

GREETINGS FROM THE PASTOR:

The new program year is about to begin with the arrival of September; and all of this begins with the *End-of-the-Summer Party*. The big day is Sunday, September 4th. We worship at 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., with games at Noon, great food at 1:00 p.m., live music at 2:00 p.m., and by 4:00 p.m. we'll be on our way to enjoy the rest of our Labor Day Weekend. This *End-of-the-Summer Party* has grown into a really fabulous event for Zion, a fun way to raise funds for any one of the many ministries we support. This year we are focusing on repairs needed at the parsonage. The parsonage offers quite a ministry of caring for the four men who live there; but significant maintenance is needed from time to time. This time the repairs needed involve some leaks in the roof, and some water stains inside. We appreciate your support for this much-needed work; and we hope you will have a great time at our Great Grill Off, which has become such a wonderful Labor Day Weekend hit for our church family.

The following Sunday is September 11th, and we all know what that means. The City of North Canton will remember 9/11 on Saturday, the 10th, with a Service of Remembrance at Noon (at Bitzer Park), a Panel Discussion at 1:00 p.m. (at the High School auditorium), and an Interfaith Street Fair & Picnic from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. (at Dogwood Park). Here at Zion, our Sunday Morning Services of Remembrance will feature special music and prayerful litanies. Jackson High's *Jacks-N-Jills* will join our worship at the 8:00 a.m. service; and Zion's Praise Team will anchor our special music at 10:30 a.m. Both services will be extraordinary. We are so thankful to Fred Locker for making these arrangements. Between the services during the Sunday School hour, we will celebrate Rally Day at Zion. Our kids will gather in Memorial Hall for all sorts of special fun, and the adults will gather in Luther Hall for a celebration of our volunteers, along with some really delicious treats.

The following Sunday is September 18th, which marks the official beginning of actual Sunday School classes for all ages. The Adult Class has been meeting all summer long, and will continue to discuss the issues that are raised with *Making Sense of the Christian Faith*. No doubt, we will continue to reflect on the momentous events remembered with the Tenth Anniversary of 9/11. But we have found that our discussions shine a bold light that illumines many of the questions that are raised with faith and life. What's new about September 18th for Zion is the good news that all of our Sunday School classes, from Pre-K through High School, start up with the new program year. We are thankful to Debbie Fox for the leadership she provides in organizing our Sunday School, and we are thankful to all of the members, as well, who volunteer to teach and to help. It may not take a village to raise a child, but it does take the entire congregation to introduce our children to the power of God's love alive among us.

There you have it, three great Sundays to announce the arrival of the new program year! There is something for everyone on each of these great days. Take the time to consider how God's love will direct you to share in the ministries we offer. Will it be our great grill-off at the *End-of-the-Summer Party*, or our celebration of service on Rally Day? Will it be our worship on September 11th, or the desire to grow in our knowledge of God's grace, made available with our Sunday School classes for all ages? September invites us to say YES to the God who wants us to know the difference His love will make as we learn to trust its presence and step out in faith.

THE MEN OF ZION

Zion's End-of-the-Summer Party is on for Sunday, September 4th. It's going to be another great time, with great food, the very best of live entertainment, and lots of fun. Our grillers are back. **Zach** is back. We hope that you'll be back. For those who may not recall, **Zach**, a one-man band from Parma who has performed on-stage with folks like the Dave Matthews Band, Neil Young, War, and Chicago, was voted by the readers of *Akron Life & Leisure Magazine* as THE BEST LOCAL BAND. For those who do recall, make sure you're here on Sunday, September 4th.

Speaking of parties, the Men of Zion have been working with the Church Office and Zion's Trustees to organize a **Painting Party for the Pavilion**. We want to paint and stain those parts of the pavilion that need to be protected from the weather. We have had a great response to some early calling initiated by Jayne Schrader. Our volunteers chose **Saturday, September 10th**, as our workday, with September 17th as our rain date. Many will arrive at 8:00 a.m., and others will come at 11:00 a.m. We should have enough volunteers to get it all done.

