



SEPTEMBER Hug~In~A~Mug 2021 VOL. 66

Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on..... Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. And yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they (Matthew 6: 25a, 26)?*

I know life can be sobering at times, especially when I prayed the Holy Spirit move me in the direction of this, my **September 2021, HUG in a MUG**, after a wonderful August hiatus. I had to revisit the realization, to support the anxiety we all have experienced these past eighteen months in some form or another, that God's plan for us is to not be anxious, period. I was spending breakfast watching the "birds of the air" come to my new bird bath, bend, and sip, lift their heads to heaven and swallow, and be satisfied. It was a stark parallel to me of our privilege of taking communion each week; we eat and drink and are satisfied.

Our recent society Bible Study on "Surrender" spoke directly to me, as its definition says, "give oneself up to the power of another." This idea of surrender comes from our heavenly Father. The Bible verse above asks us, "Are you not of more value than they?" (i.e., more important than the birds He feeds!) August was a time of coming to grips, surrendering the things I truly cannot change. And with it came a profound peace. And I was fascinated at how much Counselor LaFore's morning Devotion at the Tualatin Retreat focused on I Peter, who had so much to say, about we, the body of Christ: "You are Jesus Christ, the living stones in building up the church."

Staring clear across the room at a large retaining wall, bathed in sunlight, I sketched on my doodle pad, three stones high. I was smacked with how every two stones hold up the middle of the stone above it! Figuratively, that bodes us each to shoulder one another and be intentional lights, looking upwards to God and outward to others, as intentional and contagious disciples. We each have so many gifts to share, especially specific prayer.

... You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:5). We are coming out of this eighteen month's setback of enforced separation with a strength and renewed energy that was almost palpable, amidst the **JOY**ful squeals of seeing each other once more. For those at home, be assured: our Leadership is there, new plans are exciting, and our shoulders are the "stones of support and continued uplifting" of this body. We know how to do this! **WITH THE BLESSING OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER!**

Individually and collectively, we have been set apart to do His will. In this role, it's our job to offer prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, and witness to others by our very acts of caring and sharing. At the Retreat, our in-gathering and bundling over 700 Blessing Bags for the Homeless was a profound witness and a labor of love for many. We will never know those lives we touch, but God promises his Grace is imperishable. And may the devotionals tucked inside sprout Hope to many and grow into the light of His purpose. **SO: as Luke reminds us in Acts 14:22....** May God strengthen the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith.

Respectfully Yours, Pat Reck, Leader Development