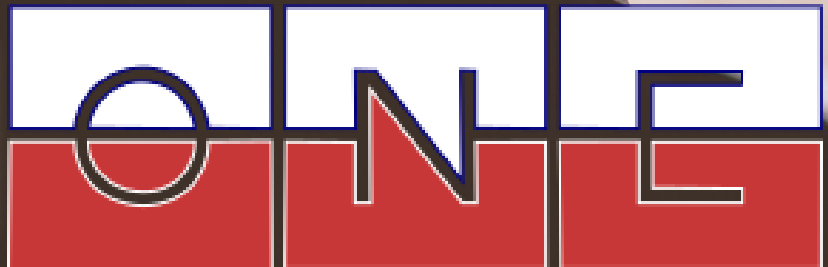




INSIDE:

+ **Inspiring Women of Faith**



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What Are You Waiting For?

Reverend Shay Craig

St. Andrews Episcopal Church

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

When I was in seminary, just starting out and completely insecure in my journey toward priesthood, I was assigned by my priest to preach at the Wednesday noon service. It was a small service, attended by a handful of deeply faithful, but mostly profoundly deaf individuals (which was a mercy, as I was very new to preaching).

I took that assignment very seriously. I studied, wrote, and practiced those five-minute sermons with as much zeal as I now prepare the Big Kahuna Easter Sermon. And every week, no matter how confident I was in the sermon, no matter how comfortable with my role in the service, I would stand in the hallway before going in and shake in my boots. On one occasion, I was shaking so hard that the cross on my chest rattled against the buttons on my cassock. The priest who was presiding over the service

laughed out loud at my trepidation. And then she said, "What are you waiting for?"

Not the way we usually say it. Not like "Get out of the way" or "Move it along, babe," but asking in genuine interest. "What are you waiting for?"

"God has called you," she was saying. "I see it. Other people see it. You feel it. This pulpit is yours today, this is the scripture you've been given, these are the people who have come to hear it. God has lined all this up for you. What, exactly, are you waiting for?"

It is my firm belief that God places a "calling" on each and every one of us. For some of us, it is world changing: curing polio, writing a breathtaking concerto, inventing the combustion engine. For others is it seemingly small: getting this troubled young man through high school; holding onto this land for one more generation; offering

someone hope--a perfect stranger--when the person was about to lose it.

At first glance, you may say, "Not me. I don't have a call on my life. I don't even know what she is talking about." But, stop and think. Have you ever had a moment when someone said something to you that seemed strange or insignificant at the time, but now you realize that it was God speaking to you in that moment?

That person, whether they were a stranger or an intimate friend. Whether they believed in God or not, was the instrument of God's voice, speaking to you about the potential, the grace, the "calling" that God has placed in you.

God no longer speaks from the heavens (which is probably good; that would be alarming). There are no burning bushes or talking donkeys (also good, also alarming). God speaks to us through circumstances and

What Are You Waiting For? (Continued)

through people. And if you give it some thought, I bet you can think of someone whom God used to speak to you.

And the message was, "You know what you're called to do. I've placed the fire in your belly, I've opened the doors and put the people in front of you, and now I've spoken to you through this person before you. WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?"

Living into the dreams that God has placed in us is not a whether, it's a when. And when is now. We can't wait for confidence; it may only come afterward. We can't wait for permission; frankly, not much of God's work in the world would get done if it waited for permission. And if

you were waiting to get God's affirmation, well, there it is in the eyes of the person before you, "What are you waiting for?"

The assignment for these essays this month is to describe a person who was "like a spiritual mother figure." I invite you to go looking in your life for the person who nurtures in you the still small voice of God. The person who speaks the truth you are yearning for and trying to avoid. The person who knows that you already know and looks you in the eye and says, "What, exactly, are you waiting for?"

A few weeks ago, on Easter Sunday, I stood at the back of the sanctuary in St. Michael's Episcopal Church

and listened to the choir and organ fill the space with joy. I watched in amazement as the first light of Easter was carried into the room. I felt the relief, elation and humility of the fact of the resurrected Christ . . . and I got incredibly nervous.

