



## **Our Words are Blossoms**

By  
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Cover Painting by Doris Stensland

## **Dedication**

To my Encouragers, Pastor Roger McCarty,  
Chaplain at The Inn on Westport,  
and my daughter, Susan Stensland.

Our Words are Blossoms  
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## OUR WORDS ARE BLOSSOMS

Words are blossoms that grow out of our hearts.  
When spoken, they can blessings impart.

Some blossoms are small;  
A little violet in the grass  
    surprises me with a little joy flash.  
And so our little "hellos" and "Good days"  
    bring a minute of joy to folks along the way.

Our words in friendly and loving conversations  
    are like the rose's beautiful creations.  
Both our words and rose blossoms can be fair and fine,  
    and bring to family and friends joy and sunshine.

After winter's dreary gray days, tulips and daffodils  
    brighten the place.  
Likewise, our words can give comfort and cheer  
to persons weighed down with discouragement or fear.

The lovely white lily is so perfect and pure.  
Our hearts become like this when our words use this cure -  
    "Confess your sins before Almighty God"  
Who promises to make dirty hearts whiter than snow,  
    whiter than the white lilies grow.

Lastly, our words can be a sweet prayer.  
Like a beautiful apple tree with blooms everywhere.  
Each blossom represents a thanksgiving or praise  
    as these sincere words to our God we raise.  
Apple blossoms dispense a sweet scent;  
And we've been assured that the prayer-words we've sent  
    are a holy fragrance to God in their ascent.

## BEGINNING A NEW DAY

Jesus calls, "Come closer.  
I've desired your daily presence all along.  
Share with Me your ups and downs.  
Let My arms surround you  
    for My love for you is strong.  
Then what sweetness to My listening ear  
    when I hear you say...  
"May I be pleasing in Your sight today."

## JOY! JOY! JOY!

A twinkle in the eye, a smile and a song,  
Joy bubbling in me  
    all the day long.

Why?  
Jesus loves me and I am forgiven,  
The Father looks after me  
    and I'm headed for heaven.  
I have a skip in my step,  
    a lilt in my voice.  
I am God's child, and I do rejoice.

A twinkle in the eye, a ready smile and a song,  
    unique characteristics of all who belong.  
Joy is the birthright of every believer.  
God's joy is my strength  
    and I'm the receiver.  
I need never be downcast nor blue  
For Jesus said, "May my joy be in you."

A twinkle in the eye, a smile and a song;  
Joy is contagious,  
Spread it around.  
Whistle while you work  
    and break into song.  
Soon there'll be others following along . . .  
. . . who have a twinkle in the eye, a ready smile and a song.

Our Colorful, Bright and Beautiful World .....	34
It's Harvest Time .....	35
Fourth of July .....	36
I Remember .....	37
The Original Thanksgiving .....	38
The Added Blessings .....	39
Trees in Winter .....	40
The First Christmas .....	41
Lying in a Manger .....	42
Mary Pondered These Things .....	43
Ordinary People .....	44
Just To Hear Your Voice! .....	45
The Subject of Time .....	46
Rejoice Anyway .....	47
When I Get Home .....	48

## Life at The Inn on Westport

Nests .....	51
My Picture Window .....	52
He Called My Name .....	53
Our Garden of Eden .....	54
Bible Study at City Lights .....	55
Knock - Knock .....	56
Rest Stops .....	57
Lunch Time at the Inn .....	58
We Need Fixers .....	59
Riding the Elevator .....	60
The Intercom .....	61
Surprise Pathways .....	62
Remodeling Jobs .....	63
Ring Those Bells .....	64
Leave the Driving to Us .....	65
Holding Hands .....	66
Sparkling Clean .....	67
He Who Has Ears to Hear, Let Him Hear! .....	68
Fishes .....	69

## Index

Our Words are Blossoms.....	1
Beginning a New Day .....	2
Joy! Joy! Joy! .....	2
Apple Blossom Time.....	3
Heartprints .....	4
Encouragers .....	5
Jesus' Invitation .....	6
God's Guidance .....	7
Hold On! Hold On! .....	8
Sing Your song .....	9
Consider the Hollyhocks .....	10
The Bended Knee .....	11
Clouds .....	12
I Want To Be Real.....	13
Daddy's Boy.....	14
Waiting Rooms .....	15
If Birds Could Talk .....	16
Press "One for This, "Two" for That .....	17
God Sees .....	18
Heavenly Catering .....	19
A Brand-New Christian .....	20
My Garment of Praise.....	20
Prayer Requests .....	21
Our Nest .....	21
Kisses From the King .....	22
Knitted Together.....	23
Wrinkles.....	24
Make a Joyful Noise! .....	25
He'll Walk With You .....	26
Rabbit Ears.....	27
Grandma's Kitchen Stove.....	28
Precious Letters .....	29
From Generation to Generation .....	30
Cookies from Generation to Generation .....	31
Once Upon a Time .....	32
Now is the Time .....	33

## APPLE BLOSSOM TIME

Oh, apple tree,  
You put on such a show  
    when Springtime comes.  
Dressed as a bride  
    attired in white,  
    covered with dainty blooms,  
    you are a lovely sight.  
Your beauty stirs me as I gaze.  
Have you heard my "oohs" and "aahs" of praise?  
The birds are chattering as they too applaud.  
We are admiring  
A masterpiece of God.

## HEARTPRINTS

I leave Fingerprints and Footprints...  
these I must erase...  
with Windex, mop and vacuum  
and tidy up our place.

Some other prints I'd like to make,  
so where I go today,  
Lord, may I spread some HEARTPRINTS  
and brighten someone's day.

There is a tear-stained cheek somewhere  
that needs a little kiss.  
Someone would like a listener  
to hear those trials of his.

Of smiles, I have a good supply  
that I can pass around.  
What fun to get one in return,  
a face changed from a frown.

I know someone would like some mail,  
so I will buy a card.  
There are some folks who need a hug;  
'cause life for them is hard.

A pat on the back for a youngster,  
some cheer for a lonely one,  
encourage someone who's downcast.  
There's so much to be done.

Dear Lord, I need a big supply of love,  
and teach me what to say,  
so today I may leave a long, long trail  
of HEARTPRINTS along the way.

## FISHES

"Down in a meadow in a little bitty pool,  
Swam three little fishes, and a mama fishie too.  
Boop, boop, dit-tem, dat-um, what-um a chu."

This was a song from the late thirties and forties, but I heard it again last week. This song describes what we have here at the Inn – "Little-bitty fishes in little bitty pools." It is one of the things that gives our atrium its outdoor flavor.

The fishes here aren't big enough to attract fishermen, but they are beautiful – gold, silver and white – and they are a great attraction to children who visit here. We found that out a couple of weeks ago when our 2 year old great-grandson who had visited here several times had become enthralled with the fish. When he saw us, instead of a "hello", he addressed us as "fish". He connects us with the fish here at the Inn.

Fish have been used as a symbol or sign of Christian faith. It was a type of password during the times of persecution of the Early Church. This Christian fish symbol usually is just two simple curved lines. It is said that during the persecution of the Early Church a Christian meeting someone new would draw a single arc in the sand. If the other were a Christian, he or she would complete the symbol with a reverse arc, forming the outline of a fish. When threatened by Rome in the first centuries, they used the fish symbol to mark meeting places. They chose fish as their symbol because Jesus' ministry was associated with fish; He chose several fishermen to be His disciples and declared He would make them "fishers of men". Jesus hosted several gatherings when He was here on earth and had fish on the menu – "feeding the 5000" with loaves and fishes, and serving a fish breakfast on the beach for His disciples before He returned to heaven.

Jesus is still giving the same "fish message" today. Now He gives it to us: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

## HE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR!

"Eh?" "What did you say?"

There is an affliction that the majority of residents at the Inn have to put up with. That is being hard of hearing. Some of us have it worse than others. We need a lot of repeating and "Speak a little louder, please."

Many have hearing aids, which improve the problem, but to some these are not even much help.

We notice how patient the servers are with some of the harder of hearing. They must repeat and repeat before their food order is finally placed. The hard of hearing also have difficulty visiting with others. They miss the pleasure of conversing, and the blessing of getting acquainted with others. Misunderstanding words, or missing part of a conversation doesn't make for good visiting. Background noises often drown out what the person you are speaking with is saying. This affliction can be inherited, or it can come upon farmers or others who lived with loud noises.

The ear is a delicate instrument and many times in the Bible we are instructed to use our ears to listen. "He who has ears, let him hear." Jesus quoted it many times. It doesn't just mean to listen with the ear that is on each side of your head. It means to listen with your heart. We find this statement in the Old Testament too, and many places in the Book of Revelation.

In Psalm 40:6 it says, "But my ears you have pierced (or opened)." It refers to ears made able and eager to hear God's Law. Sometimes it is described as "dig out my ears". Even as wax and dirt interfere with our regular hearing, so our spiritual ears need to be cleaned of obstacles that interfere with our listening and obeying God's Word.

