

My Walk Through a Christian Life

by Mary Christian

My life has been very full and rewarding because of my strong belief in God and his only son, Jesus Christ.

I was born into the household of Dr. Paul and Leita Pike, with an older brother and sister. We had a loving, sharing and giving family, raised without a major worry throughout my entire life. We went to church every Sunday together as a family. I started attending First Presbyterian Church when I was 5 1/2 years old in 1938. Dad and Mother always attended and got involved in Sunday School for both children and adults. Dad always said: "We don't send you children to church. We take you to church as a family." When I was in Junior High, I began playing the hymns for Junior Church in the old parlor before I was old enough to join the adult church choir.

I always believed and felt great comfort being in God's caring hands and listening to his word. Rev. Lloyd Brasure was my favorite children's minister as he introduced us to all parts of the church, including a visit up in the bell tower. He encouraged us to go to Presbyterian church camp at Waldenwoods, where I am still a family camping member. I grew up being allowed to think, reason and be comfortable with my decisions while having the support of my family. First Presbyterian Church and its parishioners helped me grow in the process of practicing what was right or wrong and being kind to others.

Leadership skills were developed at church during my growing up years. I became a leader in my elementary, junior and senior high school settings. At Garfield Elementary, I felt like a big leader in helping knit Red Cross squares and collecting things for the Red Cross boxes to send to our soldiers abroad. I also helped the kindergarten class by putting on their leggings and boots. At Emerson Junior High School, I began running for class offices. When I was really nervous speaking in front of my whole class, Dad would remind me that I should look out at my audience as a patch of cabbages who did not know as much as I did on my subject. That always calmed me down, and I tried my best to represent my classmates when elected. At Northern High School, I began to really enjoy elected leadership positions, whether it be a class officer or student council position. I continued to be very involved with the Red Cross. The bottom line was/is that I like people of every background and place. I became a ready and willing volunteer.

In my junior year of high school I met the "love of my life", Earl Christian. We began dating in 1950 when he was a senior. Earl went to Junior College for two years, while I entered the University of Michigan. Earl and I were married when I graduated from UM Dental Hygiene School in 1956. We lived in East Lansing for one year while Earl finished his degree at Michigan State University.

There were many good years together after we moved back to Flint, and although we had no children of our own, we became Godparents to 13 of our close family members' children. What fun, but what a responsibility to help raise, love, entertain, travel with and discipline those godchildren! We also became very close to 12 other young children whom we took under our wings to nurture and add to our "family." Some of those children were students of my elementary classes, (as I had given up my Dental Hygiene practice), or close neighborhood children. Today, counting those 25 young people, their spouses, their children and a few grandchildren, they number 99 young people I am still connected to and care very deeply for.

My life became full of teacher professionalism and unionism in Flint. In 1965, the state passed a bargaining law allowing teachers to strike if bargaining broke down. I was elected President of the Flint Education Association and when bargaining failed, I led the first Michigan and National Education Associations approved strike on June 3 and 4, 1966. What a scary time! Some educators were afraid to strike, which I also would have had a difficult decision to make if I had not been their leader. When settlement was reached, those who went into their respective school buildings gave their two days' wages to begin a Mary Christian Scholarship Fund which is still in place today.

"What fun but challenging years those were!"

My life continued to be involved in the education profession, serving on several Michigan Education Association Committees, which then put me into the National Education Association involvement. In 1970, I was elected by the MEA to become an NEA Director, serving there for 12 years. Those final two years resulted in Earl asking me for a divorce in 1980 which devastated both me and my parents. They were fully supportive when they realized there was no resolve to our marriage, and they supported me through those following tough days. Another very positive force helping me through a divorce was the words of Dr. Don McFerren. Every Sunday morning, he spoke directly to me on some phase of living and being whole. I bought a taped sermon almost every Sunday to listen to again and again to reinforce my positive living and being.