As our Property Ministry Elder, Lorin Beaber has been working with Chris Thomas to make sure that we have enough to do, and that we have the supplies we need to get everything done. We've got the paint, the stain, the brushes and scrapers, and all sorts of ladders. If you have some drop cloths, that would be helpful, and six- or eight-foot ladders. Sign-up sheets are located in Luther Hall. We'll keep in touch over the phone or online just to make sure that we've got everything lined up to have a great day. Right now it looks like we'll have more than twenty-five of us. Everyone is welcome. Come when you can.

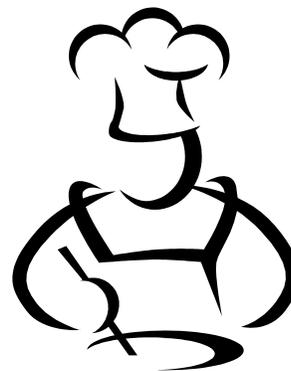
IT'S A GREAT WAY TO
END THE SUMMER:

ZION'S "END OF THE SUMMER" PARTY!

LABOR DAY WEEKEND
SUNDAY AFTERNOON
SEPTEMBER 4TH, 2011

WORSHIP: 8 & 10:30 a.m.
GAMES at 12:00 p.m.
FOOD at 1:00 p.m.
MUSIC at 2:00 p.m.
Clean-up at 4:00 p.m.

The Great Grill Off in Action
Pulled Pork, Beef, Chicken,
Fish, Shrimp, and More
Hot Dogs, Hamburgers
Baked Beans, Cole Slaw
Lots of Great Desserts



Good Fun, Great Food, Fabulous Fellowship
A Fun Way to Raise Funds for a Good Cause
The Parsonage Beckons and You Can Help!

ZION'S SENIOR CHOIR

If you are a present, past, or potential choir member, then this invitation is for you:

I have been extremely blessed and pleased to work with such a wonderful group of singers, and have been honored with the opportunity to continue in this capacity for another church year.

We would like to start off the year with a combination potluck picnic and rehearsal on Wednesday, September 7th. The picnic will begin at 6:00 p.m., followed by our first rehearsal. Dale will be coordinating this event. If you would like to come, then all we ask is that you bring the following: Sopranos – salad or side dish; Altos – dessert; Tenors – 2 liters of pop or ice tea; Basses – Hot dog & hamburger buns.

For the first rehearsal, I have put together a schedule of rehearsal dates and times, along with a calendar of our service schedule, which includes special services, as well as the planned anthem for those dates.

If you have not sung in the choir for some time, or at all, we hope that you will prayerfully consider joining us to sing praises to God! We are hoping to completely fill the choir pews this year.

Looking forward to a great choral season with you being a part of it!

Blessings,
Fred Locker

Please remember, and don't forget: Zion's Senior Choir is set to resume rehearsals on **Wednesday, September 7**. Our first Sunday to sing will be Rally Day, which is September 11. We would love to have some additional voices join us this year. So, if you are at all interested, please contact Fred Locker (330-265-5129) or the Church Office (330-499-3909).

RALLY DAY AT ZION

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11TH



WORSHIP at 8:00 a.m.
JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL'S
"JACKS-N-JILLS"

SINGING *AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL,*
SONG OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

PROGRAM IN LUTHER HALL

BETWEEN THE SERVICES:

"JACKS-N-JILLS"

SINGING *GOD BLESS THE USA;*

A SPECIAL "GARRY LEED" VIDEO:

ZION'S FOOD PANTRY IN ACTION;

A CELEBRATION OF VOLUNTEERS!

COFFEE & CAKE, BAGELS & JUICE

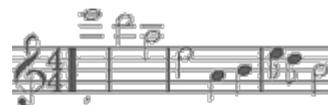
OUR KIDS TAKE THE GYM:

CARNIVAL GAMES AND MORE, WITH

REFRESHMENTS GALORE FOR OUR KIDS!