So Listen! Put in a new hearing aid battery and turn up the volume so you can get the messages God has for you.

## ENCOURAGERS

"You can do it!" she said.  
Her words made me try.  
She was my encourager, my long ago friend.  
I think these are people that God does send.  
As I look back now I can see  
how valuable encouragers can be.  
God often uses them to shape our lives  
so God's blueprint for us survives.

Each one of us has been given a voice  
to encourage or criticize; we have a choice.  
All people need encouragement, no matter their age –  
"Big Girl" motivates a two year old,  
"a pat on the back", the youth stage.

Encouragement gives us confidence as we walk along.  
It stirs up a vision of what we can be.  
Just look in the Bible and you will see  
Paul encouraging his friend Timothy.  
"My son," he said, "be strong in Christ's grace."  
This is advice we can also embrace.

## JESUS' INVITATION

Come, share the road with Me.  
I'd love to have your company.  
The new year's path you do not know  
so take My hand and I will show  
the adventures God has planned for you.

We'll take the road that's gently winding  
where each day new joys we'll be finding.  
When the road is steep and rough,  
My guidance and strength will be enough.

Often signposts we will see. A *Detour*, I tell you, will only be  
a *scenic route* when you're with Me.  
We may encounter fog but perchance  
When the clouds lift you'll see the significance  
of His plan.

The road winds uphill all the way.  
You'll get closer to Heaven every day.  
So come, and share the road with Me.  
We'd have such sweet camaraderie.

## SPARKLING CLEAN

An annual event takes place when winter is over. It is called Spring Housecleaning. Our mothers did it, and our grandmothers did it, but in these modern times it has been simplified. No longer do we hang the carpet out and beat it, or take down all the curtains and wash them. But one part of spring housecleaning is still with us - the washing of the windows!

Here at the Inn with all of its windows, it was a big project. Window washing specialists were called in because of the height of some of our windows. Washing windows on the first floor was simple, the second floor wasn't too difficult, but when window-washing is to be done on the third floor, you are working at dangerous heights. In fact, the window washer climbed up a ladder to a height high enough for a circus performer to begin his tight-rope walking act.... but this man was there to work!

With a swish of a wet cloth, and a quick once-over with the squeegee, the worker quickly had the window panes clean, and I was happy to see the dirty spot I had been looking at all winter no longer there. The next day other workers came and washed the windows on the inside. Now I look at my world through sparkling clean windowpanes.

The Psalmist had a desire for something to be made clean also. He prayed "Create in me a "clean heart." Our hearts get soiled from many things, like selfishness, resentments, unkind words and thoughts, plus a multitude of other wrongs.

Our windows don't need washing every day, but our hearts do. It is wise each night before we close our eyes to talk to God. "If I have walked in my own willful way today, please forgive." And God is faithful to forgive and wash our hearts sparkling clean.

The housewife feels pride when her windows are sparkling clean, but how much greater is the wonderful feeling of peace with God as we close our day with a sparkling clean heart.

## HOLDING HANDS

When walking down the halls here in the Inn we meet other residents. From time to time we come across couples walking side by side. As we take a second look, we notice that the lady has her hand in his. They are holding hands.

It is a beautiful picture – two gray and white-haired seniors walking hand in hand, looking contented with their life now. Their time together may cover fifty, sixty or more years. Now they may need one another even more than in their younger days. One may carry a cane, but they hold hands, showing that they are still there for one another. Now they treasure each day they can walk together down the halls hand in hand. Now holding hands is an act of love for them. This scene speaks of togetherness. Each couple has its own story - the experiences they have gone through together. They may have had their share of difficulties, and even some sad times, but most likely they have loads of memories of the happy events they have enjoyed together.

Have you ever realized that God is in the hand-holding business? The Psalmist writes in Psalm 73:23, "Yet I am always with You; You hold me by my right hand." There is no time when we are alone; He is there 24/7. God's hand is mighty and strong yet gentle and loving. Our hand may be weak and small, but He offers His children help, and comfort, strength and companionship. How great that He is our Father and cares for us.

There is a story behind this also as our Heavenly Father reminds us of our experiences with Him.

"Remember when life was so difficult for you?

I was there holding your hand."

"Remember when you were afraid?

I was holding your right hand"

"And when you were very ill, I was there then."

"In fact, I have held your hand and led you all the way, and I'll continue to hold unto your hand, and guide you all the way Home!"

## GOD'S GUIDANCE

The swallows, dressed in their formal attire  
perched every day on our electric wire.  
We would observe "swallow-tails" all in a row  
as daily they checked out the world below.

Today the electric wire is bare.  
I presume these swallows have moved elsewhere.  
God must have whispered, "Birdies, now is the time  
for you to move South to a warmer clime."  
They relied on His guidance, without GPS they will go.  
God reminded them they weren't made for snow.

What if swallows one fall had a hankering to see  
the East or the West, what a tragedy that would be!  
But birds are wiser than you and I.  
They trust God's guidance while we question "Why?"

Birds can teach us a lesson, and God's Word will show  
God knows the best way for birds and people to go.  
Have you heard Him whisper? "With mine eye I will guide Thee.  
All the way Home I'll be there beside Thee."

Amen

## HOLD ON! HOLD ON!

Little green apples hanging on the tree,  
each one of you is a "possibility".  
Someday you'll grow larger and sweet  
and be a delight for someone to eat.  
But be sure to hold tight to the branch you are on  
for that's how you'll grow and get kissed by the sun.

Hold on! Hold on! Or else when storms blow  
down you will tumble to the ground below.  
Little green apples, hold on! Hold on!  
For you want to be larger and juicy and sweet  
A rosy red specimen for someone to eat.

"Hold on! Hold on!" God says to you.  
"Hold on to the Vine that's what you must do."  
"My child, you are my "possibility", my design,  
but it's necessary that you hold unto the Vine."  
When the storms come, hold tight to Christ's Hand.  
Walk close to your Lord, and then you will stand.

He'll shape you and change you to His design  
as He perfects little green apples with sunshine.  
"Hold on! Hold on!" Let God take control.  
Following His blueprint should be our goal.  
Someday we will see - if to Him we cling -  
That He makes "possibilities" a "sure thing!"

## LEAVE THE DRIVING TO US

According to the dictionary, the word "chauffeur" is defined as "One whose work is the operation of a motor vehicle." Here at the Inn, we have two vans for resident transportation, which deliver us to our doctor appointments, shopping, or other trips. Our "Inn chauffeurs" are special persons, and if I tried to describe them, I must add a lot to the dictionary's description, like "one who is caring, careful, helpful and knowledgeable".

We only need to tell them where we want to go and they are acquainted with the city and know the way and they will deliver us right to that front door.

I've seen them carry packages for some residents with special needs, and buckled seat belts for some. They stand by the door to gently hold our arm and steady us as we take the step off the van. We feel safe and enjoy the trip when our Inn chauffeurs are behind the wheel. And they always get us back "home" safe and sound.

We need Someone behind the wheel for our individual life journeys too. Some people say, "Jesus is my co-pilot", but I don't agree with that! I want Him "behind the wheel", not as co-pilot!

There is no GPS that can guide us on our future way, but Jesus knows the best route for us. He can bring us safely through difficult situations. However, sometimes we want to be "backseat drivers" and tell Him "I don't want to go that way!", or yell at Him to "Turn Here!". But we know that He is the wisest and the Only Way, so we are wise to surrender the steering wheel of our life to Him, for He has promised to bring us safely "Home" at the end of our life's journey. Plus He is such wonderful company on the way!

## RING THOSE BELLS!

One of the activities in the atrium at the Inn on Wednesday nights is the performing of the Bell Choir. The participants are not professional, nor are they accomplished musicians. Most of us can't even read music. You might say we are taking "Bell Ringing 101". The only requirement for membership is to recognize colors. There are green bells, peach bells, yellow bells, purple bells and two shades each of red bells and blue bells. The sheet music is in color also.

What is needed is a conductor or director who can direct the performing or execution of melodies from these colored bells. And we have one who is enthusiastic and on his toes! As we watch our director, and follow the designated colors he displays on the sheet music, it is almost startling and unbelievable to be able to hear and recognize hymns and tunes as they come out of the ringing of our bells.

The purpose of this Bell Choir is to praise God with songs and hymns. The Bible in Psalm 150 says God should be praised with the whole orchestra – wind, string, and percussion, but it doesn't mention any bells. Our repertoire includes "Abide with Me", "Jesus Loves Me", "Ave Maria", and "Edelweiss", to name a few, and then our theme song "In the Garden", which is our favorite and the final number every week.

It was difficult to find the word "bells" in the Bible, except in Zechariah 14:20 where it says, "On that day "HOLY TO THE LORD" will be inscribed on the bells of the horses". It implies that in a future date all things, even the most common, shall be sacred to the Lord. Perhaps in that day the bells on the horses will be as melodious as ours, ringing forth notes of praise.

## SING YOUR SONG

In the country away from city noises  
I could hear the birdies' voices.  
Perched in the trees here and there,  
I declare what I was hearing  
was an opera that these birds were singing.

