

A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS – 38

(JANUARY – APRIL, 2015)

Hello, everyone! Are you surprised to be getting another Penny? Since I commented at the end of Penny 37 about my increasing difficulty with typing, my son George, who also serves as my editor, thought you might be interested in seeing how that sentence first came out:

helllo, Evverryone! Aree u suurprised 2 bb gettingg anott her Pennnn y?

George has agreed to continue refining my crude typing. I am very grateful for this help! As you know, I've been thinking about how to replace the Penny essays, and I can't come up with a title or a format I like better!

In my Penny 37 comments I wondered what further effect the progression of my PLS might have on the quarterly Penny essays. One further change is obvious – it has been more than a quarter since the last Penny. So far in 2015 most of my writing energy has been devoted to the monthly Sky View services and to two poems, one of which was read at our Good Friday service. The March service was a particular focus since I decided to compile and comment on some of my favorite materials for the 100th monthly “Scripture and Prayer with Verna and Friends.” (The total number of services is even higher if we include the Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas services presented by our team. To God be the glory!)

While working on this special service I wondered how it would be to include the entire script in this Penny so we could worship together. I have often mentioned the services but this way I could feature them and my wonderful team.

By the way, this service almost did not happen! On the scheduled date, March 5 (our usual slot is the first Thursday of the month), there was a snowstorm that made travel too dangerous for the team. We postponed to the next Thursday, but learned only the day before that a staff meeting would make our space unavailable. When we found out the next week that the crew re-carpeting Sky View would be displacing the 4th floor residents that day, I wondered if the service would happen at all, since to postpone yet again would put the service just one week before our “Good Friday” service scheduled for Thursday April 2. However, our Activities staff assured us that this would benefit us, and indeed it did! We had a very large turnout on Thursday March 19, so large that we ran out of handout sheets! (These are the double-sided papers that contain the words of the songs and unison readings we will use that day.) We make 50 of these each month, so picture at least 60 of us, including the team, more than half of the residents in wheelchairs, all gathering to worship the Lord. Join us!

I am grateful to Cliff and George for assembling and annotating the service materials. In the spirit of the new flexible Penny format we will proceed to the service without further ado, and I will wish you God's blessings of joy and peace and hope until we meet again.

Love, Verna

*** This is the caption Verna wrote atop the program used by the team:*

SCRIPTURE AND PRAYER WITH VERNA AND FRIENDS
SKY VIEW Thursday, March 5, 2015 #100

CELEBRATING OUR 100TH MONTHLY SERVICE AT SKY VIEW – TGBTG! AMEN!

*** Those attending the main living room entered through the dining room, with sweeping views of the Hudson River on three sides. They were greeted by the piano and cello prelude performed by Earl and George, including some of Verna's favorite hymns: Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee; This Is My Father's World; and Trust and Obey. Our worship leader Cliff welcomed the attendees, introduced the team, and began reading Verna's script.*

Cliff – Verna says: At the start of our 100th monthly service, I want to thank God for allowing my wonderful team and me to serve him in such a happy way. I praise God also for giving me an abundance of creative ideas to use in the programs, some of which I will describe to you as the service progresses. For example, years ago I saw the value of using Psalm 118:24 as an opening song – “This is the day that the Lord has made.” Sometimes I heard the verse as an invitation: “let us rejoice and be glad in it,” and sometimes as a positive response to an invitation: “we will rejoice and be glad in it.” I decided to use both, with the invitation in verse 1 and the response in verse 2. And that's the way we will sing it today –

*** This is how the words appeared in the handout sheet given to all in attendance:*

1. THIS IS THE DAY Words: Psalm 118:24; adapt. by Les Garrett; Music: Les Garrett

1. This is the day, this the day that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice, let us rejoice and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made.
2. This is the day, this the day that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice, we will rejoice and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made.

Cliff – Early in the process of writing Sky View services, Verna got the idea of combining various related Scriptures into readings she called duets and trios, according to the number of readers they required. The first of these was AN INVITATION TO PRAISE FROM THE PSALMS, described as “A duet for two readers. Alternating Psalm 95:1-7 with Psalm 100 as the verse, ending with Psalm 150 as the chorus.” Leo & Frank were the first to read this duet, & they will read it for us now.