And from somewhere--maybe from heaven--the Rev. Jeanne Leinbach's voice rang in my ears, giving me the little push forward that I needed to walk into the calling God has placed in my life. She was saying, "What, exactly, are you waiting for?"



The Rev. Shay Craig is Vicar of St. Andrew's and St. Michael's Episcopal Churches in Hays.

Grandma Pauline's Presence Is Still Being Felt

Cheryl Glassman

St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church

As I write this column, I smile, for I am writing on my daughter Sarah's birthday.

Being a mother is something we cannot truly prepare for. Oh, sure, we buy clothes, and diapers, and cribs, and receive tons of advice. But the moment that young, helpless, beautiful (all babies are) child is placed into a mother's arms, life

takes on new meaning. It is no longer just about you, the individual. What gets a new mom to that point besides instinct?

We all have someone, a motherly person, who has influenced our direction, whose presence sticks with us and shows us things, long before we even realize it. A statement I once heard by professional basketball player

and coach Lisa Leslie rings true: "(A) mother was my role model before I even knew what that was.

A spiritual guide for me was my grandmother Pauline.

Grandma Pauline was a saint on earth. In the middle of the Dust Bowl, she cared for her four children, cooked (made the greatest fried chicken and green beans I've

Grandma Pauline's Presence Is Still Being Felt (Continued)

had to this day), helped my grandfather on the farm, and taught school.

She played piano for silent movies. She sang with the Methodist choir. Everything she did created joy and life in those around her. Visiting her was the very best. Everyone wanted to be the one standing in front, knocking on the door, because when it opened, Grandma's face lit up with an aura I have yet been able to find words to describe.

The best part? Her arms held out wide, and she would take one step forward, and you would literally melt into her embrace. We would sing as she played piano, eat vanilla cream cookies, and visit. No matter what bad thing might have happened before seeing Grandma, it didn't hurt anymore once she hugged you, kissed your cheek, and squeezed your hand tight.

She never talked about her own problems, and always wanted to know about our daily lives. She would straighten with pride to hear how one of us got an "A" on a paper or played at a

church service. Her love for Christ flowed from her as well. Her tattered Bible was always next to her, and several pages were bent. She would have tears in her eyes as she played her favorite old hymns.

One time when I was about 10, I asked Grandma why she was crying as we listened to "The Old Rugged Cross." I will never forget her answer. "Sweetheart, close your eyes and listen with your heart." Grandma took a deep breath, and we all closed our eyes. Grandma then said, "Can you see him? When I play, listen to, or sing a hymn, I see Jesus. He sings with me."

Grandma's "next-to-Godliness" stuck with me as I grew into my teen years, and although I tried to run from serving him several times, Grandma's smile or presence was there. I would be remiss if I did not tell you I ask her for help to this day.

I remember a day a few years ago. I was searching for a piece of music for a funeral. I could not find it anywhere. I had called several music friends. No one had it. One thing I try to do is,

if a family would like a specific song, I will do what I can to find it. This time, things were not going well. This was before the Internet and Google. Having exhausted what I thought was every possibility, I said (out loud), "OK, Grandma. I know you would have this song."

Not more than a few seconds later the phone rang. It was friend and musician Renee Michaud. We talked about an upcoming event. Then Renee said, "I would like to use (the song I was looking for; I cannot remember the title)." Renee had the song. I looked upward and smiled.

Grandma Pauline's love of life and faith live on in me today. When I think of her, I think of Luke 2:51, "Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart." Happy Mother's Day to all.



Cheryl Glassman is the Minister of Music at St. Nicolas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.

Memories of One Very Special Lady

Becky Rogowski

First Presbyterian Church

I worship and work at my childhood church. We are small in number, but strong in relationship. When I mention "church family," I truly mean the members are part of my extended family. I have extra grandmas and grandpas, extra moms and dads. As an adult member, I now have extra children, too.

A story frequently told is my special bond with Marian Layher. Marian passed away in 2020 at the age of 103. Yes, you read that right--she was 103. Our story began when I was a young girl of 4, learning the ins and outs of what I was expected to do at church. Marian was a grandmother at that point, and my own mother was a young mother learning the ropes.