First, the prima donna's solo reached my ear;  
Then a pleasing duet came in loud and clear.  
All of a sudden a mixed chorus could be heard.  
Did you know God gave a different song to every bird?

God also gave to each of us a song -  
It's what He created you and I to be,  
our talents, tender hearts and personality.  
We are His workmanship made with His plan -  
to be a blessing to our fellow man.

Each person's song is beautiful.  
But what good a song if it's not sung?  
Oh, Lord, tune our hearts  
to sing our assigned parts  
and be vocal alleluias of your love.

## CONSIDER THE HOLLYHOCKS

Hollyhocks are an old-fashioned flower. Grandma had them, and we grew up with them. Back then almost every farm and house had these majestic and proud blooms. They brightened the corners where they blossomed, and they grew by living room windows so we could look out and enjoy them. Their flowers were like smiling faces that brought cheer to us.

Then hollyhocks began to go out of style. People wanted more sophisticated flowers like delphiniums and roses. Forty years ago we also got rid of our hollyhock bed and planted some bushes, but we have had a hard time forgetting about those dramatic spires that left a burst of color in our yards.

Last spring when the perennials began popping through the earth I discovered some strange leaves. Were they weeds? No, they looked familiar – like hollyhock leaves! These grew into two tall stalks, and when the buds opened, behold God had clothed them in pretty pink garments with dark rose throats. They were hollyhocks growing where they had bloomed forty years ago. This year six stalks arose and now they are all blooming. Bees are happily buzzing and darting in and out. There is beauty in the hollyhock flowers as they are borne in a long succession up tall stems. They grow on the south side of the house and their cheerful smiling faces peek in the living room window.

Consider the hollyhocks; they labor not, neither do they spin. In fact, our two hollyhock seeds had been asleep for forty years when God awakened them and made them grow; then He clothed them in pretty pink garments and gave them cheerful smiley faces.

Jesus said, "If your Heavenly Father so beautifully clothes the flowers and takes care of them, how much more will He meet your needs?" We are but to trust Him and not worry.... and when we are trusting Him we will have cheerful smiling faces also!

## REMODELING JOBS

NO ENTRANCE! NO ENTRANCE! There is only one opening to the dining room and it is the long way around. Now the dining room at the Inn is crowded, and sometimes it is difficult to navigate between the tables.

WE ARE REMODELING THE INN DINING ROOM! Some tables have been moved into the atrium, and this is the pleasure part of this remodeling process. It is delightful to dine in there in "The Garden of Eatin'!"

Those in charge made the plan and then turned it over to the carpenters and other workers. These men are working out the plan. The result is hammering, sawing, tearing out old parts and rebuilding new. Those who have seen the plan say it will be beautiful when it is finished, and be well worth the wait! But such a big job cannot be done overnight and we are patiently waiting to see our new attractive dining room.

When we came to Jesus just as we were, we all needed a remodeling job. Before we were born God had a plan for each of us - the way He wanted to use our lives to bring glory to Himself. There needs to be some hammering, tearing out old things and rebuilding new, changes in our attitudes, ideas and goals, and decorating our lives with love and unselfishness. We realize we can't do this remodeling job by ourselves, so we pray David's prayer in Psalm 139: 23,24 -

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be a wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Good News! We have a helper. Philippians 1:6 says "God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure He will continue until it is finished." This remodeling job will be slow too. It will last a lifetime. He has the plan. It says He will continue until it's finished.

That's a promise, and we look forward to the beautiful results on the day we face our Heavenly Father.

## SURPRISE PATHWAYS

"Your road led by a pathway through the sea – a pathway no one knew was there!" Ps 77:19

It sometimes takes a while to discover how to get around in a new residence. Or even to know which direction is north and south, or east and west. For example, we found a pathway that we didn't know was there!

Our car is parked in the outside garage, and it was a long walk to get to the car in the cold weather. One day we discovered that right across the road from our car was a back door into the Inn. Inside was the long hall that led up to the front of the Inn. There we could get on the front elevator and at the 3rd floor walk down another long hall. We did this three or four times, sometimes loaded with packages, and it was a long walk. One day we found a shortcut that took us to another elevator and shorter halls and saved us so many steps. We had lived here for three months and we had never been that way before. We didn't even know it was there!

It reminds me of the Israelites when they left Egypt and came to the Red Sea, a dead end. But God could see what they couldn't see. He made a pathway through the sea – a pathway no one knew was there! Just like we didn't know about the shortcut that was here. And He made a path for them so they walked across on dry ground! God already knows what lies ahead on our pathways, and He can make a way when there is no way.

Sometimes we are faced with obstacles, but God can see a path that we know nothing about. God has a purpose for the paths He chooses for us. If we trust Him, even when we don't see a way, He will make a way for us. And we might be surprised at what great things He does along the way.

## THE BENDED KNEE

O Lord, Your wisdom is beyond our understanding.  
The details of Your creating leave us speechless.  
How wonderful that you watch over both man and birds  
both night and day.  
And You have a lesson for us from sleeping birds.

To us it is a mystery – How can birds "sleep" on their perch, never falling down?  
It shows Your ingenuity in creation.  
When we go to sleep in a chair, soon our heads are nodding  
and our newspaper is dropping.

But the bird's secret is the tendons You created in the bird's leg.  
When it is bent at the knee, the bird's claws contract  
and grip their perch like a steel trap.  
It's the bended knee that gives the bird the ability  
to hold to its perch so tightly.

The word "*bended knee*" reminds us of prayer.  
You've created us with a "prayer tendon"  
that connects us to You.

Each time we bend our knee in prayer  
we can be assured You are holding us tight.  
We are perched in Your Presence, and everything will  
be all right.

Thank you for this "bended knee principle" that is a blessing  
both to birds, and to us,  
*Your children.*

## CLOUDS

It is a lovely day in May.  
The sky is bluest blue.  
The sun is shining on our world.  
Our spirits are sunshiny too.  
Against the blue background overhead  
God decorated the sky with clouds o'erspread -  
    white ones, fluffy ones,  
    every shape and size.  
These clouds slowly move and rearrange  
    right before our eyes.

Some day we'll fly up with the clouds.  
What a day that will be!  
The Bible tells about a cloud,  
    a very special one -  
Riding on this cloud will be the Father's Son.  
No one knows the time or hour  
He will come in great glory and power.

This cloud will be where Jesus meets  
    the multitude of His loved ones here,  
and takes them to the Home He has gone to prepare.  
There'll be no waiting on the tarmac.  
It'll all happen in a wink.  
And we'll see resurrected miracles.  
It'll be more wonderful than you think.  
    *And we'll be there.*

Today the clouds are just a decoration,  
but that day a cloud will be part  
    of the great Resurrection -  
    *That Grand Reunion in the air!*

## THE INTERCOM

The Inn's Intercom always has something to remind us.  
    Into our rooms its loud voice finds us.  
It first informs in a sunshiney way.....,  
    "Today is Thursday, the twenty-ninth day";  
    and the voice announces a coming event.  
Throughout the day these messages are sent.

The sound of the intercom is loud and so clear.  
Sure, we have heard what is scheduled here,  
    but as time passes, things slip from our mind,  
    so the Inn's Intercom is used "to remind".

If God's messages came to us as loud and as clear  
    as the Inn's intercom,  
    do you think we would hear?  
In His Word God reminds us what He wants us to do,  
    but often His message doesn't get through.

There's a button on the intercom that we can press  
    if we have problems or are in distress.  
We're happy the Inn's Intercom works these two ways:  
    First, it gives us its messages,  
    then someone hears the needs that we face.

This last process kind of reminds me of prayer.  
When we share with God our needs and our cares,  
there's Someone listening who will answer our cry  
and in love says,  
    "I'm with you and your needs I'll supply."

## RIDING THE ELEVATOR

Up and down, and Down and up.  
It's the Inn's main means of transportation.  
Just press the number 1, 2, 3, and shortly you're at your  
destination.

Sometimes we meet a neighbor aboard, but the time  
to chat is short.  
Just "Good Morning! How are you?" No time for a report.  
Just think how we would huff and puff  
if we must take the stairs.  
And all of those with walkers, - an impossibility of theirs.

Sometimes we press the button and then to our surprise  
the door flies open right away.  
It's like the elevator's wise,  
and knows that I am standing there,  
just waiting for a ride.

Often that's the way with prayer;  
We tell God of our need  
And hardly have we said "Amen"  
when the answer comes with speed.  
Jesus says, "I knew all about it  
but I waited for you to ask."

Often when the elevator's up and I am waiting down.  
I press the elevator button but I believe it's "out of town".  
Soon others join me and we wait.  
Patience is a comely trait.  
The elevator has other stops, that's why,  
and it'll be here by and by.

It's sometimes like that with our prayers;  
We pray and no response.  
We tell God we can't understand.  
He says. "My Dear One, I have got it planned.  
I know what is best for you,  
And the answer will be coming through  
.....in My Time."

