



# The Branches

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## *Aging, Experience, Advice for all Stages*

**What is the secret advice to aging gracefully? It isn't purposefully a secret: aging full of Grace.**

Scriptural wisdom provides the grace for living and aging as well as possible. It begins with trust that all is provided for through Christ's love, grace, and mercy. It continues with perseverance in searching Scripture, even when emotions and apathy don't make it easy. It leads on with faith that reminds us to *follow* Him. God gives us all sorts of wisdom—better than advice—for how to get through each day and event.

Those people who age gracefully know this, and they act on it. They don't need to trumpet their knowledge from the pinnacles. They show their wisdom in actions; they are the living proof. They know how to form opinions based on solid ground (Scripture), and they don't toss around unnecessary advice. Their age shows beautifully, they are respected, they know how to be contented more easily.

Many people's advice consists of upsetting stories that don't do much but disable your faith and courage. Be selective about where you get advice from. If you need a list of wise thoughts and a bit of wit, read through Proverbs. If you need a friend that sympathizes and points you to God, read through Psalms. If you need to prioritize things in life, read the Gospels and Acts. If you want philosophy, go to Ecclesiastes. If you turn to a friend for advice, consider whether that friend uses Scriptural wisdom to counsel you or just personal opinions.

Setting aside time for daily devotions is one of the best habits for a Christian woman (or any Christian) to acquire. If your impulse is to say, "What a drudgery," or "I'm so busy," or tired, or you may not want to read devotions alone, then you need daily devotions, just like everyone else. A regular reminder of God's love comes through them, and each day is made much more joyous to live with. I often need to tell myself that I am the one cheated the most when I neglect daily reading of Scripture.

On a different subject, I'm happy to announce *The Branches* has reached a great milestone this year. The July issue will mark the beginning of our fifth year! To celebrate our birthday, we're presenting a special subscription offer that you'll definitely want to get in on—including a great discount offer and a chance at getting next year's subscription free! Be sure to check this offer out on page 15 with the subscription renewal form.

—Abby Matzke, *Immanuel, Mankato, MN*

***"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."***

—Colossians 3:2, 17

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# On Becoming a Mother

A few years ago, even into my 30s, I would likely have skipped over this article after reading the title. “I’m not a mother. This doesn’t apply to me.” For me, it wasn’t even “I’m not a mother (yet). It doesn’t really apply to me (now), but I might read it anyway.” It just wasn’t part of who I thought I was. But it did apply then just as much as it does now. It applies to all women of all ages, even my youngest niece who is just weeks old. It is simply about how God made us. Basically, it hit me a few weeks after the birth of our first child—I had been “a mother” all along.

No, I hadn’t given birth before; not everyone who is a mother in the traditional sense does. I hadn’t experienced the very big and overwhelming sensation of sitting at home with a crying infant while trying to comprehend that he wasn’t leaving to go home at some point with his parents (we were at home, and that was me—yikes). But about the time I had changed my newborn’s umpteenth diaper, it occurred to me that I had done all this before at some level—and not just the diapering part. Sure, babysitting, I said to myself. No, that wasn’t it. What was so familiar about this season that I’d just supposed I had entered?

I had been “a mother” all along.

When do we, as women, really feel at home in ourselves—that is, comfortable in our own skins? Is it when we’re holding someone or being held? Is it when a child looks at us and smiles? Is it when we arrive home after a time away to be “rushed” by family members who missed us and said “It just wasn’t the same while you were away?” Yes, it’s all those things and many more. It’s the fascination and pull we have to young ones. It’s the dolls we play with as little girls, the younger siblings we dress up and put in laundry basket “cribs.” Yes, it’s the babysitting classes we take and the children we watch as children ourselves. It’s the little cousins we cuddle and think are “so cute”—or those cute little first and second graders down the hall from where we are in 7th and 8th grade or high school. Later, perhaps, it’s the desire to touch, smell, kiss, and hold our first niece or nephew. It’s the care and concern we take on as youth group or youth activity leaders in our teens, twenties, and beyond. It’s the care and nurturing we provide to older women in our lives with respect and love. We nurture those younger (and sometimes older) than we are; we naturally take them under our wings, to teach, to listen, and to grow together. We wish great things for them, we hurt when they hurt, we cherish that they want us around, need us around—and we pray for their safety and their souls.

