

NEWS FROM THE HEART

Issue 113

EDITOR, MARY HANSEN

MARCH 2018

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Where I live, March is a transition month. Spring wants to pop through, but winter isn't quite finished with us. I get antsy during the month of March. My hands itch to dig in the dirt. I see tiny shoots of green. Birds are chirping again the sun seems a little brighter each day. So, I begin preparing for spring and summer planting. I clean pots, sharpen tools, and have new ideas for my gardens. But then I remember my spiritual garden. Am I sharpening the tools of meditation and prayer? Am I taking inventory of new ways I can share God with the world around me? Am I preparing the soil of my life for new and exciting challenges for personal growth? During the month of March, I see the promise of new life in my garden and new life sprouting within the garden of my soul. *Laura Ricker (Maryland)*



REMEMBER ME?

My husband and I are retired teachers. Sometimes we are approached by former students who ask, "Do you remember me?" Most of the time we can recall their names, but sometimes we cannot; some we have not seen for years and have know thousands of children over our careers. A look of sadness or disappointment often crosses the student's face when we fail to recall a name, and we feel bad. On occasions when we do remember a name, we see joy on the person's face and a twinkle in his or her eyes. Usually, we talk about classroom memories. The students' faces reveal that being remembered is good. What I find remarkable is that God never forgets any of us. Though each of us is only one among billions, God always knows who we are. No matter how far we stray or how much time passes before we return God remembers us, loves us, and calls us by name. *Jamie Bergman*

FLAWS AND ALL

When I was a freshman in high school, I was diagnosed with an eating disorder. For over two years, I despised my body. When I finally began my journey to recovery, I slowly began to understand that God doesn't make mistakes. Regardless of the flaws we see in ourselves, everything that God creates is beautiful and wonderful. God loves us and accepts us flaws and all and with His help we can love ourselves and others. *Ashley Oliver (College Freshman)*

THE SHELTERING TREE

The poet Samuel Coleridge once described friendship as "a sheltering tree." When you have this quality, the branches of your friendship reach out over the lives of others, giving them shelter, shade, rest, relief, and encouragement. Friends give comfort. We find strength near them. They bear fruit that provides nourishment and encouragement. When something troublesome occurs in our life, we pick up the phone and call a friend, needing the comfort he or she provides. I think there are few things more lonely than having no friend to call. Friends also care enough about us to hold us accountable.... but we never doubt their love or respect.

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***Blessed are the flexible, they will never be bent out of shape.
Blessed are you when you have little stumbles, they prevent great falls.***

***Stressed out?? Don't give up.
Moses was once a basket case!!***

Thank
you

Amazing Grace Interfaith Ministry

Many "Thanks" to employees of the **Hilton Garden Inn** on Staten Island for their generous contribution of underwear and socks and volunteers for the **Amazing Kids Connection** give-a-way in February/March, and to Lois and Richard Nicotra for their personal donation. Also, to **Calvary Church** for allowing us the use of their church for this outreach and their donations. To our regular **Olivet Presbyterian Church** of contributors and monthly volunteers we are grateful for all you have done over the years. Gratitude to **St. Clare's** who has been donating clothing to us from the start, and to the wonderful **70 Easter baskets** for children in need. To the **Siller Foundation** and Mary Siller Cullen. Your donation of \$10,000 for the children will be put to good use. To **Northfield Foundation** thank you for the storage it is so very important for seasonal clothing. I believe God uses all of us to get done what He wants done. Every time I say, "I don't know if I can continue on," He provides some other incentive for me to keep on keeping on. So, until He says "Stop" we go on in His name. Many Blessing on all of you army of angels.

On Saturday, **March 24th** we will be doing a **Workshop, "Living Your Dreams-Overcoming Your Obstacles"** at the **Woodrow Methodist Church** from 9AM to 2PM. If you wish to attend please let us know by calling 718-356 6441 or 718- 987-0492, 718 987-0735. We are having bagels, fruit and need a headcount for the food. **See Flyer**

WOMAN'S RETREAT "Faith Moves Mountains" May 18 – May 20. Mendham NY. Weekend after Mother's Day. We have already received responses. Please ladies, even if you're a regular attendee I need your deposit to secure your room **ASAP**. The Retreat House will not hold any rooms without deposit. Last year we had a full house of 35 women.

