

August 25, 2020

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH...

To Friends of Earl Palmer Ministries

Let's Keep in Touch...

During these months of world-wide pandemic, the stay-at-home safeguard has kept most of us away from public meetings and large gatherings. Some have been able to work from home, but one thing important to all of us is finding a way to keep in touch with one another in the context of social distancing - phone, social media, postal mail and through our prayers.

My own work during these weeks has focused on writing a biblical commentary of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. One thing that has struck me is Paul's concern to keep personally in touch with his friends at Ephesus while he is held inside a Roman prison. He writes "so that you may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychius will tell you everything, he is a dear brother..." (Ephesians 6:21). This tender note from Paul keeps their friendship up to date even when apart. In Paul's mind, personal information and shared prayer concerns have important roles to play in their Christian fellowship.

At the close of the letter he adds, "I am sending Tychius to let you know how we are, and to encourage your hearts. Peace be to you brothers and sisters and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 6:22,23). Throughout the Ephesian letter, Paul's goal was to steady this young fellowship of believers in the peace that comes from Jesus. It is this Jesus - with his teaching, his sacrificial death at the cross and his resurrection that defeated death - that steadies us in good times and in times of stress.

He also asks for their prayers too, "Pray also for me, so that I will make known with openness the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains," (Ephesian 6:19, 20). This steady grace for Paul is the encouragement that the letter shares even in his time of being confined in prison. He doesn't dwell on his chains.

Best of all, Paul mixes joy with faith and peace with the words, "Be filled with the spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts." (Ephesians 5:18-19). For each of us in today's safety protections from a dangerous and contagious virus, we cannot presently sing in choirs or in gatherings together but we can treasure the music and quietly sing along with recordings that preserve the familiar sounds and the healing they bring.

These past few weeks a surprise package arrived in the post mail. We opened the mailing to find a gift of a CD with a list of hymns recorded by our dear brother in Christ, Walt Wagner. The CD is titled The Comforter. It was like a letter we received. Walt's ability at the piano to express the soul of the hymns put us in touch as he communicated in the language of music. And comfort us it did!

We replayed and replayed his piano renditions of the hymns so familiar to us and used the experience for our time of worship last Sunday. We sang alongside. The piece, Blessed

Assurance (1873) by Fannie Crosby written in a time of deep hurt in the country, reminded us of the words and especially focused our hearts and minds on the enduring truth that steadies us:
Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Saviour am happy and blest,

Watching and waiting looking above, Filled with His mercy; lost in His love.
This is my story; this is my song. Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song, Praising my savior all the day long.

To end, I want to share that Shirley sent a note to Walt to express the gift of his piano recordings, and wrote, Through the music, "I heard the Lord and felt gratitude for his servant, Walt." We were encouraged that he kept in touch with us.

May God bless each of you near and far and please know that we pray that you will find surprises of joy that bring encouragement to you in "a time such as this".

From your friend, Earl