AN INVITATION TO PRAISE FROM THE PSALMS – A duet for Leo (1) & Frank (2).

1 – Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.

2 – Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

1 – For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

2 – Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

1 – Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

2 – Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever, his faithfulness continues through all generations.

1 – Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

2 – Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

1 – Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet; praise him with the harp and lyre.

2 – Praise him with tambourine and dancing; praise him with the strings and flute.

1 – Praise him with the clash of cymbals; praise him with resounding cymbals.

1 and 2 – Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Cliff – Verna says: When I could no longer write by hand, I assumed my music-writing career was over. Then, a few years ago, I began writing poems that could be sung to hymn tunes old enough to be used without permission. Surely this was God's doing, and I praise him! In the rest of the service today we will sing 3 of these songs. The first, to the tune of Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise, is –

2. A CORPORATE PRAYER

Words by Verna Kwiatkowski

(To the tune of Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise)

1. We gather together to bring you our thanks
For life everlasting, preserving our ranks.
For living and dying to you are the same;
In Christ we're all living! O praise his dear name.
2. We're under surveillance by day and by night.
Wherever we live, we remain in your sight.
O may our behavior bring joy to your heart,
And our faith grow stronger as we do our part.
3. Together forever, with Christ as our King,

Secure in your presence, we can't help but sing.
In all circumstances, you, Lord, we will bless,
Thus doing your will, and for us, that's success! **Amen**

MEDITATING ON MOSES – Cliff (C) & Leo (L).

C – In order to understand the next form of worship materials used in our services, we must review part of the story of Moses. You may recall that God announced from a burning bush that Moses would be the person who would lead the Israelites out of their captivity in Egypt and into the Promised Land. Moses, 80 years old at the time, felt SO inadequate that he put up quite an argument with God, including this interchange, recorded in Exodus 4.

L – Moses said to the Lord, “O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.” The Lord said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

C – Moses, of course, did eventually go, and for the next 40 years worked closely with God during a wide variety of emotional experiences, ranging from a high at the crossing of the Red Sea to a low when the people made and worshipped a golden calf in the absence of Moses. Finally the Israelites arrived at the place just across the Jordan River from the Promised Land. Moses asked the people to gather so he could bless them before he died, since he would not be going into the Promised Land with them. What a change had come over Moses during the 40 years! Listen to his opening remarks that day, found in Deuteronomy 32.

L – Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

C – Isn't that beautiful? Moses had become quite an orator during the 40 years in the wilderness! With God, change is possible, even in old age! Verna says: Since I am a teacher myself, I was captivated years ago by the way Moses compared his teaching to rain. Listen again:

L – Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.

C – A couple years ago Verna began gathering together Bible verses on certain topics, forming them into duets and trios, and calling them showers, thanks to Moses. On this day of celebration may joy & delight nurture & refresh you as George, Barbara, and Marilyn read for us the SHOWER OF JOY & DELIGHT. After the shower, Frank will lead us in prayer. (Cliff & Leo sit.)

SHOWER OF JOY & DELIGHT – 3 readers – George (1), Barbara (2), & Marilyn (3).

1 – My soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation.

2 – Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

3 – Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands.

1 – For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

2 – I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

3 – This is what the Lord says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let those who boast, boast about this: that they understand and know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.

1 – When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.

2 – The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.

3 – That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

1 – Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

2 – However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

3 – Even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

1, 2 & 3 – Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

1 – Let us rejoice and be glad and give God glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

2 – And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.”

3 – Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.” With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

1 – I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

2 – In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

1, 2 & 3 – The joy of the Lord is your strength.

PRAYER TIME – Frank

3. A PRAYER FROM THE PSALMS – Unison reading

Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips. Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

(Psalm 141:3,4; Psa. 51:10; Psa. 139:23,24; Psa. 19:14)

SPONTANEOUS PRAYER – Frank

4. THE LORD'S PRAYER – Unison reading

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

POETRY AND VERNA'S STORY – Cliff (C) & Marilyn (M).