Following schedule:

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| March 25 | Sunday | Palm Sunday Service held at St. Simon's Episcopal Church 11:30AM |
| March 30 | Friday | Good Friday Service held at St. Simon's Episcopal Church 7:30PM |
| April 1 | Sunday | Easter Sunday Service held at St. Simon's Episcopal Church 11:30AM |
| May 13 | Sunday | Mother's Day Service held at St. Simon's Episcopal Church 11:30AM |
| May 18 to 20 | | Women's Retreat Weekend, "Faith Mover Mountains" Mendham NJ |
| June 3 | Sunday | Tree of Life Sunday Service, Buffet, St. Simon's 11:30AM – 4PM |
| June 10 | Sunday | Sunday Service/Confirmation 11:30AM – 3PM |
| June 12 | Tuesday | Meditation "The Power of Forgiveness" Woodrow Methodist Church 7:30PM |
| June 17 | Sunday | Father's Day Service held at St. Simons 11:30AM |

Please pray for **Gabby** a 13 year old girl diagnosed with cancer. **Francine and Maria** on their way to Recovery. Susan Lamberti on the good news from her doctor. **Lisa and Angie** in the hospital. **Maria's friend, Francine** who fell and broke her nose. All those suffering from breathing conditions this Winter. Our prayers to **Iman Tahir** on the death of his wife **Hannah**. She was a gracious lady, always welcoming when we attended Temple. Our prayers to the family and Congregation of St. Simon's on the death of their Warden, **PJ Nelson**. I will remember her many kindnesses. PJ now is singing with the angels. Our prayers to **Pat Cherry** on the death of his wife **Jenny** who loved coming to church. Jenny brought the sunshine and warmth of her American Indian culture with her wherever she walked. To **Monsignor Joseph Murphy**, Congratulations and love on his 89th birthday.



Rev. Mary and Rev. Bob are on the Steering Committee since **Community Days** originated many Years ago. We will be attending the **Kick-Off** at the Albanian Cultural Center on **March 22nd** At 9Pm. **Amazing Grace will be celebrating Community Days with the Amazing Kids Connection On Saturday, April 7th from 9Am to 12AM. So far Staten Island Hospital, NYC Fire Department, NYC Police Department, the YMCA, Panera Bread will be with us for our give-a-way.** Unfortunately, we will not be at Wagner College this year for the closing ceremony and awards presentation since we will be on vacation.

Rev. Mary & Rev. Bob will be attending **Building Bridges Interfaith Seder** with **John Van Alpert** and his mother and Deacon Charlotte Kaplan on **Thursday, March 22 at 7PM at St. Charles Roman Catholic Church.** If you are interested in attending, there is still time call me 718 356-6441.

IT WORKS – IF YOU WORK IT

SOOTHING FEARFUL THINKING

What you feel is caused by what you tell yourself, how you think, the ways in which you interpret situations, and your personal point of view. Many people begin in childhood to develop the habit of filling themselves with negative thoughts about themselves and their circumstances. Thoughts that go around and around in your head, and make you feel as if you have no choice but to think them. For example, you may think fearful thoughts as, ***“My car is going to break down on the highway.”*** ***“I think I have cancer,”*** ***“My depression is getting so bad I’ll be locked up and drugged for the rest of my life.”*** And so on. What would happen if the next time you had a fearful thought you immediately asked yourself, ***“How true is that?”*** You might then tell yourself.... ***“No, my car isn’t going to break down because I keep up with repairs.”*** ***“No, I don’t have cancer because I have a checkup.”*** ***“No, depression isn’t going to get that bad because I’m taking steps to overcome it.”*** Replacing fearful thinking with responses that are grounded in reality, you can reprogram yourself to begin to think differently ad less fearfully. *Amy Dean*

TOOLS OF LIVING

Two little boys were playing in the surf. Along came a huge wave that suddenly knocked both of them down. One little boy regained his footing and ran back to the beach to his mother, crying and begging to go home. The other little boy scrambled to his feet, took a deep breath, laughed and raced back into the water. One learned to see the ocean as an enemy that would do the same thing time and time again, with the same result; the other enjoyed the unexpected event and was ready and willing to experience the next one. What’s your reaction when you’re knocked down by one of the blows of life? If you’re someone who expects the worst, then you probably respond in the same way each time.... You fearfully flee from troubles, problems or worries. To you, life is one big wave that knocks you down. But if you’re someone who embraces life and all it has to offer, then you know how to deal with each wave, no matter how big or small or how weak or powerful. You believe that life is manageable And enjoyable because you know how to handle whatever comes your way. It’s not so much what life DOES to you, but what YOU DO in response that determines your destiny and your happiness. A wise man once said, ***“Your mind is a sacred place into which nothing harmful can enter except you’re your permission”*** Just for today, don’t run from the waves in your life, think of them as tools you can learn from.



