

A Word from our General Presbyter

Ed Thompson

I am grateful for everyone who has reached out to me since the death of my mother-in-law. Your expressions of care have touched my heart. I can't say I was surprised, but I also have to say I didn't expect it. Perhaps you just assume that you are a part of a community, but until something like this happens, you don't always appreciate or know how much it means. It means a lot.

I spent a good deal of time this past week thinking about my mother-in-law and reflecting on her life as I prepared to lead her funeral service. I probably appreciate her more now than I did when she was with us. I don't think I took her for granted, but there are certain aspects of her life that seem more apparent in retrospect.

One thing she did well was, for the most part, engaging in the community where she lived. There were times we had to encourage her to go to bingo or to exercise class, but for the most part, she did that willingly – at least at the beginning. However, she always enjoyed visiting with the other residents in the assisted living facility where she lived. Sometimes she'd be late for events because she'd stop to talk to people in the hallway. She took part in the Halloween and Christmas parties, and less than two weeks before her death, she was dressed up for St. Patrick's Day. She'd go down to watch movies and sporting events like the Super Bowl, the World Series and the Final Four. She'd put on her Michigan State gear whenever the Spartans played the University of Michigan – a big event in the Great Lakes State. She watched the news and could hold her own in discussions of current events. Certainly part of that is due to the staff at Silver Maples, the assisted living facility in Chelsea, Michigan where she spent the past seven or so years of her life. They do deserve credit. They were good. Part of that, though, was her decision to be engaged and to take advantage of the opportunities that were available to her.

For the most part, I think she enjoyed life. She had fun. She loved to laugh. There were health problems, to be sure, that slowed her down and sometimes sidetracked her, but they didn't stop her. She loved to read. She loved to watch the news. She enjoyed talking with people and learning more about them. She was curious, which may be why she went to all these events – so she could see what was going on. But she also remembered people and would ask about their health and family. There were times, especially early in our marriage, when I can remember her getting worked up about something, but for the most part, I think it was because she was concerned that the parties or special occasions she was planning would go well, that people would enjoy the food and that everyone would have fun. That was important to her. She wanted people to have fun.

She enjoyed food. It was said she would read cookbooks the way other people would read novels. The last few years she spent a lot of time watching the Food Network. She especially enjoyed Paula Deen and someone known as the "Pioneer Woman." My sister-in-law told us, "You don't want to interrupt her when she's watching the Pioneer Woman." Lest you get the wrong impression, my mother-in-law was not heavy. I think she may have enjoyed preparing and serving food more than she actually enjoyed eating.

Sometimes this would get annoying. If you attended a party, reunion, conference or any kind of special event, she would inevitably ask, "Well, what did you have to eat?" The question reflects her curiosity, as well as her love of food. She just wanted to know.

I think we can learn a lot from Margaret Seibert. We can be engaged and take advantage of the opportunities that are available to us through our church and in our community. We can laugh. We can be curious. We can enjoy life. We can enjoy good food. Maybe most of all, we can enjoy our family and friends while there are still with us. And we can remember them and express our care for them in times of mourning, as well as in times of celebration. We need one another, and our words of support can mean more than we will ever know.