## I WANT TO BE REAL

The bouquet looked lovely from a distance,  
but when I touched it, I could feel  
it was not real.

It was just an imitation of a flower.  
These buds will never open,  
this flower will never grow,  
and it has no scent.

Oh Lord, I do not want to be an artificial flower –  
someone who just goes through the motions,  
whose heart is not in it.

I want to be real with You.

Dear Master Gardener, with Your green thumb  
plant me,  
water me,  
and prune me, if necessary.

I want to grow and have blossoms that  
give off Your delightful perfume.  
As You care for me, and I spread Your fragrance,  
people will say,

*"What a wonderful Master Gardener!"*  
This will only happen if my heart is real with You.

## DADDY'S BOY

I asked the little fellow,  
    "Tell me, sonny, what's your name?"  
The little fellow said with joy,  
    "I'm my Daddy's boy."

He was probably three or four.  
He knew who he was, and to whom he belonged.  
"I have a good Daddy and he's big and strong;  
    And I'm my Daddy's boy!"

He knew his Daddy loved him;  
    that his Daddy's lap was his.  
Walking hand-in-hand with Dad,  
    that was childhood bliss.

Dear Lord,  
Like the little fellow, I too can say with joy,  
    "*I am my Father's child,*"  
    a relationship I enjoy.  
My Heavenly Father loves me and cares for me each day,  
And comforts me by whispering, "Everything will be okay."

## WE NEED FIXERS

As long as we live on this earth, we have found that  
    things break, wear out, and need to be fixed.  
We have talented fixers here at the Inn  
    who solve our problems with a grin.

The smoke alarm begins to beep.  
    Call Mr. Fix-it.  
He arrives with a battery so we can again sleep.  
The air conditioning is on the blink.  
    Call Mr. Fix-it.  
And quick as a wink  
    he arrives with his cart with ladder, and tools ...  
    and after a while our apartment cools.

There are always small and nuisance things that go wrong.  
    Burned-out night lights, plumbing, needed things that  
belong.  
    Call Mr. Fix-it.  
We are thankful for our Mr. Fix-its for when they begin  
    things keep running smoothly here at the Inn.

We know some things are beyond human fixing,  
    especially the rift between God and man.  
We are thankful for the One who can fix it,  
    and He's the only One who can.  
Our Fixer and Savior is Jesus so we pray  
for He is waiting to help us in every way:  
    "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.  
    Who healeth all thy diseases.  
    Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.  
    Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and  
    tender mercies.  
    Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things so  
    that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."  
He is the answer and He'll make us whole.  
    "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

## LUNCH TIME AT THE INN

Lunch time at the Inn. Tables all set for us to begin.  
Sounds of shuffling as walkers are parked.  
Now and then we hear some hard-of-hearing's loud remark.  
Then the sound of ice cubes clinking in the glasses,  
and hear coffee drinkers eye the coffee pot with "Please  
Passes!"

Waitresses in long black aprons and white shirts  
consult us about our entrees and desserts.

Around the tables strangers become friends,  
and residents from far and near seem to blend.  
Fellowship becomes more important than food;  
eating with a person shows acceptance and a loving attitude.

We learned in our high chair days that if we cleaned our plates,  
a dessert would be the reward that waits.  
Even though we left high chair days long ago, still we anticipate  
a dessert at the end to make the meal great.

God, You have given us a holy appetite for You,  
and promised sweet blessings our whole life through.  
"O Taste and see that the Lord is good;"  
He generously offers us spiritual food,  
"Happy are those who take refuge in Him;"  
and tasty is the person's cup that He fills to the brim.

## WAITING ROOMS

Waiting rooms are strange places –  
rooms full of people with concerned faces.  
Here you sit and thumb through last year's magazines  
while you wait for the person with the clipboard  
to appear,  
and call out your name loud and clear.

Waiting is not a favorite thing to do.  
We are an "instant" society who  
can't bear to wait for anything.  
A supply of patience the Lord must bring  
when I am overwhelmed with waiting.

God also has a Waiting Room. Have you been there  
patiently waiting for an answer to a prayer?  
Perhaps it was a loved one's salvation you prayed for,  
or you asked God your health to restore.

Whatever the prayer that's unanswered,  
don't give up. Of this you can be assured.  
God has been listening. Your prayers have been heard.  
You can trust the One who works the answer through.  
He knows the best time to reveal His solution to you.

## IF BIRDS COULD TALK

The robin on the lawn  
was a handsome bird.  
So self-assured.

With a characteristic hop,  
he bent to grab an insect from the grass.  
Then paused and stood erect,  
a stately form in his formal best,  
his dark tuxedo with the rust-colored vest.

This confident bird a message sent,  
"You can see that I'm content.  
God made me a robin;  
I'm His design.  
And a happier robin you'll never find."

"But you humans, I hear you grumble a lot,  
always complaining about what you're not.  
Not satisfied with who you are,  
forgetting you're God's crowning glory by far.  
So hold your head high,  
you're His special creation,  
with even a close "Father-child" relation.  
And the fact that He loves you, what joy that should bring,  
what daily contentment and worshipping."

## REST STOPS

Along the long hallways at the Inn, you will notice  
benches stationed here and there. These are there for a  
purpose. If these benches could talk to you as you pass by, they  
might invite, "You look tired, come and sit and rest a bit."

Different residents have different problems and pains  
which can be lightened by just sitting a bit. To someone they  
might say, "You've walked too far, and your knee is hurting, sit  
down and rest your legs a bit."

They might notice you are out of breath, and say, "You're  
welcome here.. Rest a bit. And catch your breath!"

When you come with a load of packages and it is a long  
way from the elevator to your room, and you don't think you  
can take another step, the bench invites, "Lay down your load  
for a little while and get rested. A short break can recharge you  
and then you can continue on."

Most of these benches are painted a pale green and  
have lovely padded cushions. Very inviting! There also are  
big comfortable leather chairs situated here and there. These  
benches and chairs are meant to be rest stops along our way  
each day. They are needed because the residents here don't  
have the pep and energy of their youth anymore.

There are also benches situated on both the second and  
third floors over-looking the atrium. Balcony seats! You can sit  
here and visit, or listen to a concert or program in the atrium, or  
just sit and relax!

Jesus gives the same invitation, "Come unto me, all  
you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."  
Got worries? Tired? Heavy burdens? Jesus wants to be your  
rest stop. Just being with Him is comforting, refreshing, and  
a wonderful fellowship, plus He gives renewed energy. And  
besides, He loves you!

## KNOCK - KNOCK

"Knock-knock"! Someone's at the door! We opened it to see two old friends standing there. How happy we were to see them again.

"Come on in! What a wonderful surprise!" Next come hugs and we pull up some chairs, and begin our visit.

What fellowship we have. We tell each other what has been happening in our lives, and we share photos of our families, and as we turn the pages of our large photo album, comments are made. Our friends have to check out our apartment and they tell us we made a good choice.

It was such a good warm feeling just being together again, and the afternoon flew by. "You must stay for dinner", we say, and we make arrangements.

After they leave we converse about what an enjoyable day we had had. "I'm so glad we were here so we could answer their knock!"

Did you know that Someone has been knocking at your heart's door?

"Knock, Knock!" Did you hear Him? You will have a wonderful future if you open the door.

Revelation 3:20 "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

## PRESS "ONE" FOR THIS, "TWO" FOR THAT

Using the telephone can often be complicated.

It's difficult to get a real person on the line  
now that business calls are automated.

Press "one" for this or "two" for that,

keep trying till you get a person who will chat.

This isn't the end of problems, for then we are told,

"I'm sorry all operators are busy, just hold."

That's when the music starts, and on and on it goes,  
and soon I become tired of holding this uncomfortable pose.

With the receiver still to my ear,

and an aching arm, I finally hear

.....a real person.

I remember in the distant past,

I'd just dial a number, and my business was completed fast.

Those were the days!

I'm glad our Heavenly Father doesn't use a phone.

He says, "Just call and I will answer thee,"

and announces, "Here I am!"

So as I start my day,

and open my heart to Him and pray,

He dispenses my sins as the morning dew,

and directs my way the whole day through.

In fact, He knows my needs before I call

and deals with my problems, big and small.

It isn't hard to reach Him,

`cause He hears each sigh, each sob.

We have such good connections -

No "press one", or "press two" when I talk to God.

## GOD SEES

Nothing is hidden from His sight –  
the good, the bad; the wrong, the right.  
my thoughts, my deeds,  
my wants, my needs.

GOD SEES.....  
each deed of kindness done,  
He's pleased as He looks on  
and it is written in His book.

GOD SEES.....  
when my heart breaks or I'm in pain  
and He cares.  
Into His bottle goes each tear  
and in His book it will appear.

GOD SEES.....  
each sin when I transgress  
and on the pages it is writ.  
HE also SEES when I confess  
and from His book wipes out the mess.

GOD SEES.....  
my heart. Is it sincere?  
Heavenly Father,  
make Your residence there.