Elisabeth Elliot, a Christian author, said of women, “We were all meant to be mothers, but perhaps not (always) in the traditional sense.” After reading this when I was single and childless throughout my twenties, I really felt that my calling might be to simply serve children and young people all my days and never have children of my own. I found so much peace in that thought—that I could use my God-given gifts of “mothering” even if He didn’t bless me with a spouse and children. I’m sure now that He provided that peace for the appropriate season and, as always, in His wisdom was preparing me for this time and season.

So many times since that thought a few months ago have I pondered the notion of “becoming a mother.” So what does one do with new learning like this? Become arrogant and say to self or even out loud, “I’ve figured it all out?” or “Ok, I get it; I just can’t believe that other woman hasn’t figured it out yet.” God help us if we even entertain this sentiment. I am currently in awe (again, still) at how God has never stopped coming in and sweeping out the cobwebs of my heart so that I can see something more clearly in His time and in His way. It is humbling and worthy of all praise to Him for the love that He showers through lessons for His children, no matter what our age. God’s timing is always perfect, and it is unique to each of us.

Perhaps, in part, what to “do” with this learning is to encourage a mothering spirit in all women, young and old, single and married, with or without children living in their home. I know this is one of God’s great blessings to women—to support all those around our lives no matter what the relationship. This innate sense of support, care, and nurturing is in large part what it means to be a woman. This insight makes me want to run out into a big field, stretch my arms out as wide as possible, throw my head back and let out some very loud “ah” or “yes” from my gut

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## On Becoming a Mother—Continued

with a great big smile. Odd? Perhaps... but it works for young girls all the time. Why not as we get older? It would probably also relieve some of the child-carrying tension in my neck and shoulders, but that's a different topic all-together!

As for me personally, I think I'll focus on the "becoming" part from now on. I am, and have always been, a mother. How can I continue to "become" a better one? What new learning can I eagerly await for God to send? Even as children grow and leave home, I hope to always be "becoming" something new in this life—something deeper, wiser, and truer—that will make me better as a woman and mother as life changes with time. I like to think of the process of "becoming" like being a kid who lives in a candy store, with joyful access to loads of goodies from God!

Dear sisters in Christ, I pray for you today "...that your joy may be full" (John 16:24b). My joy was full when God showed me how to embrace my singleness. My joy was full when God showed me how to embrace my marriage. My joy is now full again as God shows me how to embrace my mothering spirit. Can God fill us with joy multiple times in life? Emphatically, yes! I pray that He has filled and continues to fill your lives with joy.

"But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Like this mother, we should ponder a little more. We, too, have been "mothers" all along.

—Tina Eichstadt, Immanuel, Mankato, MN

## Raising Children: His Mercy Endures

Having "raised" two children, who are now adults, I am extremely thankful to God that He raised our children for us. We were two young kids that knew nothing about what we were doing at the time. Now I know how much we did not know and how we could have been better Christian parents. We were always active in the mission churches we attended and we drove many miles to church every Sunday. The kids always asked why we drove so far to go to church, why we worshiped in someone's garage with no heat, or why we had a vacuum cleaner powering the organ. We must have answered them and lived the answers in a way that impressed upon them that God and His Word were very important in our lives. Our kids went to Sunday school and to summer Bible camps. That was about the extent of our Christian life at that time.

Now that I know how many mistakes we made, I am even more thankful they grew up to be Christian adults with Christian children (our grandchildren). Again, I must give credit to God for guiding us to send our kids to ILC for their high school years. Our children's faith was strengthened and nurtured at ILC. I must also give credit to God in giving us a young pastor and his wife (Dave & Mary Schierenbeck) who talked about their days at ILC. Our kids grew up knowing that they were going to go to Immanuel High School. There really weren't any real discussions about that fact when I think back on it.

So far, 5 of our 6 grandchildren have attended or are at ILC. (One more to go!) We have many fond memories of instances where the kids were well cared for and watched over by all the loving professors. Prof. Ron Roehl, in particular, was a good role model and cared for the kids like they were his own. We are very thankful to God for Prof. Roehl, his wife, and family, who allowed him to dedicate so much of their family time to the kids and the school.

We have very fond memories of all the ILC kids that passed through our doors in Illinois, many who just knocked on our door because they were tired, had some car trouble, or needed a place to stay for a long weekend far from home. So many times we had part or most of the ILC tour choir stay in our home. Sleeping in beds, on the floors—wherever we could put them.