WORSHIP at 10:30 a.m.

ZION'S PRAISE TEAM
SPECIAL MUSIC, LITANIES,
PRAYERS FOR PEACE



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11TH

RALLY DAY AT ZION

ZION'S FOOD PANTRY: A TEN-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

On December 7, 1941 America was attacked by the Japanese. I am sure that our parents and grandparents still remember where they were and what they were doing as the news broke across the radio waves. On September 11, 2001, we were again attacked from the air. I know exactly where I was and what I was doing. I was working in our food pantry, getting ready to take off from Zion to pick up food at the Akron-Canton Food Bank. Pastor Bob Brigham, our Interim Pastor at the time, came in to tell me about what was taking place in New York City. Upon my return from my pick up, there was more. Pastor Bob told me what else had taken place. We were all horribly shaken up and felt certain that this could be the end of life as we knew it. I knew from that point on life would be different, in all respects; but as a proud American I knew in my heart that we would endure.

These last ten years have passed so quickly since 9/11. Our Food Pantry is still going strong. That's good for the continuity of our outreach, but not so good that the demand for our service has increased and our clients' needs are always evolving. Our clients have gone from the generational cluster to the laid off workers and young people with degrees who are not able to find their first job. We have folks with disabilities, and, of course, the senior citizen who cannot meet all the cost increases. Margaret Porter and I assumed the responsibilities of leadership at Zion's Food Pantry in July of 2001, which was about a year after it was started. This is a ministry that can't just coast along if it is going to serve the needs of families whose needs are diverse, complex, and evolving. We needed direction and placed a call to the Stark County Hunger Task Force. Under their guidance we were able to form a top notch food pantry that has come to provide "only the best" for our clients. Our slogan was born from the hearts of two Moms: "If I won't eat it, then I don't expect someone else to."

During the early days of our newfound service, the pantry crew consisted of Pastor Brigham, Margaret Porter, and, of course, me. Then something wonderful happened. We had someone volunteer. His name was Chuck Heller, and he was a blessing to us. We felt certain that he was placed there to help us along our path of growing together in love and service. Right on the heels of Chuck Heller was Gary Horton, whom we all know should have been an Indy 500 race car driver. To no one's surprise, he has always had the ability to move carts and clients in and out in record time. After Chuck and Gary came Evelyn and Larry Moore, who have been a very dynamic couple in supporting this ministry. Whenever other duties may call me away from the pantry, I never have qualms about leaving Evelyn in charge. She knows how we operate, and what is more, she always gets the job done, completely and correctly.

Soon the word spread of the good things that were happening at our pantry. People learned that they could volunteer, feel a sense of accomplishment, and also develop a wonderful sense of camaraderie with the other volunteers who make up the *Food Pantry Crew*. Our pantry crew is now so diverse, with no two people alike. Maybe that is why on any given day we can have between fifteen and twenty-five volunteers enjoying each other's company. Garry Leed has put together a wonderful slide presentation documenting what a great time we have volunteering together. We plan to show it in Luther Hall between the services on September 11. Please join us; and remember, in this great country of ours no one should have to go to bed hungry!

May God Bless You – Shirley Cavender

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOLUPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- Sunday, September 4th:** Zion's *End-of-the-Summer* Party: Great food, fun, and music!
Sunday, September 11: NO SUNDAY SCHOOL scheduled for our Rally Day Festivities
Sunday, September 18: The 2011-2012 Sunday School Year begins today at 9:15 a.m.
Saturday, October 22th: 2011 Youth Missions Fall Craft Show, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

RALLY DAY AND BREAKFAST FARE

Rally Day will be Sunday, September 11th, which means that it is going to be an extra special day at Zion, both for the Sunday School and for the entire congregation. Our 8:00 a.m. worship service will feature Jackson High School's *Jacks-N-Jills*, under the direction of our Choir Director and theirs, Fred Locker. The *Jacks-N-Jills* will then join us in Luther Hall for the festivities that we will feature for Rally Day. Not unexpectedly, this is going to be a great event filled with good food, good fun and great fellowship! Rally Day takes place between the services at 9:15 a.m. Kids gather in Memorial Hall (a.k.a. the gym), and adults in Luther Hall.