God's book contains my whole life story.  
One day when I enter glory  
and God opens up His book,  
if He lets me take a look,  
may the final entry commend,  
"She was faithful to the end."

*References – Malachi 3:16, Jer. 32:19, Ps. 56:8, I John 1:9,  
John 14:23, Rev. 2:10*

## BIBLE STUDY AT CITY LIGHTS

A breakfast meal at the Inn isn't sufficient on Tuesday mornings. Oatmeal may fill us up, but on Tuesdays oatmeal and toast and jelly isn't enough because we have another kind of hunger.

We come to City Lights with our Bibles and crave the sweetness of God's Word the Psalmist talks about in Psalm 119:103. We come with a prayer in our hearts "Teach me Your ways so I may know you, Heavenly Father".

As we look around the room, we feel a bond with each other for we realize that each person came here with the same goal – "to spend an hour around God's Word." We are fortunate to have a leader who has tasted the sweetness of God's Word and is anxious to share these truths with us. Then it is up to us to receive it.

Jeremiah of old said in Jeremiah 15:16, "When Your Words came, I ate them." That is the food we are looking for also. This is a process. It means I digested them. Like eating food, I assimilate them and I make them a part of me. All Scripture is God-breathed and this Word gives us strength, and fills us with hope and love.

How blessed if we can conclude this verse as Jeremiah did – "*They (these Words) were my joy and my heart's delight*".

## OUR GARDEN OF EDEN

Tulips and daffodils! The appearance of these bright blossoms in the atrium remind us that Spring is here, even though these blossoms are only props. However, now it is time for the real tulips and daffodils to open up everywhere.

We admire our atrium with its birch trees, birds and fish. It has been called our "Garden of Eden", a place to enjoy an outdoor atmosphere.

Do you suppose there were tulips and daffodils blooming in the garden God made for Adam and Eve long ago? I think it must have been the ultimate greenhouse, with a sample of every variety and color of flower. How beautiful it must have been! You could have seen hollyhocks, peonies, lilacs and roses, and probably lots of petunias blooming along the paths where Adam and Eve walked with God everyday.

I haven't seen an apple tree in our atrium, but if it was an apple that Eve craved, do you suppose this tree had earlier been covered with dainty apple blossoms?

The world changed after Adam and Eve lunched on that apple. Time has passed but God hasn't forgotten us today, and He blesses us now with a beautiful world of flowers and birds, and He still likes to walk with us each day. He loved Adam and Eve, and He loves us, and He gives us a refreshing Springtime every year.

"See! The winter is past;  
The rains (snows) are over and gone.  
Flowers appear on the earth;  
the season of singing has come,  
the cooing of doves is heard in our land."

Song of Songs 2:11.12

Remember the heartwarming story of the lad with his lunch of loaves and fishes? I wonder what happened when the little boy came home and told his mom. How amazed she must have been when she realized that the little lunch she had prepared that morning fed over 5000 people.

## HEAVENLY CATERING

My son felt blessed as he saw his lunch  
distributed to the hillside bunch.

And then it dawned on me.....

I too had had a part.

Preparing his lunch that morning was the start  
of this miracle.

It was poor man's barley bread  
and pickled fishes,

But to hungry stomachs it was probably delicious.

It was Jesus' prayer and blessing on the food  
that brought heavenly catering to this multitude.

I'm proud he shared.

And now I know...

when there's a need  
and you wish to be blessed,  
give your all to Jesus  
and He'll do the rest.

## A BRAND-NAME CHRISTIAN

Jesus, I don't want to be a Generic Christian,  
a believer who settles for a cheap faith.  
With just a passable Christianity,  
and minimal involvement.  
A substitute for the real thing,  
with only a so-so allegiance to You;  
The lukewarm kind that displeases You.

Show me how to have a fervent faith.  
I am determined rather to spend more –  
whatever the cost in sacrifice, surrender and obedience,  
to purchase a brand of belief as a follower of Yours.

Show me the way to be a Brand Name Christian,  
that makes me want to be like You.  
Daring to be different,  
And faithfully trusting in and enthusiastically following  
the plan God has for my life,  
a Brand Name Christian, patented in Your name, dear Jesus.

## MY GARMENT OF PRAISE

God, this morning Your sun arose at the exact minute set for it,  
and now has lightened up Your world.  
Today the grass is covered with diamonded dew,  
And all the birds are singing their brightest morning songs  
to You.  
I heard the trees whispering; was it a prayer, or was it praise?

In the flower bed the black-eyed Susan turned up her face  
and I am sure that she gave You a smile.  
The rose in full bloom sent her fragrance heavenward while  
Your creation has praised You already today,  
each in its own way.

And I am ready too, Lord, to put on my garment of praise,  
for lo, my heart is full of thanksgiving these days.  
I stand in awe that You love me and so I bend my knee,  
and join with my voice to give praise to Thee!  
"Glory be to You, God of all creation!"

## HE CALLED MY NAME

Twice a day everyone heads for the Inn dining room.  
Time to eat! It is there that a number of servers wait on us. The  
first few weeks we were here we knew the names of only a few  
people, and I didn't think many knew us. What a surprise when  
our server came to our table and called us by our first names!  
And each day I was impressed as I noticed most of the servers  
knew the first names of all the residents there, and there are a  
number of us!

Being called by your first name makes you feel special.  
Usually it's only the people nearest to you - your parents,  
friends and relatives- the ones who care the most for you, with  
whom you are on a first-name basis.

I must say these servers are extra-special people.  
They call us by name. They don't just bring in our food. I have  
watched the patience they have with the many residents who  
are hard of hearing, and as we put in our food order, they  
remember each resident's favorite beverage. "Would you like  
your hot tea?" "or your 2% milk? or lemonade?"

They care about us.

There is Someone else who knows you and me by our  
first names. And He cares about us. He really cares! I remember  
how excited I was the first time I read Isaiah 43:1.

"Fear not, I have redeemed you;  
I HAVE CALLED YOU BY NAME,  
and you are Mine."

To know God calls me by my first name, and wants me to be  
His. That's wonderful news! All I can answer is "YES! YES!"

## MY PICTURE WINDOW

An ever-changing piece of art is framed by our living  
room window  
The picture in this picture frame changes day by day.  
God is the remarkable artist who chooses the subjects  
to display,  
and arranges the colors in His creative way.

Last fall we admired the brilliant colors in the woods.  
As time passed, we viewed winter scenes from our  
neighborhood  
Then Spring made a green jungle where our bare  
trees stood.

To my surprise, last week God added an animal to His art.  
A lone deer stood by the woods like a statue in the park.  
What an artistic production!  
But I'll tell you what I think;  
I believe this deer was looking for a drink.

The Psalmist wrote about a thirsty deer  
that was panting for a drink.  
This made the Psalmist think  
that he was thirsty too.  
This is also what our thirsty souls pursue,  
--an intense longing for the God the Psalmist knew.

Now each morning as we raise the shade,  
We are anxious to see what piece of art God has made  
for our picture window.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

Dear Lord, today as I was making my grocery list  
I was reminded of some of my prayers.  
Oftentimes I present You with a list of "Give me this",  
and "Please do that",  
and expect You to quickly fill my order.  
Forgive me, Lord!  
This isn't prayer.  
I desire a sweet communion with You –  
not give You a heavenly shopping list.  
You invite us to cast our burdens on You,  
and this I do.  
But You also await my thanksgiving and praise.  
Help me to advance in the School of Prayer  
by changing my ways,  
so I can pray .....

"Lord, what would You like to show me?"  
"Lord, what would You like to teach me?"  
and "Lord, what would you like to make of me?"

Amen

## OUR NEST

The swallows build their nests in the niches of God's House.  
Here they are in God's Presence  
And sing their praises;  
And He watches over them.  
But I'm not envious of birds,  
Because God also is present in our nest.  
He said, "My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest."  
And from our nest we too can sing His praises.  
He watches over the birds,  
But we are His children  
and He will never forsake His children in their nest.

According to rabbinical tradition, a kiss from God is a living word of prophecy. Have you ever had the experience of a verse from the Bible jumping off the page at you, and knowing that it was a word from God to you? If so, you've been kissed by the King.

God also shows us His love in other ways: a sunrise or sunset, beautiful flowers, a bird's song, a friend, a newborn baby, a lovely song and whatever God has made happen to please you.

### **KISSES FROM THE KING**

They come on wings,  
    when least expected,  
Butterfly moments designed for me,  
    ...a glorious sunset, an answered prayer.  
    the joy of knowing that He is there.  
And when I offer my heartfelt praise  
    He whispers to me this loving phrase....  
    ..."IT'S BECAUSE I LOVE YOU."  
Blessed kisses from the King,  
    I treasure them more than anything.

### **NESTS**

High up in the tree two busy little birds are working on a project. It's Spring and the birds are back from the South and it's time to build a nest. Back and forth from the ground to the branch they fly. Time and time again they come up with pieces of recycled things: a string, tiny twigs, a bit of mud and dried grasses. These birds seem to know how to weave the bits and pieces together into a decent-looking nest. When it's finished Mr. or Mrs. Bird decide to try it out, perhaps to find out if it's comfortable. Then, "Aah, yes! It's fine. Now we have a home!"

