

Louise McCrary Memorial Service – January 15, 2018

Prelude music -- Margie

Welcome, scripture (2 Timothy 4:7), prayer – Jerry

We welcome you on behalf of everyone here at First Presbyterian Church, and all those in our community touched by Louise over the years, and who have shared their gifts with her as well. We especially welcome and thank Janie Lopez, who has been at the hub of Louise's life-work work and philanthropy for decades. She also coordinated her home-care as of late. We are honored by the loyal service of Betty Curtis, Henry Etta Cruse, Lupe Garcia, Linda Collazo, and Susie Ortiz. We welcome and thank them for sharing this time of celebration and memory as well.

St. Paul wrote this to his loyal friend Timothy: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Louise not only kept the faith, she kept our faith alive by her witness and service. We press on, and honor her memory by living what she taught us about dignity, honor, humility, and humor.

Let us pray: Our God of grace and glory, we remember and honor Louise today and we thank you for giving her to us to know and to love. By your compassionate presence, console us in our mourning. Inspire in us the confidence of a certain faith, the comfort of holy hope, and the peace which passes all understanding; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Congregational Hymn: "Be Still My Soul." (# 819 - First verse)

Remarks from Malcolm

Scripture readings – Elizabeth

Psalm 121

**I lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help?
My help cometh from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth.
He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.
The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The Lord will watch over your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and for evermore.**

John 14: 1-3

Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so would I have told you that I

go and prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.

About Louise – Elizabeth

We meet today as family and friends to remember and to celebrate the grand and full life of Louise McCrary, who was a truly strong, beautiful, gracious, faithful and generous lady. Louise was genuine, fun-loving, and light-hearted, related easily to people of all ages, loved her animals and the beauty of her backyard, and always had a kind word to say. Her friend, Tom McGovern said, “Louise had a sparkle about her, a deep sense of dignity and quality, and a heart full of patience for the wild man she loved and lived with for 72 years!

I last saw Louise in December around her 97th birthday and we talked about her amazing life--- the incredible experiences she has had, how life has evolved from her birth in 1920, and the many wonderful people that have enriched her days in unimaginable ways. She also told me that she had gotten very tired and would be ready to go whenever the good Lord came for her but in the meantime, she was grateful that she could stay at home with the help of her loving caregivers. While we are thankful that Louise did not have to linger for long and was able to die on her terms in her beloved home last Tuesday morning, we will forever miss her and always thank God for her, as Louise was one of those rare people who always made you feel good in her presence.

When I visited Louise, we sometimes shared a glass of wine and what we knew, we always laughed and she always asked if there was anyone I knew that could use her help, we got caught up with all that was going on in our lives and in the lives of our loved ones and in her real and caring way, she sent me on my way in better space and spirits than I had come. As we share stories about her wonderful life that was filled to the brim with quantity and quality, Louise would want us to keep it short, to laugh, to give thanks for the incredible gift of life, faith, and friendship, and to leave this church in better space and spirits because of her great love and care for each of us.

Through the years, Louise found great comfort in her quiet, Christian faith as well as in the fellowship and community she and Giles experienced in this church. Louise was the backbone of this congregation for decades-- she opened her home for lunches or meetings, made purchases that added to both the aesthetics and the upkeep of our building, and always went out of her way to love and serve others. There was a group of Presbyterian women who met every Wednesday at Jo Cash’s pool to eat lunch, lay-out in the sun, swap stories and share lives and spirits. In addition to their weekly lunches, Louise, Wanda Mitchell, Frances Camp and Minnie Williams met daily in the afternoons for cocktails and to give support, perspective, and sanity to whatever was happening in their lives and the lives of their families. Louise and Minnie talked to each other every day and Louise still laughed about how Minnie would get upset when she called Louise and Giles would not give Louise the telephone! Louise said she and Minnie had shared life intimately for over 70 years, had traveled, socialized, and taught

Sunday school together, raised and buried children with each other, loved, nurtured and complained about their husbands, and painted a meaningful and reflective picture of how faith and friendship truly sustain the essence of our lives and the fiber of our beings from beginning to end.

In addition to faith and friendship, Louise's life was also defined in remarkable ways by Giles and generosity. Giles and Louise grew up in the same Fort Worth neighborhood and had fun skating and taking dance lessons with each other when they were young. They were married for 72 years and sweethearts all of their lives! Their relationship brought out the best in the other and through the highs and lows and ordinary in between times, they gave each other much security, love and light-heartedness in their life together. Giles truly adored Louise and enjoyed shopping for her and bringing her clothes, trinkets and presents. While Giles was a man of the world and marched to the beat of his own drum, Louise was a homebody and the one person in his life that could change his plans or lay down the law with him! When Louise told him not to bring back to their already full home any more treasures from his trips, Giles decided to open the museum so Louise would be happy and he would have a place to house his stuff! Giles always said he was more of a packrat than a museum curator and Louise wholeheartedly agreed!

