)? One who loves me so much He gave up what was dearest to Him‑‑His Son‑‑so that He could care for me for all eternity?

For me it is simple to understand. I just imagine everything I always wished for from my father and then magnify that picture. Even so, I know my Heavenly Father is even more wonderful. How do I know? I know because He tells me so: "From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

I know because during all the hard times, and the good times, and even during the mediocre times, I've felt His loving Heavenly Daddy arms around me, comforting me, holding me. Sometimes He holds me through other people. Sometimes He holds me through His Word-read, spoken, or memorized.

So, should we rewrite Scripture to be more "gender inclusive"? No. God knew what He was doing when He (who actually has no gender) referred to Himself as our Father. He knew that there would be many people who long for the love of a father. And He knew that He would always be there for them.

Do you know the love of your Father? If so, love Him back: Use your worship and praise to tell Him how much you love Him. Obey your Father. Do the "chores" that He, like every good father, has outlined for you to do: "Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39); "Go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). Tell others about His love‑‑there may be someone you know who is longing for a Father's love.

If you are one of those who long for your Father's love, stop longing and start believing. He states this love for you: "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). He promises to never leave you. He has built a place for you in heaven, prepared by His Son, Jesus.

Every day in God's Kingdom is Father's Day. But He doesn't want presents of a tie or aftershave lotion. All He wants is your love.

### Dorie Beat the Cancer

Dorie Mates was the director of the Grand Rapids Outreach Center. Blind from birth she struggled to fit in for years and years. When she connected up to an outreach center, God took hold of her and blessed her richly. When asked, Dorie agree to be the leader of the Grand Rapids Outreach Center

Dorie was diagnosed with cancer some years back. She fought it hard and the doctors pronounced her free of it. Shortly after quitting the chemotherapy this spring, Dorie’s liver had problems. This in turn placed stress on her kidneys. Last month she left the hospital and returned home in the care of hospice. Dorie died two days later.

She had four goals before she died. 1 return home 2 be at one last outreach center gathering. 3 see her family one last time. 4 See Kloey, her cat, one last time.

She came home and because she was so weak, the outreach center came to her. Because the center is small, they could all come into the living room apartment and stand around her bed. They talked, shared, laughed and prayed. The Outreach Center meant so much to her.

The next day her family came to visit. This means three of the four goals complete. Bob, her husband and blind himself, somehow found Kloey, picked her up, put her on the bed with Dorie. She didn’t stay but a second or two and off she went.

With the goals completed, Dorie was at peace. She went home to Jesus the next day.

### From the Pittsburgh Outreach Center

I received this note from Angela. Her dream as a young girl was to serve the Lord. Visually Impaired herself, at the Outreach Center her dream has become reality.

Dear Pastor Dave,

I wanted you to know that the other catechumen that I started to teach last summer has become a member of First Trinity Lutheran Church.  He is the boy friend of Natasha, who I taught during the spring and summer of last year, who is blind and deaf.  It was a breeze teaching Natasha.  Josh was another story.  He is visually impaired but not blind; he can read but refuses to do it.  We gave him an audio small catechism and tried to get him to listen to some of your audio Bible studies but he would not listen to them.  He refuses to read the Bible.  He does spend hours using computers, iPad, iPod, etc., downloading stuff.  I told his girl friend to read him the catechism using her braille copy.  She did and asked Pastor Spittel to confirm him. In the few weeks before his confirmation, Josh started to learn to say a few prayers in Church.  Josh has attention deficit disorder and hearing loss. Natasha gave Josh an ultimatum that he must become a Christian and join the Church to continue their relationship and possibly marry and have a family.  Pastor Spittel confirmed Josh saying that he comes to Church more than some of the members and that we should continue to teach him.  Josh is 23 years old and is grieving for his Mother, who died last May.  Natasha entered the Church on August 28, 2016.

Pastor Spittel obtained information from Magee Women’s Hospital stating that Josh was baptized the day of his birth because he was in danger of dying so he did not need to be baptized in our Church.  His Mom never took him to Church.  He never entered a Church until he came to First Trinity nearly two years ago for a Blind Center dinner.  Josh has braces on his legs and walks with a walker because of cerebral palsy.  Jesus has to take care of the rest—I can’t.  Two deaf women were transferred/received into our Church also.  Cindy, wife of our Church Accountant/Treasurer, is an ASL interpreter and provides translation at Divine Services.  I have given Josh various videos and movies to watch about Bible, Jesus, etc.  He has watched some of them but I don’t know if he understands them.

God Bless You,

### A Retreat for People Who Are Blind

The Extreme Experience Retreat (E.E.R.) was started by the Covington Outreach Center. It is held at Blue Lake Camp, Andalusia, Alabama. This year promises to be lots of fun.  For those who love to deep Sea fish, you arrive Friday evening Sept. 22 and leave early Saturday, 23 for a 6 hour deep sea fishing trip in Destin, FL.  The E.E.R. retreat will begin Sunday September 24 around 2 pm.  The total cost for the fishing rodeo and E.E.R. is $250 and E.E.R. alone, is $200. This includes lodging, meals, and all activities. The fishing rodeo will be open to the first 40 who have paid.

Some of the items during the retreat are: motorcycle ride, cooking tips, self defense class, orientation and mobility, independent living skills, share your favorite tips, tech talk, and of course canoes, swimming, aquacise, nature hikes, bring instrument to jam.

If interested contact me for the registration form and information.

### Final Thoughts

In upcoming issues we can and will look at many of the same topics as well as others. If you have questions, thoughts or suggestions, please send them to me or post them on the blind ministry email list.

Pastor Dave