

Phoenix Rising

This grief newsletter is sent to members and friends of Paradise Valley United Methodist Church following the loss of a loved one. PVUMC pastors are available to you if you need one-on-one support. Contact the church office for more information at 602-840-8360. If you wish to be removed from the mailing list, contact the church office or e-mail ddoran@pvumc.org.

Debbie Doran, Editor

Musings for Today

In the midst of grief, our world can shrink to a single perspective — the dark, empty hole of loss. From inside that space, it feels impossible to imagine climbing out, and sometimes we don't even want to. That hollow place becomes familiar, even when it hurts.

Yet every so often, a small thought nudges us to look toward the edge. Not to erase the grief, not to "move on," but simply to notice that there is still a world beyond the hole — a world we now have to navigate in a new way.

My hope is that some of my offerings this month give you gentle opportunities to look up, to look around, and to see your life from varied angles. Not to deny the sorrow, but to recognize that even in grief, perspective can widen, and light can find its way in.¹

Whispers for the Soul

Your life will consist of a series of times when you must reinvent yourself.

We desperately cling to the idea that things should stay the same, but life and growth are about change.

Don't mistake the end of a chapter for the end of the story. Lean into the plot changes and follow your character arc. If you are in a dark part of your tale, know that this night will not last forever, but you must be brave enough to see it through. This is not the end, oh my friend. Take courage, better things await you.²



The Tapestry Poem

My life is but a weaving, between my God and me.
I cannot choose the colors, He weaveth steadily.
Oft' times He weaveth sorrow; and I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper, and I the underside.
Not 'til the loom is silent, and the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unroll the canvas and reveal the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful in a weaver's skillful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.
He knows, He loves, He cares; nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those who leave the choice to Him.³

JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF: Mami' Grief

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.

Psalm 56:8 (NLT)

"That was fun, right?" I said to my mother after getting back from Connecticut.

We'd just spent 4 days at my cousin's house. My father had passed a few months ago, and my mother was now spending more time with me.

"Yes, we had a wonderful time with the family," she agreed.

I watched her smile begin to scrunch before sobbing into her open hands.

"How dare I?" she cried. "How can I enjoy myself when he's not here to enjoy it with me?"

For 54 years, my father enjoyed many experiences with his beautiful bride. They'd dance in the kitchen without music at all, hold hands everywhere they went, and join in harmony whenever the other would spontaneously sing out loud. They had worked together as equal partners in our home, cooking together, washing dishes, and folding sheets into small, neat squares. Their love didn't fade in their many years together. Even in the depth of dementia, my father never forgot his great love for my mother.

Now that he was gone, she struggled with her grief. Good days were met with guilt at the thought she might be forgetting him, while bad days were met with guilt because she was ungrateful for their many years together.

That day, I encouraged my mother to grieve without judgment and recognize it as something beautiful in all of its forms. Grief is hard, but it is the only expression of love we have left to give.

Let Us Prayer

Lord, you know my heart even more than I do, especially in the fog of despair. When I'm struggling to be kind to myself as I process painful emotions, remind me there is no ingratitude or lack of love in my heart when I grieve – there is only love.⁴

Prayer

Prayer does not remove the tragedy; it does not offer us a means of escape from the situation; it does not give us exemption from the task; but it DOES make us able to bear the unbearable, to face the unfaceable, to pass the breaking point without breaking."⁵



Footnotes

1. Paula Rugen
2. John Mark Green
3. Corrie ten Boon
4. "WALKING IN GRACE 2026" by Karen Valentin, Wednesday, August 19 – page 253
5. Richard Rohr