



Dear People of God,

This March message comes to you as we are deep in the season of Lent. Lent – a time of renewed discipline to be in the Word and a time to reflect on the God Moments in your life. God Moments are those times that God in His Grace reveals Himself to us in amazingly nourishing ways...a moment of crystal clear clarity, an overwhelming sense of complete and total peace, a frozen moment in time that jump starts faith, an awakening of being made new with Jesus by your side. God Moments are unexplainable, yet real. God Moments are gifts from our Heavenly Father. God Moments are meant to be shared that others may be encouraged and strengthened in their faith journey. Sharing a God Moment is one way to evangelize, to tell of Jesus and His Love.

Evangelism. Hmmm. Being a strong Norwegian Lutheran, I have personally kept evangelizing at arm's length. It seems a rather risky business. I have basic Biblical knowledge with the emphasis on "basic." I don't want to embarrass God (or myself, probably more emphasis on myself) if someone stumps me with a Biblical question. And there are those questions like: Why does God let babies die? Why do bad things happen to good people? Then there's the authority of the Bible and science v. religion and hypocrites going to church and all the church ever asks for is money. Yeah, evangelism can open up a whole can of worms!

Yet, aren't we called to be "fishers of people?" Worms are a part of the fishing experience, but worms aren't the goal. The worms are used to make the "catch." And what is the "catch?" I propose to you the catch is "souls for Jesus." So with that in mind, I would like to share with you one of the many God Moments in my life.



It's December, 1982. I am in the Israel with others from my church. We have just held a service where we read the end of Matthew when our Risen Lord and Savior, while ascending into heaven, commanded the disciples and those in attendance to *"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And, surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* I was very moved and quite overwhelmed and returned early to our bus to reflect. The view from the bus was Jerusalem. The Eastern Wall with its blocked-



up gate was in view with the expanse of the city sprawling beyond. I started to think about all who have not heard of God's love demonstrated in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. I thought about all who have heard and didn't believe. I then thought of Jesus seeing Jerusalem and saying *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were not willing..."* (Luke 13:34) What broke over me can only be described as a cascade of tears. I began to cry...no, sob. From deep inside, those who were lost, living in darkness, defeated, fooled, empty or seeking to fill themselves with whatever the world could give them, bombarded my soul and I sobbed for them. I cried and cried feeling the deception of Satan who longs to dissuade a believer, distract a seeker, confuse a mind and use apathy and/or arrogance in strong measure to deflect any call of the Spirit. I remember crying to God *"Why can't they see? Why won't they believe?"* I don't remember an answer but I do remember the bus driver watching me in his mirror. I tried to calm myself. I wanted to "buck up," but the tears just wouldn't stop. The heaviness on my heart was so real. One of the pastors traveling with us came up the bus steps and

A WELCA SERVANT HIGHLIGHT - How does one spell "volunteer?" R-H-O-D-A !

When I accepted the role of President of WELCA, Rhoda Hargrave, who is also serving on the Board, became my "WELCA Encyclopedia." She has a vast knowledge of the workings of the church in all arenas including the Women of the Church, which just might be her specialty. In looking over her past volunteer experiences in the churches and communities where Rhoda has lived, I think you will agree that she is a wealth of experience and knowledge! Here is a sampling of her volunteering:

- Sunday School teacher as a teenager and later, Sunday School Adult Leader
- Vacation Bible School craft teacher, Craft leader on Dominican Republic Mission Trip
- Choir member, always
- Volunteer at the National Lutheran Home in DC in the craft room
- Served in varied positions for the women of the Lutheran ALC, LCA, and now ELCA churches
- Varied positions include Treasurer, Secretary, President, Committee Chair on local level
- Conference level of state WELCA as Presider, Director of Communications, Asst Treasurer
- Often a Delegate to state meetings
- Member of the Church Council here at Grace and in Nativity in Alexandria, VA
- Served on Education Committee when Grace began its Preschool
- Community involvement includes: Habitat for Humanity, Meals on Wheels, Blue Ridge Literacy Council and FISH driver

Rhoda's life is a testament to the love of Christ which has fueled her energy and her efforts for as long as she can remember. Rhoda shares a bit of her faith story:

"My earliest recollection of learning about Jesus was taught to me at age 4 or 5 by Mrs. Meyer, who was my first Sunday School Teacher. She taught me to sing "Jesus Loves Me". I have loved singing hymns ever since and have always felt I had a strong faith in my Savior.

But as most people experience, there were times of doubt and wondering if all I learned during my faith-forming years were true, especially when going through experiences that were troubling.

During one such experience, something happened to me that convinced me that Jesus is truly alive.

It happened in June of 1972. One night my husband walked out on me and our four children and I was devastated. All I could do was lock myself in my room and cry hysterically for what seemed like hours, pleading with God to take away the pain, to tell me what to do, to make things somehow miraculously right and better and to not feel so abandoned.

All of a sudden I felt a burning sensation starting at what I call the center of my being near my heart and radiating out to all areas of my body, my arms, hands, legs, feet and even to my head.

I felt a presence in the room with me though I couldn't see anything or anyone there. Then I heard His voice. I instinctively knew it was the voice of Jesus. He said, "Remember, I am with you Always." At once a feeling of utter calm and peace came over me. I sensed that this must be the way I would feel if I went to heaven to be with Jesus. I didn't want that feeling to go away, but after it did, I knew everything would be ok. I was then able to fall asleep as if there was nothing to worry about, nothing to disturb that sleep and a feeling that I would be able to go through any heartaches or troubles that come my way because Jesus would be with me through it all."

And so Jesus was with Rhoda and continues to be.

As Rhoda reflects on all her years of willing service for the Kingdom, she wraps it up with this:

"I always wondered what I would be when I grew up, but I guess I have been doing what I was meant to do all along....being a volunteer!" Thank You, Lord, for the blessing of Rhoda!



Rhoda makes "Butterfly pillows" for hospice and rehab centers.

