Dear Lexie,

"Abandoned?"

I am embarrassed to admit that there are times when I feel that God has completely abandoned me and/or those who are close to me. I feel like I pray, beg and reach out to God in whatever way I can but He does not hear me.

Read more>>

The Grace of Simple Things
Food for Thought

There are times in our lives when the moment is so deep, so simple, as to be transparent and effortless. Within that moment we sense that the rush of events has subsided and we, quietly grateful...
This Sabbath:

August 24, 2013

Speaker:
Pr. Paolo Esposito
"Liberty, Unity and Diversity!"

Special Musical Guests:
Christina Rosette, Soprano

We've Only Just Begun
Homecoming 2013

"It Ain't Over Yet; We've Only Just Begun," was the reassuring yet challenging title of Dr. Hyveth Williams' sermon at Sligo Church on Sabbath, August 3. It was Sligo Church's fourth annual homecoming. Members, former members and friends of Sligo from across the nation and beyond crowded into the church building to worship, celebrate, reconnect, and reminisce.

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Sligo By The Sea

Have you attended Sligo By The Sea yet this summer? Our services in Ocean City, Md. are running for 7 more weeks, through Sept. 28!

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Sermon Audio Archive:

Audio Archive>>
I am embarrassed to admit that there are times when I feel that God has completely abandoned me and/or those who are close to me. I feel like I pray, beg and reach out to God in whatever way I can but He does not hear me.

At times like that, I feel like I have to go to others who may have a better relationship with God than I do and ask them to make my case before God, to be my advocate. But there are even times when my mother, who I consider a deeply spiritual woman, and I pray about the same thing and neither of us get any obvious results.

At those times when my connection to God seems so very weak, I read books and articles by others who I think know more about God than I do and look for insights into what may be missing from my life that has caused the connection to lose strength. I do not always get the guidance I seek.

I turn to the words of King David, a troubled, yet highly spiritual man, in my opinion, to glean inspiration and strength from him. Again, I do not always come away feeling like I have gained any knowledge that will help me breach the canyon between me and God.

I continue to pray because deep down, even through all my doubt, I remember the words found in Luke 12:6-7: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” (NIV)

I keep reminding myself that God does not abandon people; He has not abandoned me. Indeed, at times the evidence seems overwhelming that I am completely on my own. I look at myself, metaphorically, and think why a great God would want to be bothered with me anyway. And then He reminds me that He cares and why He cares.

It is often some small thing; like telling me where to look for the screw that fell off the cleat on my biking shoe. Nothing big, but God cares enough to listen to my prayers about a screw. He has not abandoned me after all.

I suspect that if a social scientist were to analyze prayers to God, we would find that prayers about finances would be high on the list called “most prayed about”. We all worry about finances at some point in our lives and we turn to God a lot on that subject. I suspect, as the bills pile up, many of us have looked with longing at the money set aside for church (for God). I think it would be easy to convince oneself that a God who cares would not want me to be homeless or starving, so it would be okay if I used that money this time.

Do not do it! God does not forget the sparrows, and He does not forget us. Sometimes, doing what He directs takes a huge jump of faith. Jump! He catches us.

I understand the difficulty sometimes, in reconciling personal suffering, like not having enough money for basic needs, with a loving God. I understand feeling that God is not hearing. I cannot explain why God does not always step in when you or I feel we need immediate intervention. I know from personal experience that God comes to our aid in big things as well as those that seem inconsequential to others. He is still there and still has a plan.

We have to do the right thing, let go and let Him fulfill His promise. Letting go is hard; it takes a willing heart. I pray that God will help me keep my heart open and willing; will you?

Jean Arthur
Tagged with → • • • • • • • • • • •
The Grace of Simple Things

Barry Casey

I believe in all that has never yet been spoken.
I want to free what waits within me
so that what no one has dared to wish for
may for once spring clear
without my contriving. — Rainier Rilke, Book of Hours

There are times in our lives when the moment is so deep, so simple, as to be transparent and effortless. Within that moment we sense that the rush of events has subsided and we, quietly grateful, find ourselves turning in a gentle current to gaze first here and then there, and to feel ourselves lifted and set upon our feet on a new morning at the edge of a far wilderness.

