

Mother's Day 2018 FCCS
Rev. Curran Reichert

"Praying Mothers"

When Ellis Jane was very small, we used to carry her in one of those canvas packs that straps to your back or to your front. I liked to carry her in front, so I could look at her while I walked. Also, because when she would fall asleep on my chest, I could feel her breathing and smell the top of her head. A great many happy hours were spent, lips pressed against the soft peach fuzz of that child's head, all the while an unconscious prayer for her wellbeing coursing through my veins. The apostle Paul is known for inviting the followers of Jesus to pray without ceasing, but no one needs to remind a mother to pray.

If you have a mom, there is nowhere you are likely to go where a prayer has not already been. ~Robert Brault

When Jesus knew that the disciples were going to have to continue his ministry without him, he prayed for them as a parent does for a child. He prayed they would know that they belonged to God and were beloved. He prayed that they would be safe, and that their lives would have meaning. I love imagining Jesus praying for the disciples and find this passage from John very moving in that way.

We don't usually give much thought to how often we are thought of by others. It is a powerful notion; that whoever we are, whatever road we travel, our path is paved with the prayers.

As I sat with Helga in the days before Rudy died and watched the steady stream of people coming in and out, the phone pinging with texts, e-mails and calls to tell her that she was in people's prayers. It dawned on me that prayers for and about people are happening all the time, mostly unspoken, unbidden, but they cling to us just the same.

I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life. ~Abraham Lincoln

Mother's Day fills my heart with nostalgia. My mind drifts through countless thoughts of my mom, her mom, even my great grandmother Crabtree. I think of the love that all of these women had for their families, for their kitchens and the food that came out of them. I think about the faith in God that grounded their lives.

My Mother's mother was raised in the Texas Church of Christ, not to be confused with the United Church of Christ. No, in the Church of Christ there are no female ministers, no choir, no instruments, no alcohol or dancing of any kind. It is a very conservative branch, and not considered mainline Christianity.

There were, however, lots of pot lucks- consisting mainly of white food and fried chicken, prayer services, bible study, and a shared commitment to care for one's neighbor. Both of my grandparents worked in the service industry all their professional years, one as a groundskeeper, the other as a cook.

The image that comes to my mind every Mother's Day is of my mom's mother- who I called "Mama"- sitting on the orange and yellow floral velveteen couch that she referred to as the "Davenport", with a glass of sweet tea on a coaster in front of her and the big black family bible opened on her lap.

Every day she read scripture and every day she prayed; for the people in her family, for people in the hospital, for our president, and for the checkout girl at the Stater Brothers Supermarket. One thing I knew was true, everyone my Mama ever thought about, was surrounded in prayer.

Bishop Desmond Tutu prays for over a thousand people a day. I wonder if you pray for more people than you can count? What I want to say, is that those prayers matter more than you may ever know.

A prayer for the homeless man who lives under the bridge and the dog by his side, a prayer for someone's sick grandbaby whom you will likely never meet, a prayer for the earth and all her tender inhabitants. Those prayers are real, not just to the people who receive them, they are real to us. And with each prayer we are changed, we become more deeply the people we mean to be in this world.

Parents are people, so not any of them are perfect. Unfortunately, some of them are awful. I'm sorry if that was your experience, and if this day is more pain than beauty for you. I mean that, I'm truly sorry.

What I also know, is that no person is one dimensional and so even the best parents had some awful mixed in, we all do. But if we're lucky, our parent's meant well.

It was amazingly sweet to watch the love exchanged between Rudy and Mary, his girlfriend of two decades, those last few days of his life.

Equally touching was Helga's love for her father, and before he became unable to speak Rudy would gaze at his daughter when she wasn't looking and say "Oh, Helga," and tears of love would overtake him the way they so often did.

The worst part of losing our parents, must be that their voices go with them into death.

How sweet and happy seem those days of which I dream
Memories I recall now and then
And with a rapture sweet my weary heart would beat
If I could hear my mother pray again

If I could only hear my mother pray again
If I could hear her tender voice as then
How happy I would be
It would mean so much to me
If I could hear my mother pray again

Amen