Adults will enjoy a celebration of volunteers. For our kids there will be carnival games, relay races, refreshments, and more. We will have lots of information to give the parents along with the necessary forms for Sunday School. We will see you at 9:15 a.m. on September 11th as we kick off the new Sunday School year! We are calling on all of Zion's older youth to help out with Rally Day, along with anyone else who might be interested. We will need helpers to set up and lead our games and activities. Set up will begin at 8:30 a.m., and our activities will start at 9:15 a.m. Any help that you can offer will be greatly appreciated.

ZION'S NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL YEAR

We are always looking for new volunteers to help with teaching and leading our Sunday School classes, from Pre-K through High School. It is always great to have new and fresh ideas for our program. If you are interested in being a teacher, a classroom helper, or a substitute for these positions, please contact Debbie Fox at 330-966-2433. It is such a rewarding and enjoyable opportunity to share God's love and God's Word with Zion's Youth!

PRE-K THROUGH THE SIXTH GRADE

We are looking forward to Rally Day and the start of the new Sunday School Year! We have a year of great lessons and activities planned, along with our Christmas and Easter Programs. We will also have our traditional Halloween Party, service projects at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and other fun events this year! We have classes for kids age 3 through 6th grade. We will be using a new curriculum that allows our children to learn important Bible story lessons through fun activities. It will be a year full of fun and learning. See you on September 18th!

MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S YOUTH

CONFIRMATION INSTRUCTION AND THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS

Confirmation classes will start up again on Sunday, September 18th, at 9:15 a.m. in the Resource Center. This class is for all 7th and 8th graders. Renee Keith will lead our new group of Confirmands. We will follow the "Here We Stand" Confirmation program.

We extend a heartfelt thank you to Renee for her continued support and commitment to our Confirmation Class. She is a great teacher and a tremendous resource. We ask that parents show their support by making sure that their children are in class and on time.

Our High School class will also start Sunday, September 18th, at 9:15 a.m. Tina Beaber will again lead this class. We are very grateful for the time and dedication Tina has committed to this class and to our kids; and we encourage all of our High Schoolers to join us each Sunday morning for an important and fun life experience.

FALL OKTOBERFEST YOUTH MISSIONS CRAFT SHOW NEWS

The Craft Show will be here before we know it, so we are planning to start working on the youth's projects this month. All of our Sunday School classes will again put together Raffle Baskets. We will assign each class their theme on Sunday, September 11th, at Rally Day. We would like all items to be donated for the baskets by Sunday, October 9th. Tickets for these baskets will go on sale in October. This year the youth of Zion will again host the bake sale at the Craft Show. Their project this year will be making items like chocolate covered pretzels and oreos, no-bake cookies, puppy chow, and much more. We will also ask the Zion congregational family for additional baked goods when it's time to get ready for the Bake Sale table.

Our *Eighth Annual Craft Show* will take place on Saturday, October 22nd, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Connie Frank and Jayne Schrader are looking forward to this year's edition matching last year's success. Registrations have been coming in a bit slower this year than last. At this writing, thirty-one craft tables been rented! We still have plenty of time to reach our goal of seventy. This is a great event at Zion that helps our youth program, and we need lots of help to make it a success. There will be sign-up sheets in Luther Hall in late September for volunteers, bake sale items, and other food we will need. We encourage everyone to help out if possible. Again, we very much appreciate your support of Zion's youth!

