

Good Sunday morning Church of the Apostles Family.

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you today. Yesterday Bruce and I had to make the difficult discussion to put our amazing Border collie, Shep, down. Most of you know how blessed we were to have such a wonderful, smart, loving and faithful dog in our family. Shep accompanied me to church many times and always was happy to welcome folks and once that was done, he would content himself by laying down and waiting for me to accomplish whatever task I needed to perform.

I am grateful that he was not sick long. That he did not suffer and was not in any pain. He apparently had a severe infection that was attacking his body and was getting increasingly worse as he was being evaluated at the Emergency Clinic in Hagerstown. His breathing was becoming labored. And I knew that he was not well when I asked Shep if he wanted to go outside and go for a walk and he didn't move.

W. Bruce Cameron, author of *A Dog's Purpose*, says, "Every dog happens for a reason." I agree wholeheartedly! Shep came to us just when we would need him the most, but we didn't know it then. Please indulge me as I share the story of how Shep came to be part of the Druckenmiller Family:

Our

daughter, Rachel, was visiting our church in Williamsport, PA one Sunday morning for worship and during worship, Ben Keller, Shep's previous owner, announced that he and his wife had to leave their farm and go into assisted living apartments at the Williamsport Home. He asked if anyone at New Covenant would take Shep or knew anyone who would. Rachel called her daddy right away. I was leading worship at my church, Trinity UCC in Lewistown, that morning. Bruce was at Hartman Center working since he had campers for the weekend. I came home and immediately Bruce informed me that Shep needed a home, to which I replied, "He has a home here with Preacher and us." To which Bruce replied, "I knew you would say that, so I told Rachel to let Ben and Ruth know that we would take Shep." The Keller's were elated. I truly think God was smiling.

We both quickly made plans to have the Keller's bring Shep to his new home at Hartman Center. Plans were that they would arrive in the afternoon on a Saturday and that would work for me since I had an event at my church in the morning. My hope was to be there when they brought Shep so that he would possibly become my dog since Bruce had Preacher, his gift from the church he had pastored in Williamsport for fifteen-years. But Ben and Ruth arrived early and I was not home and lucky Bruce ended up with two faithful companions totally devoted to him. Yes, Shep became my hiking buddy and was always there to console me when I was sad or lonely. He certainly was obedient and listened so well – except when those crazy squirrels came in our yard. If he would have been younger I would be willing to bet that he would have caught several before they made it up our trees.

When Bruce felt called back to parish ministry and he answered the call to Trinity UCC here in Waynesboro, we intended to bring two Border collies with us that January of 2016. But in December of 2015, it became clear that Preacher was "playing out." He was just shy of fourteen-years and was slowing down. I still remember that day as if it was yesterday. It was like Shep knew we were grieving. He was such a smart and loving creature. He certainly was a tremendous comfort to us after Preacher was gone. Shep adjusted so well to the move to Waynesboro. I told him he would have to become a "street walker" since we were leaving our

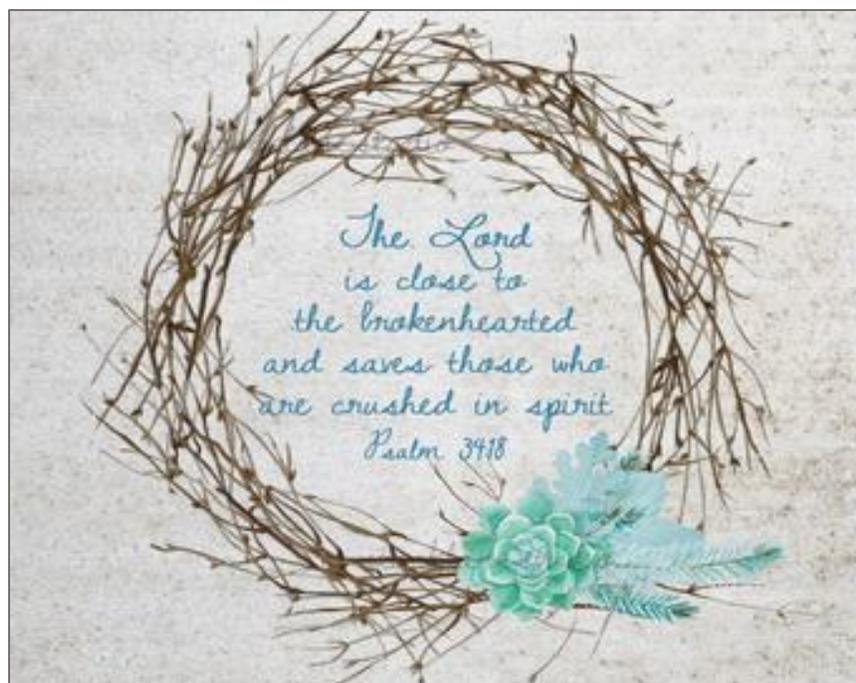
home amid 192 acres of woodlands and trails to live right in the center of Waynesboro. Little did I realize how close we would be to the Appalachian Trail and this would become our special activity for the two of us. Many a Tuesday morning Shep and I would meet some of the most wonderful folks in this area, a few other special canines and away we would go on many a hike. Shep was always ready, willing and able. He seemed to know by the sound my shoes made when I came down the steps that I was ready for hiking. Or it seemed he could tell by the clothes I had on.

You all know me, I could go on, and on, and on ... Thanks for letting me share. I will probably seem a bit lost for a while and I will most assuredly have tears in my eyes for a while. But I will be okay. I believe that dogs, and other creatures, do go to heaven. After all, our Creator made arrangements for Noah to take two of every kind of animal into the ark when God planned to flood the earth. God went to great lengths to make sure animals would once again roam this Earth. And maybe you are a fan of W. Bruce Cameron's books where he shares that dogs die and are reborn as another dog to another family who is in need of a faithful and caring companion. Whatever you believe, I'm sure you would agree with me that my life has been truly better because I had Shep in my life and was able to share him with others. You see love never dies, friends are always with us – four legged or two, and, as W. Bruce Cameron says, "Every creature has a purpose."

Thank you God that Shep was part of my life, my family and taught me how to love and care for others - unconditionally, which I will strive to do so, even though quite challenging. Thank you for entrusting me with one of your special creatures!

Amen and Blessings for another week in our journey together!

Pastor Narda



This week Apostles received an update from Global Ministries about the Dumaguete Kalauman Center where Nelwin lives. Nelwin is the young man our church family sponsors. This makes him part of our Church of the Apostles family. Let me just share the update with you:

Update: April 2020

“Since the Philippines government ordered strict lockdown measures in the country to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, many parents of children at the Kalauman Center and millions across the country, have lost their means to earn daily wages. This has resulted in families facing extreme challenges in obtaining food and medicine during this quarantine period. In the Philippines, senior citizen and children are not allowed to leave their homes, and only health workers, police, bank employees, and grocery store clerks can work at this time.

Therefore, the Kalauman Center has cancelled all programs and activities with youth and families at this time until these orders have been lifted. Staff members are at home, working as they are able with limited access to internet. Currently, board members and staff members are exploring ways to assist families who are terribly affected by this situation. At the time of this report, there have been no known diagnoses of COVID-19 for children, family members, staff, or board members at the Kalauman Center.”

As we read this, we can see that the actions taken are similar to what we are all experiencing here at home. Unfortunately, we do not know at this time exactly what Nelwin and his family are experiencing. My hope is that we will have an update on Nelwin and his family very soon. Please continue to keep Nelwin and his family in your prayers. And if you feel led to make a financial contribution toward the needs of his family at this difficult time, we will see that it gets to him. Thank you all for your continued support of this special young man.