C – Verna says: Poetry has played a large role in my spiritual life from my childhood to now. I'm sure that's because God, who knew me before I was born, also knew the desires and the worries that were on the inside of me, and had a plan to use them for my good and for God's glory. Around the ages of 9 & 10, I wrote a whole series of poems, simple, yet interesting. My next recollection occurred when I was 16. At that time I told our new English teacher that I would like to write poetry. He was encouraging, even loaning me 2 of his college textbooks, and promising to read all I would write. A few days later I handed him a poem that started like this –

Poetry is hard to write.
Of that there is no doubt.
It did not take me very long
To find that statement out!

That ended the project! It was just enough to set me up for the poetry shock to come!

M – At an early age, Verna says, I learned of the existence of Heaven and Hell, and oh!, how I wanted to know I would go to Heaven when I died! But my church taught that we couldn't know until we got there! That left me with no hope, as the church also had a long list of "worldly" things that good people who wanted to go to Heaven should avoid, such as going to movies and wearing lipstick. Since there were things on the list I wanted to do, I thought my only chance to avoid Hell was to keep myself from dying! The doctor prescribed nerve pills to calm the nervous person I had become.

C – Then I went to college. In my 2nd year I studied biology with a teacher who scoffed at the idea of a God who created the universe. In the final exam he forced us to make a choice. Reluctantly, I sided with him. At age 20 I went home for the summer with a heavy heart, wondering if God were real or just a myth. It was the low point of my life!

M – Just a few weeks later, in June, 1953, I got my answer! I was walking home from my summer job for lunch, enjoying the perfect June day with its beautiful blue sky filled with puffy white clouds, when it happened! In my mind I heard a poem that began with the words Nature proves there is a God. No question about who was speaking! Who but God knew what I was thinking on the inside? What's more, suddenly I knew I belonged to God forever! I would go to Heaven when I died! I ran the rest of the way home, intent on capturing the poem before it faded from my memory. In my room, it took me perhaps 15 minutes to write the poem, which George will read for us now. (Cliff & Marilyn sit.)

POEM: THERE IS A GOD – George

Nature proves there is a God.
Look at the sky and the trees,
Feel the warm sun and the breeze:
There is a God.

Watch a brook bubble by, sparkling and clean,
Feel nature's carpet of velvety green:
There is a God.

Hear the birds singing as only they could,
Smell the fragrance of flowers in the wood;
There is a God.

Look at the mountains and the valley below,
See the footprints of a rabbit in the snow:
There is a God.

How could you look at a full moon
And say there is no God?
How could you watch a sunset, over too soon,
And say there is no God?

Watch the seeds develop into plants,
Observe the industry of a colony of ants:

There is a God.

Feel the freshness of the air after rain,
Watch a pheasant rise from a field of grain:
My friend, there is a God!

C – Verna says: I learned something there – Poetry is NOT hard to write when it's inspired by God! That noontime incident became monumental in shaping the rest of my life. In fact, I referred to it in another hymn poem written at Sky View. To the tune of Amazing Grace, we are going to sing –

5. AMAZING LOVE

*Written by Verna Kwiatkowski, Sky View
May be sung to the tune of Amazing Grace*

1. Amazing love that rescued me, when I was bending low –
I had no hope, then Love stepped in, and now I upward go.
2. This love has wrapped around my life, and set my sights above.
I never am alone; God's always here. I know – for God is love.
3. I'm heading to Emmanuel's Land. I have a home up there.
While still on earth, I'll do God's will, and then his glory share.