I am so thankful for all those good memories of our church life. God has definitely been good to us and our family.

**"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good! For His mercy endures forever.*"** —Psalm 106:1b

—Audrey Wuerch, Holy Cross, Phoenix, AZ

# Who Wants to Grow Old?

**W**ho wants to grow old? Some say, “it’s better than the alternative.” For the Christian, the alternative to living on this world is heaven. God’s Word has some things to say about heaven, but also lots to say about aging. We can be thankful the Lord has a more gracious attitude toward aging than our youth-obsessed society does today. Proverbs 16:31 says, “The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness.” What an unfashionable idea! Gray hair is a “crown of glory,” a sign of “experience.” The Almighty’s values are a far cry from our own or the worlds.

Isaiah 46:4a, “Even to *your* old age, I am He, And *even* to gray hairs I will carry *you*.” Instead of being “disposable seniors,” the elderly are promised God’s continuing concern.

Job 12:12 says, “Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?” (NIV). Even though our body may be deteriorating, we can gain in wisdom and understanding. There is a tendency in our youth-oriented society to hang on to youth, but in reality, the Bible says that with age comes wisdom.

Aging is not only inevitable, but aging is essential. Through it, God gives us daily reminders that we’re headed for eternity. As we get older we should say, “Lord, teach us to number our days.” I think that God helps us by reminding us every time we look in the mirror. We are forced to think, “Who is that person?”

Aging is inevitable and it is essential, but Praise God, it’s not eternal! Because we’re only here for a short time, we’ll discard these bodies and move on to our glorious, new, resurrected state where there shall be no aging or disease, no trembling of the pillars, no losing of the grinders (Ecclesiastes 12:3). Aging is not an eternal process. It’s short—then on to heaven, where we’ll have new bodies designed for eternity. That is why Solomon says, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Now is the time in your aging to spend time in the Word, worshiping God now, serving God now, and that is how you get wisdom in old age. Walking with God and committing your life to Him, you will age gracefully.

During our seasons of life and struggle, we need to keep growing and going. It’s important to realize that the Bible is true no matter what season of life you are in. Share the truth with people even if you are diligently still seeking the wisdom. Speak faithfully and consistently about your Lord.

***“The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree... They shall still bear fruit in old age;  
They shall be fresh and flourishing, To declare that the LORD is upright;  
He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”***

—Psalms 92:12-15

—Kathy Kauno, *Redemption, Lynnwood, WA*

***One piece of advice I’ve been thanked for was this:***

***“If you take any advice at all, take only one piece of advice—Don’t listen to anybody’s advice.”***

***Use the mind God gave you to make decisions based on the best instructions there are: Scripture.***

—Abby Matzke, *Immanuel, Mankato, MN*

# Advice at all Ages

When asking for advice that's free,  
Ask those who've gone before,  
Who've done the things you've dreamed about—  
Their knowledge you implore.

The different stages of our life  
Reflect on how we ask.  
The words are simple, it is true,  
Depending on the task.

At six years old the question's "Why?"  
"Why does this work this way?"  
By sixteen years it changes to  
"Why not?" is all they say.

From twenty-six to thirty-six  
"What if?" they each inquire.  
By forty-six to fifty-six  
Our hope is to inspire.

By sixty-six and years beyond  
Experience has grown.  
The urge to share what we have learned  
Is not always made known.

So seek out those who've walked the walk—  
The path you'd like to take.  
And list'ning with ears opened wide,  
Give thanks, for Jesus' sake.

—Jacquelyn Radichel, Grace, Fridley, MN

## Looking for a Way to Start Conversations about the Gospel and your Truth-preaching church?

Consider ordering copies of your favorite  
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The next time you need a conversation  
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Mankato, MN 56001,  
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## Gold

**Gold** is a haystack for horses

**Gold** is a field of unborn crops

**Gold** is leaves that have lost their tree

**Gold** is a Packer color

**Gold** is a brightly wrapped present

**Gold** is a first place medal

**Gold** is a greedy man's downfall

**Gold** is a poor person's food that night

**Gold** is more than just a color

—Emily Marzofka, Faith, Markesan, WI;  
this piece was written for a home  
school writing class recently.  
Emily is 11 years old.