Marian and I quickly became "friends." She and I enjoyed coloring together. On one particular morning during Sunday School, Marian was coloring with me, and at some point in our conversing, I made it clear to her that she "needed to stay inside the

lines."

I was not a sassy child; in fact, I was rather shy and reserved. The comment seemed out of character for me. To anyone who knew Marian or her story and status in our community, she certainly didn't need to "stay in the lines."

My simple comment to her became about so much more than coloring inside the lines. Throughout our lives, we would come back to this comment and how its meaning grew with us as we both grew. She never forgot the little girl who reminded her to "stay in the lines," and she never let me forget the importance of living my life within the lines, as well.

I moved away for college and started my family, but returned home when my youngest children were born. I was glad that all four of my girls got to enjoy knowing Marian and to have her influence on their lives, as well. And yes, they learned about the "crayon story."

Marian was dedicated in her church attendance, and even well into her 90's she

was dedicated to maintaining an active lifestyle and working out at the same gym my family attended. She was a role model to us in so many ways. As Marian became older and more frail and her memory deteriorated, she would often repeat the "crayon story" three or more times on any given Sunday or on any given visit to her assisted living residence. We all delighted in hearing it, no matter how many times.

When Marian turned 100, I presented her with a "grown up" coloring book and a fresh set of colors. She was delighted, but to those who truly understood the significance, our "crayon story" had come full circle. We had both taught each other the meaning of staying inside the lines.

Her legacy lives on, not just within me, but within my own daughters, as well. Our lives are better because of Marian's influence. She is missed.



Becky Rogowski is the Generations in Faith Together Coordinator at Hays First Presbyterian Church.

Poet's Timeless Words Still Touching Readers

Reverend Celeste Lasich

Hays First Presbyterian Church

"I took to church a happy 4-year old boy holding a bright blue string to which was attached his much loved orange balloon with pink stripes. Certainly a thing of beauty, if not forever, at least a joy for a very important now. After a teacher tells him, 'Balloons don't belong in church,' he asks his mother, his lip a bit trembly, 'Why aren't balloons allowed in church? I thought God would like balloons.

"Where did we get the idea that balloons don't belong in church? Where did we get the idea that God loves gray and sh-h-h-h and drab and anything will do? I think it is blasphemy not to appreciate joy in God's world. For God so loved the world. Surely that is a cause of joy. Surely we should celebrate Good News! That God loved us that much. Where did we ever get the idea that balloons don't belong in church?"

Ann Weems' poem "Balloons Belong in Church" captured my imagination the very first time I read it as a teen, feeling a soul deep

"yes" to her powerful and simple affirmation of all that Church is called to be and do. It was my first "sermon" for Youth Sunday in my home church, a challenge and affirmation of the faith to which I longed to give my heart. It still speaks to me in timeless truths of faith, celebration, justice and love.

I never met Ann Weems and still, in considering the many gifted prophetic women who have been my spiritual mentors, I realized Weems has been a spiritual mentor throughout my life.

Her poetry collections, "Kneeling in Bethlehem" and "Kneeling in Jerusalem," have been for decades my guiding star through the seasons of Advent/Christmastide and Lent/Easter. Her "Resources for Creative Worship," "Reaching for Rainbow" and "Searching for Shalom," are dog-eared and bright with florescent page markers.

"Psalms of Lament" gives voice to heartbreaking grief and faithful lament following the death of her beloved "happy 4-year-old boy" Todd, who was killed walking

home from his 21st birthday party. In the forward to "Psalms of Lament," her friend Walter Brueggemann writes, "Weems' gift as a poet is to move the listener in and through what is personal to her, so that the poem touches each of us in our concreteness and in our commonness."

Ann Weems was a Presbyterian writer, speaker, liturgist and worship leader who died in 2016 at the age of 81. Her writing was deeply rooted in the scriptures and in the daily lives, both joys and sorrows, of the people of God.

She once said that writing was, for her, a spiritual exercise, a form of prayer in which one can imagine what might be and, in the writing, help it become true. Her writing continues to "help it become true" as her timeless words spark faithful imagination offered as acts of worship and love.



The Rev. Celeste Lasich is the pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Hays.