Giles and Louise were extremely grateful for the many blessings of their lives and were humbled by all they were able to accomplish and experience—they truly took nothing for granted. But I believe their greatest joy was found in the many ways they were able to use what they had been given in the service of others. Both Louise and Giles loved to give and were intentional about finding ways to anonymously and lavishly bless others and improve the quality of life in the communities of Post and Lubbock for decades to come. We will never, ever know the number of college and seminary scholarships, new businesses, hospital and utility bills, large charitable donations to hospitals, non-profits and universities, endowed funds and chairs at Texas Tech and its medical school, or the many unknown avenues this life-filled and loving couple used to enhance the well-being of others!

Louise's life was never boring and her simple kindnesses, gentle strengths and compassionate, generous ways brought much richness and depth to the ordinary experiences of her life and the lives of those she touched. Through her determined nature, her devotion to others, and her gift of connecting with other people, Louise knew how to make the most of the precious and fragile gift of life we are each given to live. Although her journey through this life is now complete, her loving presence will continue to give us strength, fond memories, many smiles as well as an enduring sustenance for each of us on our own sacred journeys. Louise left us last week with a lot of life in her years and a lot of love, peace, gratitude, and joy in her heart.

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, Where there is hatred,

let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy; O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.” Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Prayers and Lord’s Prayer - Elizabeth

Congregational Hymn: “Be Thou My Vision.” (# 450 - First and last verse)

Genesis 2:18:

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

Every single time an event happened around here – a funeral, a wedding, a graduation, I’d often pass along the news to Louise – in person or over the phone; she never did have an email address – and this is what she ALWAYS said. “What can I do?” “How can I help?”

For ages, that meant she organized, cooked, baked, called. Later on, she sent help along, and she prayed. A helper fit for all of us.

Maybe most especially with Giles and the family business. He got most of the credit for all the wonderful things they did. But everyone knows she did much of the work. Behind the scenes. Quietly. Firmly. And without whom, the wheels might well come off.

Michael has this memorable image of how far Louise was willing to go to be helpful. In the early days, musical talent around here was in short supply. Minnie Williams wound up as the church pianist. But she was too short to reach the pedals. I’m told that, when needed, Louise would crawl under the piano – probably that one right over there - and work the pedals in order to help make the music. I’m going to stop here for just a second for that mind picture to register.

How can I help? What can I do?

Louise helped. She helped HONOR our life together. I’m told that everything was just a little bit better at her house – or when you were together with her – and when she worked in the community. Whether it was sharing in the oversight of the museum, bringing artichoke dip to a funeral lunch, or even manning the beer tent for the annual OS roping competition, it just went better for the honor and dignity she brought to anything she did. She carried an almost regal demeanor, and did so without any sense that this was about anything but about you.

I've always been touched by how HUMBLE has been the service and philanthropy that has come from this family, and directed by its Matriarch. I've been witness to their work for over 23 years and I still don't know the depth to which the Franklin Trust keeps the wheels on organizations, families, and the lives of so many individuals in this community and beyond. But I do know this. Every time I ever did hear of what was done, or how deeply this generosity was felt, I never heard Louise take any credit. If anything was said at all, it was something like this: "I feel so fortunate to be able to help."

To be able to help. With honor. And humility. And one thing more. Humor. I think the many of the times I've laughed loud, and long. I think of gatherings of people in Louise's orbit. Often with her at the center, maybe not making much noise, but with a bright twinkle of her eye that made you get it – that she was getting it all, and giving plenty in return. A partial Roll call: Dalby. Cash. Mitchell. Mills. Camp. Shiver. Newby. Connell. Kirkpatrick. Now add your own name. Smile. And remember.

I think I first met Louise at Sunday school. And I think of three together: Louise, Frances, Minnie. These three grand ladies were very different in many ways. But joined at the heart in friendship. And with laughter. When they laughed together, you knew most of all how deeply they loved each other. And how, by living, laughing, loving, and serving together, the whole was so much greater than the sum of its parts. They helped. The helped each other. They helped all of us.

The hardest part about today is that we've all, in a way, kind of lost our Mom. Which means we've been promoted. To serve. To help. To be the greater whole that is the sum of us together. Louise's spirit inspires us to HONOR. Done best with HUMILITY. And with a tinkle of the eye and a laugh from the heart.

Of the two, Giles was much more the world traveller. Louise saw her share of God's creation, but especially later, she kept the home fires burning while Giles went back to the Amazon, or Bora Bora, or some other exotic place. I have an idea that last Tuesday, Giles came calling. And he told her, "You've got to come along on this one." It's the very best of it all." He would know. Now so does she.

God bless them together again. God bless and keep their memory alive with our honor.

Amen.

Prayer:

**Into your hands O merciful Savior we commend Louise, your servant.
Acknowledge her we pray, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock.
Receive her into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting
peace, and into the glorious company of all the saints in light. Amen.**

Congregational Hymn: "All Things Bright and Beautiful" (#20 - First verse.)

Benediction:

**To Honor Louise: Go into the world in peace. Have courage. Hold onto what is
good. Return to no-one evil for evil. Strengthen the faint-hearted, support the
weak, help the suffering. Honor all people. Speak and act with love on your
lips and in your heart. Be generous. Honor our life together. Be humble.
Share good humor. Love. Amen**

Postlude music -- Margie