# Encouragements

**“He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”**

—Malachi 3:3a

**G**ood morning! Yesterday I was making homemade spaghetti sauce, and as I ran all of the cooked tomatoes through the sieve, mashing them to get the good juice out, and leave the pulp, skin and seeds, I was thinking about this passage. Awhile back, I read a neat email with this passage in it. A woman was studying the passage, and wanted to know more about how the silver refining process could apply to us. As she watched the silversmith hold the silver in the fire to get rid of impurities, she asked him how carefully he had to watch the metal. He replied that if the silver was in the fire just a moment too long, it would be ruined. Then she asked him how he knew when the silver was done, he told her that was easy. It was when he could see himself in it.

It may seem like a strange analogy, but as I worked to get all the juice out of those tomatoes, refining them in a way, I was thinking about how God uses trials in my life to refine me. Just as the silversmith must watch the silver at all times, so the Lord watches over me every minute, leaving me in the “fire” just long enough to rid me of an impurity or behavior displeasing to Him. In the end, God wants to be able to see His reflection in me. Each trial can be used as an opportunity for me to grow in my relationship with Him, and become more like the Lord. I pressed the tomatoes with the wooden pestle in the metal sieve, wanting only the best part of the tomato. The Lord does the same with me—sometimes He needs to press me several times before I finally yield what He wants! He could just leave me as I am.... sinful, angry, deceitful, bitter, selfish, greedy... but He loves me too much to do that.

Obviously, I never saw myself in the spaghetti sauce! But as God continually refines each of us in our lives, on that final day when we are embraced into Christ’s waiting arms as we reach heaven, we will finally be “refined” and He will see Himself in us.

God Bless all of you!

—Julie Schopp, St. Luke’s, Lemmon, SD; Visit the Encouragements website at:  
[www.encouragementsbyjulie.com](http://www.encouragementsbyjulie.com). Or email Julie at: [encouragements@sdplainswb.com](mailto:encouragements@sdplainswb.com)



## A Look Ahead

### **July’s Theme: Attitude.**

July’s theme will be: Attitude. Consider the most influential attitudes a person struggles with, such as determination, despair, worthiness, humility, arrogance, vanity, contentment, apathy... the list is nearly endless.

Submissions should be sent to Abby Matzke (contact information on the back page).

**Aim to have articles in by May 15 for the July issue.**

We also could use book reviews, articles about events, congregations, or special people in your church, writings that would be especially good for reading out loud to children, recipes for Delicious Dishes (sent to Gail Mackensen: [gsmackensen@yahoo.com](mailto:gsmackensen@yahoo.com)), ideas for ladies’ aid groups to swap, hobby features, humor, memories, and more. If you would like a specific topic to delve into, contact the editor who will set you on a mission!

We also have had success with full-color photo printing and will consider photos with some articles. The higher the resolution the better for digital, and photographs come out wonderfully.

*Send only photos you do not need returned.*

# One God

Is there a god who rules this savage race?  
Is there a hell no power can efface?

Mankind weeps, imploring the heavens,  
In thrall he knows what he has done.  
No malediction, jest or scorn  
Obliterates the malignant strain,  
No sedative or jollity  
Annuls the black declivity.

Before them lay the brilliant garden,  
Divine and human intermingled,  
Wrought unto serene perfection,  
Lush with promise, love, and peace.  
Whence came, oh man, the lethal act?  
My choice, said he, Thou gavest me.

Freedom to choose my agony.  
Persuaded I could be like Thee,  
I chose the fruit upon the tree, and instantly  
The act redounded back on me, and I could see  
With vision clear and vividly,  
What Thou in love withheld from me.

The dreadful mirror showed me then  
All my being sunk in shame.  
Tempted irresistibly  
Toward half the image, half the glory,  
The mortal half, the withered half,  
Despising the fullness offered so freely.

Making it needful, for so He ordained  
Before creation, knowing the creature,  
In mercy, in sorrow, in pity decreeing  
A sacrifice worthy His love and His stature.  
Christ Jesus, Savior, we sing anthems to God,  
No force can withstand the inviolable Lord.

There is one God who rules this savage race,  
There is no hell this Power cannot efface.

