Dear Lexie,

"Faith-based optimism"

A couple of months ago a post by friend Chris Daley was published on our blog titled Can we defeat despair? Yet in times like these it would seem like no one could blame us for getting a little down and perhaps even cynical. Just a week ago we remembered, with sadness, the tragic morning we recall upon as 9/11. Yet as we remembered 9/11 we also cried out for peace in world at the brink of war because of the violence and unrest in Syria.

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9/11 and Counting

Food for Thought

My grandfather was an historian and
This Sabbath:

**September 21, 2013**

**Speaker:**
Pr. Don McFarlane
"Water is Thicker than Blood"

"Stand Ready!"*

**Special Musical Guests:**
Rebecca Wilhelm, soprano

*Second Service

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a college teacher who filled me with a love for history and a respect for those who write it. I was raised by my grandparents...

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Tea for Scholarships

**Sligo Women's Ministry**

As the summer is dwindling down, many ministries are getting ready to start their engines and a new cycle of activities. Sligo's Women's ministries is one of those ministries...

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Sligo By The Sea

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Faith-based Optimism

A couple of months ago a post by a friend, Chris Daley, was published on our blog titled, “Can We Defeat Despair?” In times like these it would seem like no one could blame us for getting a little down and perhaps even cynical. Just a week ago we remembered, with sadness, the tragic morning we recall as 9/11. Yet, as we remembered 9/11 we also cried out for peace in a world on the brink of war because of the violence and unrest in Syria.

A week later, our city finds itself in shock as our Nation’s Capital takes center stage in a tragedy that will go down in history as the Navy Yard shooting. Simultaneously, on the other side of the nation, floods as we have never seen before, devastate the state of Colorado, washing away the homes, memories and livelihoods of thousands of people. To this we can add our own list of downers: problems at work, problems at home, financial hardships, sickness and even death.

As a result of all these adverse situations and circumstances we may be tempted to ask God why do these things happen? I don’t pretend to answer that question, as it has been very well addressed in a previous post by Pastor Pranitha Fielder, titled, “Why?” However, I would like to challenge ourselves to live our lives with faith-based optimism.

Many times Peter’s letters seem to be overshadowed by Paul’s writings, yet I really like how he puts it when he writes in 1 Peter 1:3-6:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter mentions a Living Hope, and an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Furthermore, he goes on to say that through faith we are shielded by God’s power! This indeed is a good reason to be optimistic. What do we have to fear if the Creator of the universe will shield us with His power as long as we place our faith in Him? Yet, we cannot leave the text here, because if we did, we would be left only with half the blessings. Peter continues his letter by saying (1Peter 1:6-9):

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

This shield which is promised though faith is not a shield from the adverse effects and consequences of living on a planet ill from sin. Yet this shield protects us from despair, hopelessness, depression or just the seasonal downsies, because our hope is not circumstantial, or based on our surroundings but in Him who we have not seen yet, but believe. And this belief, this faith, gives us “an inexpressible and glorious joy”.

Someone once said “Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.” We cannot escape the realities of this sin-stricken world. But we can choose our attitudes, we can live with great optimism, with an inexpressible and glorious joy, because we know that “our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” And as we do so, this faith-based optimism will transform our lives, and the lives of those around us.
My grandfather was an historian and a college teacher who filled me with a love for history and a respect for those who write it. I was raised by my grandparents, teachers both, and our home was packed with books, magazines, and journals, many of them about ancient history, medieval history, and modern history. My first understanding was that history told the story of what had happened long ago, that it was a true and valid record of those events, and that it stood in the same relation to the Eternal Verities as the Law. One learned and believed History and one kept the Law. Neither was profitably to be questioned.

These beliefs, solidified and tested by teachers in elementary school, were gently but firmly undermined by my grandfather’s tutelage. History, he said, was what historians reconstructed from written documents, eyewitness accounts, physical evidence and a sanctified imagination. The story could have been written another way; in fact, there were many ways to tell the story and most of them could be seen to fit the facts as they were known.

This was endlessly fascinating to me. It threw a relativism into the works that furnished my imagination with a constant stream of long shots and close-ups seen from different angles. Historical figures, outsized characters like Lord Nelson, Napoleon, and Winston Churchill, became, through my grandfather’s stories, people whose flaws were as tangible as their virtues. Neither was to be ignored nor were the flaws to define the person, as tempting as that was. History, in the way my grandfather taught it, was complex and multi-layered, a spider’s web of nobility, contrivances, deceit and bravery. It was not, as Henry Ford was famously quoted as declaring, ‘one damn thing after another,’ but a vast and ongoing story—a tale told with a point, freely offered up for scrutiny.

The events of the 60s, exploding over my generation, came so fast and furiously that Ford’s complaint seemed justified. It was one damn thing after another. Apparently random events took on a sinister afterglow, conspiracy theories bred like fruit flies, and the Book of Revelation bookmarked the nightly news. And if journalism was the rough draft of history, then propaganda from all points on the political spectrum was the marketer’s flack, guaranteed to fill the worst with a passionate intensity.