Everybody needs a nest. We have found one here at the Inn. It too is situated treetop height - three stories from the ground. From our windows we have a bird's eye view of the world. We have hung the pictures, added some doilies, knick-knacks, and things. Now we sit comfortably in our recliners and agree that this nest is now our home.

God may have His eye on the birds in their nests, and listens to their chirpings. I think He understands their bird language songs of praise.... but we are further blessed because we have invited Him to live with us in our nest. Here we can talk to Him, and He listens. We depend on Him. Every day is happier because He is here. And the best part of all is that He loves us. If you hear singing from our nest it's just two seniors copying the birds in praising Him.

"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." John 14:23

## Life at The Inn at Westport

*Doris was encouraged to write brief items regarding life at The Inn at Westport (Sioux Falls, SD), and weaving in a spiritual aspect. These are similar to the format of the Country Style columns she wrote for the Sioux Valley News in late 1960 - early 1970s. The following are her writings related to The Inn.*

## KNITTED TOGETHER

I watch her as she sits and knits.  
Click, click the needles go.  
Her nimble fingers move the yarn  
as row by row her project grows.  
Knit and purl, and "casting on" all these play a part.  
She's making something beautiful,  
a creative work of art.  
It's special because it is handmade;  
each stitch has been purposefully laid.

The Bible describes the making of man.  
"Knitted together" by God's own hand.  
Let me explain this marvelous news:  
"We were neither manufactured nor mass produced."  
Threads of personality He tenderly entwined,  
and knitted in threads of temperament, wisely designed.  
Each part of us God deliberately selected,  
and our creation He personally directed.  
Our bodies were "*knitted together*", yet no two the same.  
Handmade by the hands of God. Praise His Name!

## WRINKLES

Age does things to us. The hair turns gray, then white; our steps slow, and soon our shoulders begin to sag. When we look in the mirror, we begin to see wrinkles settling on our faces. But I'll tell you a secret, "You're not old unless you get wrinkles in your heart!"

Is your life a desert place, with no joy or peace?

If so, you've got wrinkles in your heart.

You ask, what can I do about it?

Nehemiah had a remedy for heart wrinkles. He said,

"Thy Words were found and I ate them.

And Thy Words became for me a joy  
and the delight of my heart."

Nehemiah didn't just nibble on the Word; he hungrily ate it. When you eat food, it is digested and gives your whole body nourishment and strength. The same thing occurs when we digest God's Word. It becomes a part of us. It is there when we need it. It provides the spiritual vitamins that our hearts need, especially joy and peace.

This isn't just a malady of the aged, so don't blame it on multiple years. Psalm 92:14 informs us: "They will still bear fruit in old age; they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, "The Lord is upright; He is my Rock."

There are no wrinkles in a heart like this!

"I have called you by name. You are mine."

Isaiah 43:1

It is always special when someone knows you by name, and calls your name. Mary Magdalene, through her tears thought Jesus was the gardener, and then she heard **her** name . . . "**Mary**". The sound of it was full of kindness and love, just like Jesus had always said it before.. Then she knew it was Him!

He knows my name but what joy it will be when I **hear** Him say it with that tenderness in His voice.

### WHEN I GET HOME

Already I am anxious for the day  
when I hear my loving Savior say  
**my name.**

Mary recognized her Lord  
when the sweet sound she heard  
**was her name.**

One joyful day I too will kneel at His feet,  
when with love I hear Him repeat  
**my name.**

### MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE!

Lord,  
Was it from my Norwegian upbringing that I  
inherited these reserved Norwegian ways -  
being short on expressing affection and praise?  
O Lord, is that the way I act with You?  
Have my praises been stingy and few?  
Where did I get the idea praise should be quiet, restrained  
and dignified?  
David danced. That's how his praise was applied.  
Throughout my life You've showered blessings on my days.  
Today I will not hold back my praise.  
I'll lift my hands and tell You "tusen takk"!\*  
I'll sing a hymn of praise while I comb my hair and put on my  
socks.  
I will not wait another day - no holding back.  
I will join my praises with David's voice.....  
"Glorify the Lord with me. Rejoice!  
Let us exalt His name together."

\*a thousand thanks!

## HE'LL WALK WITH YOU

Two men walked the Emmaus road,  
with hearts that carried a painful load -  
Death had touched their lives; The One they loved was gone.  
When suddenly as they walked along  
*a stranger* overtakes them on the way,  
and listens to what they have to say.  
Their hearts were warmed and they no longer grieved  
when they finally perceived  
they were walking with the Lord.

All you who walk on sorrow's path today,  
this Lord wants to overtake you on your way  
and provide strength and comfort for your pain.  
Each day shower you with His love again and again.  
He'll warm your heart and ease your heavy load  
and walk with you as He did on the Emmaus road.

(Written for the loved ones of my nephew Scott Fladmark  
who passed away December 23, 2010. I loved him too.)

## REJOICE ANYWAY

You overslept,  
The light bulb blows out.  
Your last hearing aid battery went dead.  
A bad hair day.  
A button popped.  
The milk carton is empty.  
And you had forgotten about the morning appointment.  
What a way  
To start the day!  
You could handle irritations if they came one at a time  
But it's too much when they pile on at once!

Habakkuk had such a day -  
- his fig trees and vine were bare  
his olive orchard dead  
the fields were dried up  
and all his sheep and cattle gone  
After all this devastation,  
do you know what he did?  
He trusted God in the midst of topsy-turvy disappointments.  
"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.  
*I will be joyful in God, my Savior.*"

God tells us that we also should rejoice  
in spite of our daily headaches and heartaches  
because even if things unravel all at once,  
we still have these things to be joyful for -  
God loves us very much.  
He is always with us.  
Our sins have been forgiven.  
When we ask, He gives strength, and wisdom for our  
daily problems,  
and we can look forward to the wonderful future  
that He is preparing for us.

Dear Heavenly Father, today may we do what Habukkak did...  
*Trust in You.....with a smile!*

## THE SUBJECT OF TIME

We ask, "Where did the time go?"  
Sometimes it seems to slip through our fingers.  
Time cannot be seen, but it follows us day and night.  
We can only recognize its presence by the tick-tock of the clock,  
and the turning of its hands.  
Time has no "time-outs". It just keeps moving on.

God broke time into years, months, weeks, and days and hours.  
Each morning we are handed twenty-four hours, free of charge.  
Time is precious.  
If we had all the money in the world, we could not purchase  
one single hour. Or even a minute!

The only time we really have is Today.  
Tomorrow is a mystery.  
God created time and knows more about it than we do.  
He has a plan for our days and our time.

When we know Jesus, we let Him wind our Life's watch.  
When it stops, He gives us a new one with everlasting springs.  
May we pray with David, *"But I trust in You, O Lord;  
You are my God.  
My times are in Your hands."*

Ps 31:15

## RABBIT EARS

Soon we'll be seeing chocolate rabbits and stuffed bunnies  
everywhere,  
but the real bunnies have already been here,  
making tracks in the snow on the farm.  
On our below zero winter days,  
they've been playing games on the lawn.  
And this conclusion I've drawn –  
God cares about rabbits and clothed them in fur,  
but whatever does occur  
to their long ears when it's 10 below?  
Yet each Spring they reappear and show  
their healthy ears and wrinkled noses.  
It doesn't look like anything has frozen.

The rabbit's ears are special. They have an unusual trait.  
They can pick up sounds from far and near.  
Always alert and listening, they don't hesitate.  
At any slight rustling, the rabbit pricks up its ears,  
then sets them back,  
and like a shot it is out of sight.  
The TV rabbit ear antenna got its idea from there,  
to be a receptor and to receive sounds out of the air.

God has given His people ears too,  
and He makes it very clear.  
Over and over we read in His Word,  
"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"  
We get assistance listening,  
because the Holy Spirit gives us "*rabbit ears*".  
As we read His Word, He lets God's voice be heard  
loud and clear.  
And He helps us understand it and keeps us alert,  
as we hop through our days  
with the Holy Spirit as our expert.

## GRANDMA'S KITCHEN STOVE

Grandma's big black kitchen range,  
(you hardly see them anymore.)  
Now only electric and gas stoves are in the hardware store.  
To Grandma it was beautiful, and practical too for  
it had some chrome trim and a water reservoir.  
This range was very versatile and could perform various jobs.  
She would get heat from this black giant by feeding it  
corn cobs.  
Grandma knew how many handfuls it would take  
when baking her delicious cookies and cakes.

Towards the back of the stove stood the coffee pot,  
and the coffee in it was always hot.  
During apple season, a big black kettle she'd use  
for cooking jams and jellies, and making apple juice.  
Something special about her stove was Norwegian lefse making  
- its solid smooth black top was perfect for lefse baking.