Cliff – The Words of Encouragement that Barbara will read today are based on Galatians 5:1, a very special verse to Verna. She says: I was in my house reading Galatians in November, 1977, getting more and more excited as the story of freedom unfolded. When I got to 5:1, I SANG it! This was the 1st of more than 500 Scripture songs God gave me over the next 25 years. While I was writing the song in a notebook, I realized God was speaking to me through the words. Listen:

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT – Marilyn

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. – Galatians 5:1

How good of God to set his people free! The cost was tremendously high: Jesus Christ died to give us freedom. It is understandable, then, that God would not want us to give up our freedom. And why would we want to be under the control of others, of sin or of our own selfishness, all of which lead to slavery, when we could be under God's control? He wants us to be his loyal, obedient servants; to lovingly trust him to the point of saying, "Not my will, but yours be done." Service because of gratitude is far different from slavery. Our God will not enslave us. Good news!

Cliff – To bring our service to a close, George & Leo will read another of Verna's favorite Bible passages.

SCRIPTURE DUET (From 1 Cor. 15 & 1 Thess. 4) – George (1) & Leo (2).

1 – Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

2 – For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 – Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest, who have no hope.

2 – We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

1 – According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

2 – For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 – After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

2 – And so we will be with the Lord forever.

1 & 2 – Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Cliff – Verna took these words, always so encouraging to her, and formed them into a poem that could be sung to the tune of Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus. It's called Going Home, and we are going to sing it now.

6. GOING HOME Words by Verna Kwiatkowski; Music by George J. Webb

1. Caught up! Caught up with Jesus to meet him in the air,
With joy we rise to greet him, delighted to be there!
The trumpet call has sounded with notes both loud and clear.
The voice of God commanded: "Come, children, gather near."
2. What joy when first we see him, our Savior, King, and Lord,
He gave to us salvation, which we could not afford.
Set free from all earth's shackles, and able now to soar,
We're heading for our homeland to live forevermore!
3. When we arrive in Heaven, and shed our final tear,
We'll take in our surroundings with heightened eye and ear.
How glorious the vision, so precious to behold!
Transformed, we gaze in wonder: the half had not been told!

ANNOUNCEMENT – Cliff: Lord willing, we will be back on Thursday, April 2 at 2:00 with our monthly Scripture and Prayer with Verna and Friends. This will actually be the day before Good Friday, so we will be concentrating on the crucifixion. Then just 3 days later, on Sunday, April 5, we plan to give at 2:30 an Easter Service with Verna and Friends. You are all invited to join us for these services.

*** A couple years after the Sky View services began, Verna turned the composition of the closing blessing over to Cliff.*

GOD'S OVERFLOWING BLESSINGS

This has been a service in which, as we worshipped, we also reminisced about all the blessings that God has bestowed over the course of these 100 services at Sky View.

Blessings to Verna in the form of the readings, poems and songs He has given her during this time, some of which we've used again today.

Blessings to me personally as I have helped Verna over the years in the preparation of these services, and in leading most of these services over more than 8 years. In fact, as I have thought about it, I realized this is the longest I've ever had the same job in my life. Thank you, Verna, for steady employment!

And I know all of these people up here, Leo, George, Frank, Sharon, Marilyn, John, Earl, and the many others who have helped in presenting these services over the years feel blessed to have participated.

And I know you have been blessed as well. I know this becomes you tell me so, repeatedly, when I come to greet you after these services.

Amidst all these blessings, what comes to my mind is the realization that when God bestows blessings, they don't just fall upon one person such as Verna. But as God blesses Verna, all the rest of us are blessed in many ways as well.

The picture I see is that of one of those fountains, where the water flowing from the top of the fountain cascades down over layer after layer, spreading and overflowing from each layer down to a wider layer until the water has spread far beyond the original opening at the top.

We, you and I and all of us in attendance, are like those layers of the fountain, receiving blessing upon blessing from God's blessing of these services.

So as you go out of here today, I suggest you keep the fountain flowing. Take the blessings that have flowed from God to you, and let them overflow on to others around you.

With that thought, I'll close with that wonderful blessing from Numbers chapter 6:

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
The Lord turn his face toward you, and give you peace.

*** Our worship time each month concludes with the postlude, after which the team personally greets the residents. Today's postlude was another favorite hymn and Verna's frequent expression: To God be the Glory!*

© April, 2015
Verna Kwiatkowski

www.vernakwiatkowski.com