In 1983, I was voted in as MEA Vice-President and the next 8 years found me at the MEA Building or somewhere else in the state, nation or world. What fun but challenging years those were! I returned to teaching at Pierce Elementary in 1991 after losing a race to become MEA President. Although we worked

Continued on next page

hard for my election, I felt that when "one door closes, another one opens." My 3rd and 4th grade students gave me great challenges, but I was enjoying setting goals and working hard with the students to achieve my goals set for them. The Flint School Board offered a buy-out for teachers that spring and I decided to retire in 1992. This allowed me to travel the world in the first years of retirement.

It was not long before I became involved in the MEA-Retired Association. After being Secretary and President of our GLEA-R (Genesee, Lapeer Education Association-Retired) group for three years, I was elected as Vice-President of the MEA-Retired members for a continuous 8 years. Dealing with 27,000 retired members became a challenge, but when elected MEA-Retired President in 2007, it became an even more "full-time/volunteer" proposition. I think that it may be time to retire again from my "volunteer jobs."

The decision to retire "again" will be guided by my faith in God, Jesus Christ and my plethora of loyal family and friends. It is my thought that perhaps I have served in the MEA positions long enough. I will rely again, on the power of prayer, which has guided me through several serious illnesses in the past, as well as some of life's challenges. God has always given me great comfort and peace in tough times before, and I am sure He will guide me again. I appreciate also, not only my family and close friends' love and support, but the support and love from my First Presbyterian Church "family" also!

.....

Women's Fall Retreat Journeys, Detours and Grace Speaker Marcy Lawless Saturday, October 24

Mark your calendar and don't miss this opportunity to explore and reflect together on where we've been, where we are, and where the journey will ultimately lead as we wind our way down our individual spiritual paths. Join us on this one day retreat. Your presence is invited and encouraged, for it is within the unity of sharing, caring, laughing, crying, singing and praying that we find fellowship with each other. Our speaker, Marcy Lawless will lead us on this journey using Jeremiah 29:11-13 as our scriptural basis.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:11-13

A Recipe For:

Strawberry Spinach Salad

- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon poppy seeds
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon minced onion
- 10 ounces fresh spinach
- 1 quart strawberries
- 1/4 cup almonds, blanched and slivered



- In a medium bowl, whisk together the sesame seeds, poppy seeds, sugar, olive oil, vinegar, paprika, Worcestershire sauce and onion. Cover, and chill for one hour.
- Rinse, dry and tear spinach into bite-size pieces
- Clean hull and slice strawberries
- In a large salad bowl combine spinach, strawberries and almonds. Pour dressing over salad, and toss. Refrigerate 10 to 15 minutes before serving.

Thank you to Lisa Roeser for this delicious recipe.

.....

Pray for the Youth Mission Trip July 18 to July 25



Again this summer the Pipe youth will be traveling to Tennessee to help repair homes in the Binghamton neighborhood of Memphis. They will be working with an organization called S.O.S. (Service Over Self).

S.O.S. exists to glorify God by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed through urban home repair camps. The youth will help to repair houses for those that cannot afford it. They will also be encouraged to interact with the families they are serving. This is a wonderful opportunity for the youth to help meet the needs of the poor in the name of Christ and to see God work in their own lives.

Please pray for the mission trip. Pray for the team, S.O.S. and the families that will be served during the time in Memphis. Thank you!



Spiritual Enrichment Opportunities

Gifts: The Joy of Serving God

Monday Nights

7:00 p.m.

Room 129

Beginning June 15

Facilitated by Carol Hostetler

Each one of us is uniquely gifted by God to serve the world in His name. How can you cultivate a servant's heart and your spiritual gifts in ways that build up your church, your family, your friends and your world all without wiping yourself out? Join this women's discussion group and discover the joy of serving with others – doing together what you cannot do alone. Learn how to abide in Christ and experience a freshness and vitality that grows as you give.

The Lord's Prayer: Praying with Power

By John Ortberg

Wednesday Mornings

10:30 a.m.

Room 129

Beginning June 17

Facilitated by Kaye Hollitt

The Lord's Prayer is much more than a collection of words to be recited from memory. It is given to us by Jesus to launch us into a conversation with God; to draw on his wisdom and strength. The more we learn to pray like Jesus the more we will become like him. Jesus' secret to living in alignment with the Father's will and having the power to face life's challenges came from his prayer life. Join this group of ladies and learn from Jesus how to pray. This six-week study of the Lord's Prayer gets right down to the heart of life and faith, "Lord, teach me to pray!"