Those are moments that one treasures, storing them up for the times when the days turn to rust and the air sears as we sit in the stink of traffic waiting for the light to change. There are never enough of these moments, and in time they fade, although the mere desire for them can conjure up a train of images—some unrelated to the first experience—which gradually take on an iconic weight and bearing.

I’ve enjoyed enough of these that I can string them like pearls in my consciousness, holding them up to the light and seeing how they’ve changed over the years. There is curiosity in recalling which ones marked stages in my life. They are like ancient buried ships whose mounded boundaries we circumscribe unaware until we gain the heights and look back and down and gradually discern the outlines.

For me, these moments most usually come when I’m alone in the vicinity of strangers or near a lake or river or mountain or beach. I am booked up with a scripture (the Gospels, the Tao Te Ching, the Dhammapada or the Bhagavad Gita), some poetry (Rilke, Blake, Eliot, or Stafford) and some philosophy (Epictetus, Seneca, Marcel or Augustine)—and a fine cup of strong, rich coffee. Setting off for these possible transcendences there is anticipation, but at the very least the satisfaction of a good experience. We cannot plan for these moments but we can be ready for them.

I had one such experience while on holiday visiting family in Banff, Alberta. Early on a Saturday morning, a time of special holiness for me, I moved through the quiet streets alone in the cool dawn. In search of a quiet shop with coffee, I found one—Evelyn’s Coffee Bar—on Banff Avenue. I was past the door when I noticed it, stopped and backed up. The sign said Saturday, 8 am to 9 pm, but it was 7:45 and the door was open, so I went in, the first customer of the day.

The only other person was behind the bar, a polite and cheerful young man from the East End of London by the sound of it. With mug in hand I sat in the window that fronted the street and gazed in wonder at the mountain that rose thousands of feet in the near distance. There was morning light all around—I could see it filling in the space between the peaks—but the town was in that blue shade that only exists in the shadow of a mountain that is blocking the sun. Streams of light shot from its shoulders and I knew that in minutes I’d be in the full glare of the sun as it crested the peak.

I was reading Rilke’s Book of Hours, in a translation I’ve come to revere, in a passage that carried all my longings to create:

If this is arrogant, God, forgive me,
b ut this is what I need to say:
May what I do flow from me like a river;
no forcing and no holding back,
the way it is with children.

By now one or two more early customers had come in. The English barista had been joined behind the bar by a young woman who spoke with a Scandinavian accent.
“Wot time are we to open?” he asked, as they worked. I could not hear her murmured reply, but he responded, “Cos I wasn’t sure if it was 7:30 or 8:00 so I opened at 7:30 just to be safe.”

Then in these swelling and ebbing currents,
these deepening tides moving out, returning,
I will sing you as no one ever has,
streaming through widening channels
into the open sea.

And then the light burst over the peak and in one astonishing moment the street in front of me, the window, my books and cup—everything was shot through with white, pure light, warm to the touch but with hard-edged shadows.

I want to know my own will
and to move with it.
And I want, in the hushed moments
when the nameless draws near;
to be among the wise ones—
or alone.

We move through this world in a sullen daze more often than not. We mind our own business, shuffling through the streets, not meeting the eyes of those around us, drifting like motes in the sun. But occasionally, if we dare to look up, if we glimpse—even in imagination or memory—the trembling, fiery annunciation of the morning, we might just be graced into joy.

I want to unfold.
Let no place in me hold itself closed,
for where I am closed, I am false.
I want to stay clear in your sight.

Barry L. Casey, a long-time Sligo member and a co-leader of the Believers and Doubters Sabbath School class, teaches philosophy and communications at Stevenson University, Trinity Washington University, and Washington Adventist University.
We’ve Only Just Begun

prsligochurch.org/weve-only-just-begun

pesposito

Power Dependent DAT Feature: We Have This Hope!!