—Janet Wilson, *Messiah*, Hales Corners, WI



## All-Season Picnics

As I write this, the snowflakes falling are adding to the already two or more feet of snow on the ground. By the time this issue is mailed, the snow should be but a distant memory. Watching the snow brings back memories of years ago when my three children were very young. I was probably home-schooling Rachel, my oldest, for her kindergarten year and trying to keep the other two busy. I remember that the winter days often seemed very long, and on one particularly long day, we had an idea to have a winter picnic. We picked the sunniest room in the house, spread a cheery blanket over the carpet and set up our dinner table, ready to surprise my husband when he came home. The kids were so excited and my spirits lifted too. This became a regular weekly tradition in our home and despite enduring a few spills on the carpet and trying to keep a dog away from the food, it was a good salve for the winter doldrums. In light of this memory, the delicious recipes below would be perfect for a picnic, whether it be indoors or out.

—Gail Mackensen, Messiah, Hales Corners, WI

### Crepes

1/2 c. flour  
2 eggs  
1 c. milk  
1 Tbsp. melted butter  
pinch salt

Mix the flour and salt in a large bowl. Make a “well” in the middle, add eggs, melted butter, and 1/2 of the milk. Gradually, with a whisk or a wooden spoon, stir in the flour. Add more milk until mixture is the consistency of cream. Whisk until there are no lumps. Mom gets to pour any fun-sized amount, up to 1/4 c., onto a preheated griddle or pan. Cook until lightly browned, flip, and lightly brown on the second side. Roll up with anything you’d like: fruit, jellies, peanut butter, butter, syrup, honey, etc., either inside or on top.

## Delicious Dishes

### Pasta Salad

1—16 oz. bag colored rotini pasta  
(cook as package directs)  
1—16 oz. bottle Italian dressing  
2 cans black olives (leave whole)  
1 large jar green olives (leave whole)  
4 oz. diced pepperoni  
2 tomatoes, chopped, or 1 container cherry or grape tomatoes  
1 green pepper or red bell pepper, chopped  
1 small container Salad Supreme (found in spice section of grocery store)  
2 cups Provolone or Mozzarella cheese, diced  
Mix together and refrigerate for several hours or overnight to allow flavors to blend.

—Lisa Lisak, Messiah, Hales Corners

### Texas Caviar

2 green onions and tops, chopped  
1/2 medium onion, chopped  
1 small jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped fine  
1 can shoepeg corn, drained  
1 can black-eyed peas, drained  
2 medium tomatoes, chopped  
1 green pepper, chopped  
1 Tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped  
2 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, chopped

Mix all ingredients together. Prior to serving, add Italian dressing as desired. Serve with tortilla chips or on Italian bread. This makes a large amount, so only add the dressing to the amount you need. The extras keep well in the fridge. This is a recipe I got at a family reunion. It is a favorite and very healthy too.

—Sue Eichstadt, Messiah, Hales Corners, WI

## Kitchen Kids

I don't believe it is always best to exclude even the smallest children from enjoying cooking and clean up with Mom or Dad. Here are a couple of recipes my four- and two-year olds like to "help" with.

Both recipes can withstand child chefs in our house... so far!

—Abby Matzke, Immanuel, Mankato, MN



Clara (4) and Ethan (2) Matzke making "Homemade Noodles."

### Homemade Noodles

- 1 1/2 c. flour
- 1/2 c. warm water
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil

Add the water and oil to the flour, blend it together well with a fork. Roll up your sleeves (and the children's, if you haven't yet), and use hands to form the dough into a ball. Cover it with a damp towel and let it rest for 10 minutes. If you don't have a pasta machine, use this time to gather a rolling pin, a pizza cutter, a plastic chopping mat, and cookie racks. Lightly dust the mat with flour. Using a manageable part of the dough, roll it out on the mat to desired thickness—it can get quite thin. Cut the noodles any way you'd like (toddlers rarely choose tradition). Place the noodles on the racks to dry, or boil them to desired tenderness. Serve as you would store-bought noodles, if you wish.

### Roasted Asparagus

- Asparagus stalks
- Olive oil and season salt, or Mrs. Dash

Wash and trim stalks of asparagus. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt or Mrs. Dash. Place in grill basket or on foil pan on the grill, and roast for 10–12 minutes, or until desired tenderness. This also works well in the oven, roasted at 425° degrees. The flavor is wonderful. Serve as is, or try drizzled with vinaigrette dressing.