YOUTH SPOTLIGHT PAGES ARE BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

Please help your children fill out a *Youth Spotlight Form*, which you will find in the Church Office, through Debbie Fox, and everywhere on Rally Day! We would like forms for all of Zion's children, ages one through eighteen. We will begin our Spotlight page again in October's edition of *The Zion Herald*. Zion's church family looks forward to reading and learning about our amazing youth! When you get a Spotlight form, take the time to fill it out, and return your completed forms to Debbie Fox by Sunday, September 18, or as soon as possible. It's a big part of what we do, and we really like including them in *The Zion Herald*.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Adult Sunday School Class has been meeting all summer long, discussing *Making Sense of the Christian Faith*, which is a very interesting book by Dave Lose. It presents its themes in a conversational style, emphasizing the point that questions about God and faith arise from everyday life. In talking about the original blessing of creation, we learned that science deals with the *how* of creation, and faith talks about the *who* behind creation. We then began to think about the fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, and we dropped the “s” from original sin and wound up focusing on *Original In ... security* as a working description of the human condition that gives rise to all sorts of sins. We were created with a God-shaped hole, which we try to fill with all the wrong things in all the wrong ways. Put simply, God wants us to use things and love people; but we seem to get it backwards. We use people and love things.

The fall leads to broken trust with God, broken relationships with one another, and a broken world. The speedy path to destruction leads quickly to the great flood, which, in turn, leads to the first of five covenants through which God resolves to help us get things right. There is the covenant with Noah and God’s pledge not to destroy the earth ever again. Then there’s the covenant with Abraham through which God promises to create a people who will be His people. Then there’s a covenant with Moses through which God makes Israel His people by giving them the Law. Then there’s the covenant with David, from whom will come the promised Messiah. When the Messiah comes, the New Covenant becomes the promise through which God makes us His people with the forgiveness and the new life that is ours through the blood and in the body of Christ.

JAYNE'S ECOLOGY CORNER

In this age of *disposable goods*, it seems to be easier to replace items than to think about how we might reuse them. Have you ever wondered what you could do with an old cutting board, shower curtain or coffee table? Here are some ideas on how to reuse these items instead of sending them to a landfill.

Old Wooden Cutting Board: Hang it on a nail on the wall, and screw several small hooks into its surface to hang keys on. Stow it in your car and then use it as an all-purpose hard surface for the kids to color or write on. Use it in your workshop any time you’re nailing, pounding, gluing or soldering. Let it take the damage, rather than your workbench. Use it as a signboard. Paint your message on it, tie a loop of rope to it, and hang it outside.

Shower Curtain: Use it for an off-season cover for stored patio furniture or grills. Keep it in the trunk as a tarp for a roadside emergency if you have to sit on the ground to change a tire. Use it as a lightweight ground cloth for under a tent. Turn it into a leak proof drop cloth for home painting projects.

Coffee Table: Use it as a pallet in your garage or shed to keep bags of grass seed, birdseed, or potting soil off a damp floor. Turn it into a one-shelf shelving unit to keep cardboard boxes off damp floors. Keep firewood drier by stacking it on top of the table instead of the ground. Use it as a potted plant shelf on your deck or porch. Either set the potted plants on the table, or drill through the tabletop and saw large holes for flower-pots. Turn it into a beanbag toss game for kids if the table is square or rectangle and leans backward at a slight angle when upended. Use a saw to cut fun shapes into the top for beanbags to pass through. Add bright paints and point values to each hole.