“It Ain’t Over Yet; We’ve Only Just Begun,” was the reassuring yet challenging title of Dr. Hyveth Williams’ sermon at Sligo Church on Sabbath, August 3. It was Sligo Church’s fourth annual homecoming. Members, former members and friends of Sligo from across the nation and beyond crowded into the church building to worship, celebrate, reconnect, and reminisce. Dr. Williams, in her message to over 1700 worshippers on Sabbath morning, cited much of what is going wrong in the world, remarking that everything seemed to be going the devil’s way. She reminded listeners that often things are not what they seem to be and that God is in control of the world and of their lives. The war is far from over and it's a war that God is winning. Worshippers were urged by Dr. Williams to keep trusting God in all situations because ‘it ain’t over yet. It won’t be over until God declares it over.

Homecoming 2013, with the theme, “We’ve Only Just Begun,” commenced with Family Worship on Friday evening, led by Gerry Lopez, Children and Family Ministries pastor, and his family. Those in attendance celebrated the advent of the Sabbath and spoke of the various ways in which they welcome the Sabbath at home. The experience was enhanced with Challah and Kiddush, borrowed from the Jewish tradition of celebrating the arrival of the Sabbath.

Teaching a class of hundreds can be challenging but Dr Gaspar Colon made it look and feel like a fireside chat as he skillfully and thoughtfully led the discussion of the lesson on ‘The Fruit of Revival.’ Pastor Pranitha Fielder gave the mission feature, which focused on the female pastors who have served Sligo Church over the years and the immense contribution that these women have made to making Sligo the compassionate, accepting and serving community that it is today. On a day when the speaker for the worship services was a female pastor and one who previously served at Sligo, the mission feature could not have been more appropriate.

A highlight of each year’s Homecoming is the international luncheon, which this year was held at Sligo School. Close to one thousand members and guests feasted on dishes from the Americas, the Orient, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and other parts of the world. “The food is great,” said one very happy member as she savored a samosa, “and the fellowship is even better.”

To cap an unforgettable weekend, over 12 hundred joined Pastor Wintley Phipps on Sabbath evening for a time of worship in songs. The congregation launched into “Shall We Gather at the River” and other hymns with a fervor that suggested that they were in the mood for worship. Even, those who are not usually keen on singing traditional hymns joined in the spirit of worship and lent their voices to singing these songs of the Christian faith and experience. The enthusiasm and passion of the congregation in songs was matched by the melodious and appealing voice of Pastor Phipps as he premiered his newest album, Near the Cross, which features some of Fanny Crosby’s great hymns, backed by the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra. This program was billed as a concert but was anything but a typical concert. Pastor Phipps and others ensured that it was an evening of worship and admiration of the One who loved us to the extent that He was prepared to die on a cross for us.

More than 3000 attended the weekend events, including those who joined on line. A number of information cards were filled out by guests, inviting the church to keep in touch with them or provide them with additional information about the church and its services.

Senior pastor, Charles Tapp, was pleased with the success of the weekend and believes that the objectives of Homecoming, which are, to
restore, to reconnect and to revive our relationships with God and former members and our community at large, were realized.

We are already thinking of Homecoming 2014 but the homecoming that looms largest in our consciousness and our expectations is that when our Lord comes again and takes us to the place He has gone to prepare for us.

View full photo gallery on FACEBOOK

Article by Don W McFarlane

Photos by Michael McKinnis and Paolo Esposito

Tagged with → · · · · · · · · ·
Homecoming celebration!

Old friends
Going to spend the weekend in Ocean City, MD? Need a place to Worship? Well you’re in luck! From June 29th to September 28th 2013 you can join our Sligo family on your vacation too!

Join us for Sligo by the Sea
Join us for sligo by the sea

St. Peter’s Lutheran Church
10301 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, MD, 410-524-7474

Sabbath School 10 a.m., Worship Service 11 a.m.

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Casual attire is appropriate

www.sligochurch.org