THE PRODIGAL DUGHTER

By "Sweet" Mary, October 17, 1999

I don't really remember when it all began. I could tell you that my father always worked. He retired after 45 years at Con Edison Hell Gate Plant. My mother did not go to work until I was a teenager. She was a cook for the NY Telephone Company and retired after many years. I had plenty of food, when I was young, "hand me down" clothes that I hated but new ones as I grew older. We lived in a 3 room apartment house in the Bronx practically all my life. My mother struggled to send me to private Catholic schools. My father was an alcoholic and my mother a rage alcoholic and an overeater. There were many fights in my home.

When I was a child I loved church. I loved the candles and the smell of incense. I loved the peaceful feeling, the quiet calm feeling the atmosphere gave me in my soul. I would stare at the statues of Jesus, Mary and Joseph making believe I would bring them to life. I knew, as a small child I was protected and safe there. Teenage years came, and I began the journey of the Prodigal. I became rebellious. I felt I was not only fighting my parents, teachers and friends but also God was very disappointed in me. I was looking for a better way on my own and so the journey continued, and I left home. I found a companion. This companion warmed me with strength of a different kind. When I partook of him, he gave me courage. I could sing and dance. I could speak up for myself. I felt good. I took him on my job interviews and jobs. He accompanied me down the aisle when I married. He came to live with me in Brooklyn and comfort me all those long nights when my husband was in night school for his CPA. I became pregnant with my first daughter and he took a sabbatical for a while. He returned with great exuberance for her Christening. I welcomed him. I was afraid of being a new mother and alone so much. He appeared to be a good friend and his companionship helped me to sleep better at night. I started to feel annoyed with my lot in life. an outside relationship looked promising. I began a slow descent into a place of darkness. My companion went with me. He would say, "Stay with me and things will get better." I would hang on to his neck consuming all he had to offer. Things never got better. They got darker and worse. I was divorced. I was lonely with an ache in my heart for the God of my youth. I looked for Him in beautiful colored liquids, in bright lights, in lovely odd shaped bottles, smoky rooms and in the blurred faces of strangers. He wasn't there!!!

A kind and gentle giant found me. He protected me from the cold, loved me and my daughter. We were married. my companion came to the wedding rehearsal and the ceremony. He joined us for our Honeymoon spreading himself all over the glamorous glass decorated bathroom in the hotel. The kind and gentle giant and I had a wonderful baby girl. Once again, my companion left and returned after she was born. My companion was now in my life every day all day long. I could hardly feed and take care of the children when he was around. I wanted him to go away for awhile, but he wouldn't leave. Sometimes In anger and frustration I would throw him out, but I would let him return again. At times I couldn't find him and I would go looking for him in closets and under mattresses. Sometimes I found him empty of all his warmth and unable to fill my needs. At other times I would find him fully alive and I could again hang on to his neck for comfort.

My companion was taking all my time away from my daughters and husband. I was becoming confused and disoriented. His promises were empty and dark with no meaning. I reached out, I make a phone call. A woman, Chris appeared before me like an apparition. She led me down a flight of stairs to "The Light". "The Light" spoke and welcomed me. I was frightened and leery, I couldn't understand what "The Light" was saying. I came home, and I threw my companion out. I realized he was not my friend but my murdered. He was with me for so long I did not know how to function without him. I cried and cursed and cursed but continued going to visits with "The Light". The road to "The Light" was the journey back to God. The prodigal daughter returning. The body healing was the robe. "Wear it loosely" "The Light" said. Into my had "The Light" placed a triangle. "This has power,

eat it before you pick up with your old companion again." I rarely wore shoes in those dark days, but now new shoes of strength were placed upon my feet, which took me to rooms of happy, shining, loving faces. Places filled with cups of warm, brown, liquid, conversation and laughter. I found a new way of life. Steps to change my thinking. I had come home!!! She who was lost is found. Amen.

Pray for me, and Until we meet again, May God hold you In the palm of His hand. Love Mary