Winter brought another plus for her grand old range. On cold  
blustery days  
Grandma left the oven door open, and warmed up the place.  
My stove can outperform most of Grandma's tasks,  
but I admit there's one thing that my modern stove lacks . . .  
I can't bake lefse on my electric stove top!  
But I have one advantage that I like to brag about,  
"I never have to carry any ashes out! "

## JUST TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!

She sat by the telephone  
and hoped it would ring.  
Perhaps today her daughter would bring  
her up-to-date about everything.  
She wanted to hear how her week had been spent,  
and if she received the gift that she sent.  
But mostly she longed just to hear her sweet voice,  
for that would be one of today's special joys.

God bends His ear to the earth everyday,  
listening for His children to pray.  
He says, "To take time for me, that is your choice,  
but I long each day just to hear your voice.  
I delight to have this visit with you  
and hear if my gifts and blessings got through."

Think about what a privilege we're given...  
To come into God's very Presence in heaven.  
We're invited, and no traffic problems getting there;  
always a green light when you come in prayer.

## ORDINARY PEOPLE

You'd never think of them as the first missionaries.  
But they were!  
With the smell of sheep about them.  
People at the bottom of the totem pole.  
Just some ordinary shepherds, sitting out in the cold.

But this was God, the Father's way.  
In His love He chose shepherds that first Christmas Day,  
to welcome the Christ-child in the manger where He lay.  
These shepherds with joy spread the news of His birth.  
"The long-awaited Messiah has arrived on this earth!"

Jesus said, "the Good Shepherd am I!"  
"My flock is the world full of human sheep.  
My love for them is very deep,"  
and it includes you and me!  
He thought we were worth dying for. How great can that be?

He reminds us today there's a harvest to reap,  
calling each of us to be missionaries and speak  
the Good News that still is unique;  
And it's *ordinary* people like you and me He seeks.

## PRECIOUS LETTERS

A phone call may be "the next best thing to being there,"  
for then you hear the voice of somebody dear,  
but you can't tuck a cherished phone call in a box.  
Sadly their exact words will soon be forgot.  
But handwritten words have a visible richness  
that keep speaking year after year.  
You can save these letters to be read and reread.  
They'll remind us of loved ones no longer here.

Leafing through my treasure box the other day  
I read and reread treasures I had tucked away.  
There was the handmade valentine Grandma designed for me.  
A painted flower at the top and in her handwriting I could see  
the sweet message she wrote.  
As I read it again, you'd have heard me say,  
"Oh, I wish I could visit with her today."

There's a special keepsake that brought memories of my Mom -  
a lovely Christmas card sent years ago,  
where her beautiful penmanship shows.  
As we dig through these special letters and cards,  
we see the familiar handwritings signed,  
"Love and best regards."

Letters, handwritten, e-mailed or in letters bold  
carry a message of love and of friendships told.  
Many of these letters are timeworn and old.  
But the oldest letter I have, God sent - It's His Word.  
It was written years ago with the best news I've heard -  
it's "Jesus loves me" and I'll always call  
this letter the dearest treasure of them all!

## FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

"I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me....but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." Exodus 20:5,6

Your life has been blessed  
because of the lives of  
- your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and  
- great-great grandparents.  
Many of them walked with the Lord.  
They were faithful to pass unto the next generation the  
knowledge of God.  
Some of their prayers still follow you today.

If they could speak to you today, they would say,  
"In the end, what you do with Jesus is all that matters.  
Experience a life with Him,  
and pass it on  
so future generations also will be blessed."

## MARY PONDERED THESE THINGS

Dawn was just about breaking. From a distance Mary could hear an early-bird rooster crowing. Now everyone was asleep – the baby and the animals, and Joseph, who sat leaning against the wall, was nodding too. The shepherds had left and Mary had a little quiet time to reflect on the past twenty-four hours. She wanted to sort out all the things that had been happening.

Oh, what a surprise when the group of shepherds had shown up at the stable. Mary said, "I will never forget how excited they were, and I was excited also when I heard them tell of the sky full of angels that had visited them, and the Glory that shone round about them. The shepherds described the beautiful music of the angels' chorus, with hundreds, or thousands, of angels singing, "Glory to God in the Highest". Mary closed her eyes to imagine this event. "I wish I had been there. I don't believe this earth has ever heard anything as magnificent. That was about the time I was giving birth to my baby."

The angel told the shepherds "Unto YOU is born a Savior" and the shepherds believed He was born for them so they came to the stable where they worshipped Him and rejoiced.

"This was hard for me to understand," said Mary. "If my baby was born for the Shepherds and the whole world this would mean that I will have to share Him. Almighty God, is this the way you planned it?"

"We are calling our baby Jesus, the name instructed by the angel, but I remember so well the rest of the sentence..... "for He shall save His people from their sins." Oh, God, this seems to be such a big undertaking for a little baby! But I know Your ways are best, and I'll be content to leave this up to You. I also know that the prophet said our baby shall be called Emmanuel. How blessed is that? It is with awe I call Him Emmanuel – God With Us.

"Almighty God, one thing I know – a baby needs a Mother, and I am honored that You chose me. I love this Christ Child very much and He has already brought me joy. Dear God, I am young and I ask for Your wisdom to make me a good Mother for this holy Child of Yours."

## LYING IN A MANGER

"A Babe is born in Bethlehem" was the angel's joyful news.

"He's lying in a manger!"....

This was the important clue.

All other Bethlehem babies were ignored.

There would be only one who would be the Lord.

They would know Him when their search would show  
a Baby lying in a manger.

They found Him! The Christ-Child lying on the straw.  
and here they knelt and worshipped.

Their Savior had come! The shepherds were in awe.

This was the setting God had chose  
to make His entrance to our earth.

No palace crib nor princely nursery;  
just animals watching on His birth day.

So we could understand His love  
the Eternal God left Heaven's glories above,  
enduring that filthy lowly stable,  
humbling Himself. What could be stranger?  
It was His love for you and me that brought Him  
to a manger.

His birth in a stable announced in a dramatic way  
that He'd come to be accessible to all -  
every man and woman on this earthly ball.  
Amazing! Just to have Almighty God become so small!  
Could He have said, "I love you" any clearer?  
All this He conveyed by simply being found.....  
*lying in a manger!*

## COOKIES FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

When Grandma baked her cookies in her big black Majestic  
Range,

I always thought it was a mystery and also kind of strange  
how she could know how many corn cobs to get the right  
oven heat,

for her cookies were always perfect when they came off  
the cookie sheet.

When the aroma of baking cookies was in the air,  
the grandchildren came running from everywhere.

It was a custom when Grandpa had his forenoon lunch,  
we would also be there to grab cookies to munch.

Sometimes we'd sit on Grandpa's knee  
and dip sugar lumps in his coffee.

These memories of childhood days are to me sublime -  
the days we were at Grandma's house  
at cookie baking time.

Today when I hear my grandchildren are on the way,  
I hurry and bake cookies to fill up the tray.  
But I have an electric oven - no corn cobs for me;  
and I'll just set the oven temperature to the right degree.  
I use an electric mixer in this modern day.  
If Grandma could watch me, I wonder what she'd say.  
Plus I have something my Grandma never saw -  
- *chocolate chips* to add, which to grandchildren is a draw.  
I've seen *chocolate chip cookies* disappear in a flash.  
Now it's I who am making cookie memories that will last.

## ONCE UPON A TIME

Scenes from the past:

Boys sitting in a circle playing marbles  
Girls with nimble fingers and a little bouncy ball picking up jacks  
Roller skates clamped to our shoes  
Jumping rope

Remember?

Walking a mile to school and picking wild  
flowers on the way home  
Country school where one teacher taught all eight grades  
No homework!  
But we memorized poems like Kilmer's "Trees" and  
and Longfellow's "Psalm of Life"  
Palmer Method Penmanship  
Syrup lunch pails

Remember?

Saturday night in town  
Ice cream cones for a nickel  
The soda fountain where they mixed up cherry and lemon  
cokes and malts and sodas  
Movie for a quarter  
Mickey Rooney, Shirley Temple and Judy Garland  
Saddle shoes  
"Somewhere over the Rainbow" and Deep Purple"

Riding the passenger train

This was our generation – a way of life that is gone forever!

Now everything has changed!

Children play with video games and sit in front of the TV  
A school bus takes them to school  
They have a backpack full of homework  
Stores close on Saturday night  
The music is noise rather than melody  
No passenger trains.

But once upon a time we attended Sunday School and learned  
to sing "Jesus Loves Me" and "Beautiful Savior".

These songs are even more meaningful to us today. Most  
everything has changed, but Jesus' love hasn't changed. We  
have through the years personally experienced that Jesus  
loves me.

Once upon a time we were young. Now, even to our old age and  
gray hairs He has promised to sustain us. His faithfulness  
and love continues to all generations. He is a **Beautiful Savior!**

## THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

It was an ordinary night.  
The sheep now lay fast asleep.  
And shepherds did their usual chore  
as they had hundreds of nights before.