THE WOMEN OF ZION

The monthly Bible study for the Women of Zion meets on the third *Tuesday, September 20*, when we will start our Bible study of the Gospel of Mark, *To Follow and To Serve*. In Session 1 we are introduced to Jesus with our focus on his words in Mark 1.15: “*The time is fulfilled; the kingdom is near. Repent and believe in the gospel.*” The Rev. Patricia Lull, our guide through this study of Mark, writes, “Our church, our culture, and our world are undergoing profound changes. Powerful leaders are being toppled from power. New nations and grassroots movements are being born. How we think of work, the economy, and having enough are changing for many households. Even what it means to be a community of faith is undergoing transformation in many congregations and synods. Studying Mark’s Gospel of together during the coming months offers encouragement to stand in the midst of change knowing that our lives are supported by a Word that is more lasting and more powerful than the impermanence of our economy or the upheavals we may experience in our family life or congregation.” We invite all of Zion’s women to join us on ***Tuesday, September 20, in the Resource Center at 9:30 a.m.*** You will enjoy the fellowship, and we’ll enjoy your company.

The Canton-Massillon Cluster: Our Fall Fellowship will focus on the theme ***United by the Spirit***. The date is ***Monday, September 19***, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The place is St. Luke’s Lutheran Community on Applegrove in North Canton. Our guest speaker is Kristie Woods, the Director of Community Relations at St. Luke’s. Her presentation is entitled “The History of the Lutheran Women’s League.” Lunch is at Noon, featuring stuffed pork chops with baked apples. The cost is \$8.00, with the deadline for registration being September 7.

THANK YOU’S AND MORE

The Women of Zion thank you in advance for your support in their drive to provide Lutheran World Relief with more Personal Care Kits and School Kits this year.

Our ***Personal Care Kits*** include a bath-size towel (dark color is recommended), two bath-size bars of soap, an adult-size tooth brush, a sturdy comb and metal nail clippers.

Our ***School Kits*** include 70-sheet notebooks, a 30-centimeter ruler with inches on the other side, a pencil sharpener, blunt scissors, #2 pencils (which come with erasers), erasers, ball point pens (no gel ink), box of 16 or 24 crayons, and drawstring cloth bag, approximately 14” x 17” with shoulder straps.

Don’t forget that ***cash donations are also appreciated***. We can do the shopping, or help Lutheran World Relief pay for shipping.

The ***Chancel Guild*** will meet to work on polishing the silver and cleaning the Chancel on the evening of ***Monday, September 12, beginning at 6:30 p.m.***

Zion’s Comfort Givers continue to meet on the second and fourth Thursdays, September 8th and 22nd, at 9:30 a.m. in Luther Hall. We can use your help. So please try to join us. You’ll enjoy it, and so will we!

Dear friends,

I want to express how much your prayers, cards, and love have meant to me during my recent illness.

Also, I thank Pastor for his visits, support, and prayers.

Thanks, as well, to Dick & Edna Smith for bringing the beautiful Chancel flowers to me.

*Sincerely,
Shirl Hertler*

AUSTIN'S ADVENTURE CONTINUES: THANK YOU FROM ARMENIA

On behalf of our **Partnership and Teaching NGO** (Non-Governmental Organization), we would like to thank you for your generous donation in support of the *We Are Our Future* summer camp, which was completed in Goris, Armenia on August 19th. During the past year, our organization implemented a project called “Building Outreach for Greater Disability Inclusiveness.” The goal of this project was to strengthen the social-protection networks in communities as it related to the inclusion of children and adults with disabilities into society, focusing particularly on the promotion of inclusive education. This project concluded in June 2011. Believing that inclusive education should not stop with the project, our organization sought activities and events that would continue to promote this ideal. The *We Are Our Future* summer camp was the first of these.

From August 15th through the 19th, thirty-six children (ages 9 – 14) from the Goris community participated in a weeklong camp to learn about leadership, cooperation, and teamwork. Twelve of these children either were from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or were persons with disabilities, with the remainder coming from student councils from the two schools of Goris that promote inclusive education. During the camp, the children engaged in daily leadership and teambuilding activities, participated in various information seminars, collaborated to build a *leadership shelf* in the school where the camp was held, and both designed and implemented small civil service projects throughout the community. From blinded egg-dropping challenges to seminars on Human Rights, every child was diligently engaged.