My cognitive dissonance over America’s manifest destiny gone rancid in Vietnam was further jolted by the realization that Martin Luther King, Jr. was breaking the Law. He didn’t just break it though, he first hauled it up from the depths like some blinkered Morlock, where it could be seen for the poisonous creature it was. The social effect of his nonviolent resistance to institutional racism was the permanent dwarfism of law. From that point on, certainly for my budding political awareness, the law no longer had the implicit seal of approval from on high. I saw it as a human construct, flawed and dangerous when it served only the interests of the powerful.

For me, this was a new experience: I found myself in a dark wood without the familiar landmarks and the path I’d traveled daily suddenly looked alien and forbidding. Thoreau had been there too, literally if not metaphorically. The traveller in the forest looks around and “Though he knows that he has travelled it a thousand times, he cannot recognize a feature in it,” says Thoreau. “. . . .[I]t is as strange to him as if it were a road in Siberia.”

Perhaps that was our feeling on 9/11 when, on a perfect day in September, our predictable world turned dark and terrifying. How could this happen here? Twelve years on from that day I wonder what we have learned. “Not till we have lost the world,” said Thoreau, “do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations.”

Someone once remarked that “the world is passing strange and wondrous.” That it certainly is. There is mystery and wonder all around us—in the violent dislocations as well as in the harmonies we find. Our common histories quickly become uncommon when we make allowance for a shift in view.
“In rethinking our history,” says Howard Zinn, historian and author of The People’s History of America, “we are not just looking at the past, but at the present, and trying to look at it from the point of view of those who have been left out of the benefits of so-called civilization. It is a simple but profoundly important thing we are trying to accomplish, to look at the world from other points of view.”

Perhaps that can be a legacy of 9/11.
As the summer is dwindling down, many ministries are getting ready to start their engines and a new cycle of activities. Sligo’s Women’s ministries is one of those ministries. As we get ready for fall think about how you can contribute to this ministry, below is one of the many activities they sponsored so far this year. If you’d like more information please contact Dr. Joan Annette Francis

“This article first appeared on the Columbia Union Conference website (www.columbiaunion.org) June 5, 2013, and is reprinted with permission.”

An evening of drinking tea and eating scones with friends from church may seem like just another fun activity to some, but to a woman in Cambodia, it means a year of tuition to university. At a Monday evening tea, women at Potomac Conference’s Sligo church in Takoma Park, Md., raised more than $800* for college scholarships.

The tea served as a pleasant backdrop for the church’s chapter of the Scholarshipping Our Sisters (SOS) program fundraiser. Calling the event their Spring Tea and Silent Auction, organizers explained that SOS is a program started by the General Conference Women Ministries Department to give women scholarships to Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities. While the women sipped tea and nibbled treats; listened to “I’m a Little Teapot” played on the piano in various genres; and browsed gift baskets, china, floral centerpieces and other auction items, foremost in their minds was the real purpose of the evening.

“We wanted the ladies to think about the people whose lives they are impacting,” shared Carolyn Kujawa, a Sligo church member and the SOS chapter leader.

In their midst that very evening was one of the women impacted by SOS—their very own Debbie Eisele, the church’s associate pastor, who received a scholarship from the group when she was studying religion in Australia in the 1990s.

From the program’s inception in 1991, Women’s Ministries has bestowed a total of 1,980 scholarships to women in over 118 countries amounting to $876,908. This year alone, they have given scholarships to women in Madagascar, Mongolia, the Philippines and Israel. Sligo’s contribution will add to the program goal of raising $85,000 for scholarships this year.

The idea for the tea came about when a Sligo member donated china to the group, which also holds yard sales as fundraisers. Instead of selling the various pieces of ornate china, Eisele suggested hosting the tea. Kujawa took the idea, ran with it and recruited other Sligo women to help prepare for the evening.

One of the ladies, Karen Banner, even brought tea and several boxes of china! She said she likes to follow her mother-in-law’s example of using the best china—not hiding it away for a future use that never comes around! Another participant, Carla Conway, and her mother, Charlotte, made themed baskets to present for auction.

Francia Bissereth, a public university student, doesn’t benefit from the scholarships, but says, “I’m glad to give. It doesn’t matter that I don’t receive. I remember receiving a book scholarship once and how much of a difference it made to my education.”

Heather Dawn Small, General Conference Women’s Ministries director, said she is thrilled to learn of the efforts of the women at Sligo church. “These scholarships are absolutely vital for so many women globally,” she said. “Without help, many women would not be able to
attend any school at all, let alone a Christian school. It’s also vital to our church as many of these women, in turn, give back to the church in many ways.”

The Sligo chapter is a first for SOS, and they are hoping other churches will launch a chapter as well. Click here to learn more about the program.

*As of June 6, 2013, Sligo church’s Scholarshipping Our Sisters Tea and Silent Auction raised $1,200.

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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