It was an ordinary night.  
The shepherds had made no special preparations.  
They had not dressed in their Sunday best,  
for they did not know they would be blessed  
with heavenly guests.

It was an ordinary night in Bethlehem.  
People were asleep.  
Mary and Joseph had not decked the halls  
or sent out invitations.  
They couldn't even find a place to sleep.

It was an ordinary night until.....  
behold, that night the world's True Light  
came forth from the darkness of a womb.  
Mary, Joseph and the animals were the only ones  
to bid Him welcome!

No, it wasn't an ordinary night!  
God was in charge that night.  
He had arranged the miraculous birth,  
and He sent this birth announcement  
to the earth.  
Shepherds heard the angel choirs say,  
"UNTO YOU a Savior is born today!"

The shepherds hurried to go and see.  
And at Jesus' side they worshipped reverently.

.... AND SO CAN WE!!

## TREES IN WINTER

Now the trees stand like dark brown skeletons.  
The leaves that garmented them have disappeared,  
but evergreen trees haven't changed this time of year.  
Their varied shades of green  
provide the only color seen.

Now piles of harvested evergreen trees lay in the stores.  
Soon they will be in homes or be wreaths on the doors.  
The difference between Christmas trees and  
the trees growing outdoors,  
is that cut trees have no roots, and sad to say,  
no life anymore.

Too soon the needles on the Christmas trees will fall,  
but the dark brown skeletons outside still stand tall.  
When Spring comes, they'll bear leaves again.  
But the rootless Christmas trees are dead,  
and will soon be discarded and to a fire fed.

Psalms one says the godly are like trees "with roots",  
spiritual roots that go deep into God's grace.  
We will be like trees growing beside the stream  
when we place  
God's Word in our lives every day.  
We'll grow and bear fruit, as we pray,  
"May we be healthy and beautiful creations of God,  
never dropping a leaf and always in bloom."  
Then we'll never experience the Christmas trees' doom.

## NOW IS THE TIME

Now is the time.  
The squirrels are doing it --  
putting away food for winter.  
The ladies have been busy in the kitchen  
"putting up" fruits and vegetables  
and bright colored jars of jellies and jams.  
For them it will be a way of hanging on to summer  
during the long winter months.

Memories are like that too.  
They are a way of "putting up" some of life's special  
experiences  
and saving happy times so they can be enjoyed again.

But the most important "putting up" was what Jesus advised:  
"Put up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where  
your treasure is, there will your heart be also."  
Giving ourselves to the Lord and pleasing Him today -  
these are treasures that will be enjoyed in eternity.

But now is the time to prepare -  
the "putting up" time  
if we hope to get the results we look forward to in the future.

## OUR COLORFUL, BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD

Heavenly Father, thank you for putting color in our world,  
making each season bright and beautiful.  
In Spring You gave yellow daffodils,  
Summer brought purple iris and the red, red rose.  
Today Nature's clock is chiming – and now we enter a new season.  
*"Autumn has arrived!"*

Now God is painting the trees in bright array.  
From his color wheel He spreads the shades of orange and yellow,  
red and brown.  
And these leaves of scarlet and gold now come dancing to the  
ground,  
and really, a falling leaf is nothing more than a summer's wave  
goodbye.

God has colored the corn ears golden yellow  
the pumpkins, brightest orange.  
He has generously dabbed red cheeks on apples.  
and turned tomatoes flashy red.

Autumn is Nature's Mardi gras  
with its color and carnival-like excitement.  
Parades pass by of wagons loaded with golden grain,  
accompanied by the loud syncopated sounds of the tractors.  
From football fields wild cheering is heard,  
And we view the southward flying of the bird.

Everyone is rushing to put away the produce from their fields  
and gardens.  
It's *"harvest time"*, a time promised in Noah's day when God  
said, "While the earth remaineth,  
seedtime and harvest shall not cease."  
Harvest time is here again exactly according to His Word.

To guarantee His promise, many times a year  
God gets out His palette  
and paints colors on the bow that He forms after the rain.  
The beauty of these rainbows always thrills us.  
Thank you, Father, for making our world so wonderfully bright  
and colorful.

## THE ADDED BLESSINGS

Heavenly Father, we come today with a big thank-you.  
We've found You give us what we need,  
plus a little extra.  
We received our daily bread,  
and there was jelly too.  
The turkey came with dressing.  
And ice cream with our pie.  
But our thank-yous aren't just for food.  
You've blessed our lives in every way.

Thank you for our families - the children,  
grandchildren and great-grandchildren given us.  
You've blessed us with good friends;  
like desserts, they make our days tastier.  
We see Your Giving Hand wherever we look.  
Daily You display Your beautiful creation,  
with flowers that bloom throughout the year,  
and we enjoy the sweet music of bird songs  
and children's laughter  
to drown out the noises of our world.

Thank you for another day, another month, another year.  
You are the One who gives us breath, and keeps our  
hearts beating.  
But the greatest gift of all is knowing that You love us.  
Your eyes watch over us both night and day.

Today my stomach is satisfied with good food.  
My heart is full of thanksgiving.  
What can I say?  
My cup o'erflows.  
I am content.  
And should I try for years without end,  
I never could thank You for all of Your blessings.

## THE ORIGINAL THANKSGIVING

If I had visited the Pilgrims that first Thanksgiving Day,  
I can only imagine how inspired I'd have been  
to hear these people pray.  
These Pilgrims set aside a day to thank the Lord above  
for being with them, blessing them with harvest and His love.  
These Pilgrims had trusting hearts, and they were generous too.  
They shared their feast with their neighbors - an Indian tribe or two.  
There were no racist problems here. They treated them as friends.

That day the Pilgrims' lights did shine as their "thank" givings  
did ascend.  
The Indians watched the Pilgrims celebrate and they perhaps were  
heard to state,  
"This God they are worshipping. He really must be great."

Now on our Thanksgiving Day as we sit to eat we're told,  
"Keep the prayer short ...or the turkey will get cold!"  
If Governor Bradford, that old Pilgrim, had stopped at our  
houses today,  
he'd most likely have had this to say...  
"My friends, here I don't recognize our Special Thanksgiving Day.  
From what I've seen and found . . .  
you folks have things turned around.  
Today you seem to have forgotten an important part -  
Thanksgiving is not about a "full stomach,"  
but a "thankful-to-God heart".

## IT'S HARVEST TIME

Once more the earth has yielded  
her wealth of ripening grain.  
It's harvest time again.  
  
Standing side by side, and row after row,  
the cornstalks now look weathered and show  
their weariness.  
The green leaves that waved in the breeze in July  
are now ragged and dry.  
Now their task is almost through.  
Wrapped in husks the golden ears that grew  
now hang heavy and some cornstalk shoulders sag  
as the waiting days drag.

Most pale cornstalks still attempt to stand up tall,  
but winter snows they can't forestall,  
so a sense of urgency is in the air because they know  
that harvesting must be done before the snow.  
Now so patiently these cornstalks wait for the harvest call,  
for laborers who will bring the harvest home  
this fall.

Then we hear Jesus' voice,  
"My fields are also ripe, my harvest is so great,  
but there are few laborers to participate."  
His harvest isn't golden corn to be retrieved,  
but precious souls who will hear and believe.  
Night is coming. The need for workers is intense.  
Will you volunteer? We can make a difference.

## FOURTH OF JULY

"LET FREEDOM RING!"  
is the theme in every community  
on the Fourth of July.  
It was celebrated with  
Parades  
Waving flags  
Speeches and singing of our National Anthem  
Picnics and family gatherings  
And, of course, the noise of fireworks!  
As darkness fell, we viewed the colorful roman candles  
and finally those traditional sparklers.

We have never tired of those sparklers  
and their noiseless beauty.  
As children, I remember how carefully we held them  
and what excitement we had as they lit up the dark.

Jesus, you called us to be lights  
glowing in the night for all the world to see,  
Make us your sparklers -  
Noiseless,  
but beautiful,  
especially in the dark.  
May our good deeds shine brightly,  
and bring praise to our Heavenly Father.

## I REMEMBER

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of memories.  
Through them we can re-live the past and once more bring  
back glimpses  
of special people and events from  
our yesterdays.  
It may be an old photo or letter, a word or object,  
or perhaps a song  
that will be the gate that opens those days to us again.  
Without our memories, we are simply shells,  
or books without words.

Memorial Day is "I Remember Day"  
as we plant a flower in memory of those who had  
been dear to us, and say,  
"Thank-you for the love you gave us."  
When we remember how special they were to us,  
you might hear us whisper, "We miss you.  
We remember you."

One of God's most frequent commands in His Word  
was "*Remember*".  
To His people He said, "Remember how I cared for you."  
And that command is for us today also as He reminds us,  
"Remember the prayers of yours I answered,  
how I daily watch over you".

Remembering God is an act of worship.  
And this isn't one-sided, for God assures us...  
"I remember you."  
"See I have engraved (tattooed) your name on the  
the palms of my hands.  
You are always on my mind."