On the final day, the three teams of children each implemented their projects. One was focused on environmental clean-up, another on anti-smoking information awareness, and the third on basic health seminars for kindergartners. Ruzanna Sogomonyan, one of the camp administrators, stated, “It was very good initiative. It was the first time I had organized and participated in a summer camp. It was a great experience for me personally and I look forward to implementing similar projects in the future. For the children, the camp was a one-of-a-kind opportunity to collaborate with each other, to work as a team, and to implement community programs. I want to thank our Peace Corps Volunteer, Austin Sherwindt, for helping us to organize this camp. I want to also thank those who supported the facilitation of this camp.”

Without the financial support we received from Zion Lutheran Church of North Canton in the USA, the *We Are Our Future* summer camp would not have been implemented. Those thirty-six children – each having their own skills and capacities – would not have had the opportunity to work together, learn from one another, and forge new friendships. We give our sincere thanks to each of you.

Staff of Partnership and Teaching NGO
Collaborate Today for Tomorrow
Goris, Syunik marz, Armenia

P.S. Austin spoke to Zion about this summer camp when he joined us on the Sunday of Mother's Day, May 8th. Zion collected \$500 on the spur of the moment, and that was combined with several Peace Corps grants to make this *We Are Our Future* summer camp possible.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF ELIZABETH TOBARIAN BALLA

June 23, 1929 – August 4, 2011

Betty's health wasn't perfect. But there was certainly no expectation that the end was near, which is why news of her death came as such a shock. Even after you've heard more of the details surrounding that last week in the hospital, then at home, and then back in the hospital again, it doesn't make any more sense. While shock is the right word to describe our state of mind, we agree with Vickie Swartz – who was with Betty at the end and every step along the way, who could only watch as Betty became more uncomfortable as her health deteriorated and various systems began to shut down – that God was gracious in sparing Betty a long and lingering decline. For that we're all very grateful, because we know that Betty was a faithful person, who loved her Lord, and was prepared for God's call home whenever it came.

But even more important than what we know about Betty and her love for God is what we know about God and His love for Betty and for us. God loves us with a love that will never let us go. God loves us with a love that is faithful forever. God loves us with a love that will not allow anything, not even death, to get in the way of embracing us with a love that will never end and a life that lasts forever. That's what Paul was saying when he wrote: *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nothing in this life, nor in the next, nothing we've done or ever could do, nothing in the entirety of all of creation will ever separate us from God's love, which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:38-39) That's the love with which God loves us. Betty knew God's love, trusted God's grace, believed in God's faithfulness, and now lives forever in the glory God promised to her and to all whom He loves.

We may not know the particulars of what our life in glory will be like, but we know the love of God that we'll find there, and we know that this God who loves us is faithful – to His Word, to His promises, to His heartfelt desire and unyielding persistence to bless us with His love and His life forever. When I was talking with Vickie as we prepared for this service, we got to talking about cemeteries, funeral plots, marriage on earth and marriage in heaven. Betty will be laid to rest alongside Blase, after enjoying a long and successful marriage with Jack “Doc” Tobarian before becoming a wife and then widow again. There is a peculiar and obscure text found in Matthew 22, where Jesus is asked about marriage in the world to come. The traditions that were practiced back then were strangely different from our understanding and practice of marriage today. That is also true for what “family” meant and how families function.

In accordance with some longstanding principles in the biblical narrative, Jesus described what will be the same and what will be different in the age of new life in the resurrection yet to come. In short, he told them that God is faithful to His promises forever because God's life is eternal. Our promise of faithfulness in the marriage service is limited by *til death do us part* because we are mortal, and we can pledge our faithfulness only as long as we are alive to keep our promise. That was the biblical principle behind Jesus telling us that while the institution of marriage will change some in heaven, God's promise of life forever to those whom He loves will never change. God's love is the tie that binds this world with the next. God's Word of promise is true forever; God's life of love is eternal and everlasting: these theological convictions form the backdrop of the love and the life that will be ours forever ... in Jesus' name. Amen