Summer Reading List

Fiction

Chasing Francis: A Pilgrim's Tale

by Ian Morgan Cron

Three Bags Full: A Sheep Detective Story

by Leonie Swann

Dinner with a Perfect Stranger

A Day with a Perfect Stranger

by David Gregory

A Lineage of Grace

Sons of Encouragement

by Francine Rivers

Non-Fiction

When I Lay My Isaac Down

A New Kind of Normal

by Carol Kent

The Ragamuffin Gospel:

Abba's Child

The Furious Longing of God

The Relentless Tenderness of Jesus

by Brennan Manning

Where Jesus Walked: A Spiritual Journey Through the

Holy Land

by R. Wayne Stacy

Discovering Soul Care by Mindy Caliguire

Sacred Chaos: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life You Have

by Tricia McCary Rhodes

Crazy Love by Francis Chan

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

by Peter Scazzero



The Grapevine

Women Reaching Women

John 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing."

Hello Ladies,

God is at work in our church community and it is exciting to be a part of it. The love of Christ is visible here and many of you are reaching out to share this love in tangible ways wherever God has placed you. As part of *Faith In Flint* our church has committed to 5,000 hours of service to the greater Flint community this spring and many of you are helping us to reach our goal.

In *Faith of the Fatherless*, C. Thomas Davis shares how we as Christians can make a difference for God in our world. God has called each of us to work together in bringing His love into this world.

*"It is through our hands the Father's love comes, it is through our voices His voice is heard, it is through our efforts and those of the church that His care is revealed to the ones the rest of the world has forgotten.....We put flesh to His words and make Him alive to those who are desperate to know He is real."*¹

May 30th is our all church work day. Opportunities to serve in a variety of ways are available. Call the church to sign up or stop by the table in the Narthex. Don't miss the opportunity to

serve our community alongside your church family. There is something for everyone. We will conclude this day of service with a big potluck picnic in the Parish Hall at 4:30. Join us in worship the next day to celebrate Pentecost with the Festival Orchestra and a multi-media presentation in the Chapel. Be a part of this weekend of service and celebration. See how giving a little bit of God's love to someone else can transform and bring abundant joy!

As you open the pages of *The Grapevine* take a look at our summer small group opportunities, our book list and Mary Christian's faith story. Don't forget to mark your calendars for our fall retreat. More details will be available in the coming months.

This summer look for ways to continue to show God's love to all you come in contact with. Share God's many blessings and experience an overflow of joy.

Celebrating Together,
Kim Skaff

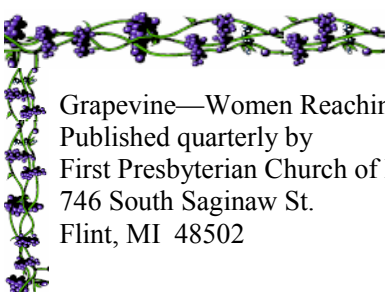
¹ C. Thomas Davis, *Fields of the Fatherless* (Global Publishing Series, 2002) pg. 33

Faith in Flint

All Church Work Day

Saturday, May 30th

Saturday, May 30th is our big work day and potluck! So many ways to serve our community! Stop in the Narthex, see what opportunities we'll work on together, and *get involved!* Whether you work or not on Saturday we hope that you will join in on the **potluck** fellowship here at the church beginning at **4:30pm**. We'll supply the hotdogs, drinks, and serving ware; you supply a dish to pass . . . desert, salad, dessert, side, dessert . . . you get the picture, something to share! Hope to see you there. In the Narthex you'll also be able to purchase your very own fire-red Faith in Flint t-shirt (\$7) and see how we've neared the 5,000 hour goal. *Please, turn in those volunteer hours slips!*



Grapevine—Women Reaching Women
Published quarterly by
First Presbyterian Church of Flint
746 South Saginaw St.
Flint, MI 48502