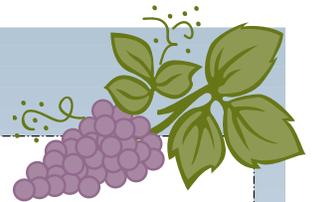
—Sue Eichstadt, Messiah, Hales Corners, WI

### Asian Chicken

- 1/4 c. chili sauce
- 1/4 c. soy sauce
- 1/4 c. vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 Tbsp. honey
- 1 1/2 lbs. chicken, beef, or pork

Mix all ingredients well and pour over meat in a non-metal bowl or resealable plastic bag. Marinate up to 24 hours. Grill or broil meat. This marinade recipe works well with bone-in or boneless chicken pieces, pork, or beef.

—Gail Mackensen, Messiah, Hales Corners



*Great Food, Good Company!*

## Aging Perspectives

I remember when I was a young girl, I just couldn't wait to get older. Then I would have the privileges that a "grown-up" would have. After all, they could come and go as they wanted, they could drive, they could go to bed when they wanted, they could get up when they wanted... that's how it looked to me. When I reached the age of these new-found "privileges," it was quite a let down, because it wasn't what I had thought at all. Well, maybe, just maybe, life would be perfect if I get married and have children. Perfect?? I am very happily married, blessed with a pious husband and I have been blessed with healthy, beautiful children who go to church, but life has been far from perfect.



Aging on this earth is a result of the fall in the Garden of Eden. Our human reasoning observes that we are born, grow up, and die, and to top it off, we think we are in control of all that. I wonder how many people realize that the wrinkles on our face are a result of the fall into sin. We buy creams and lotions to try to cover the wrinkles so that we can "age gracefully." It all makes me chuckle—I think we all put a little lotion on the wrinkles.

I remember when I turned 50, I received cards that spoke of being "over-the-hill"—wasn't I only 15 wishing I was 16 so that I could drive? I enjoyed it when I turned 50, because I now had a different perspective than when I was young. I realized God had taken care of me all along. I learned things that I could not see with my weak human reason. The Gospel does wonderful things for us! It does not come from "within," from some inner recess of our being—we need to be told over and over again—it comes from outside of us and has to enter in. When we were baptized into Christ's death and resurrection—that is when God made us His own. There is now a new creation in us and the power of the Gospel leads our lives. Even at 50 years old I can say, "I am baptized," not "I was baptized." But the point is that every day, I live because Christ lives in me.

Beginning at His very conception, Christ was fulfilling the Law for us. One of the recent Sunday School lessons reminded us of how Christ went to the temple as a young boy and his willingness to keep the Sabbath Day holy was a direct fulfillment of the Third Commandment. His whole perfect life on this earth He lived for us—and His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His sitting on the Throne of God—He does this for us, and gives us all the benefits in our baptism. God uses the means of grace—the Word in the Bible, preaching in the sermons, talking to others about Christ, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper—to keep us close to Him and to preserve us until we get to live with Him eternally.

As I have aged, so-to-speak, God has granted me to see what He has done for me. He has been there holding me in His hand, even if I wondered where He was. He continues to be close to us in the means of grace. Even in the Lord's Supper we hear His Word of comfort and how close He is—"This is My Body... this is My Blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins!" Oh, happy day!—aging "gracefully" in God's grace and mercy. God, who has power over our three-fold enemy—the world, the devil, and our own flesh—, has promised to never leave nor forsake us. He hasn't and won't.

—Marianna Gummerus, *Calvary, Marquette, MI*



# Privilege of Age

When we are older, we take more pleasure in reminiscing; we look back more than ahead. The young look ahead, as they need to, to school, romance, marriage, jobs, and children.

We must always be thankful for Christian parents, for Christian upbringing. My younger sister and I walked two miles to parochial school at the “Witt church” in Norfolk, Nebraska. We walked in cold and in snowstorms, backwards into the wind, and Mr. Fuhrman would gently chafe our hands and cheeks when we arrived. What memories!

My dad passed away suddenly when I was 17. Mom held our family together, working as a nurse’s aid for doctors and at the hospital nursery for many years, getting acquainted with and loved by hundreds and hundreds of mothers throughout northeast Nebraska.

I taught school after junior college, where I met my husband. We married in 1950, moved to Denver for his grad school, and then on to Cheyenne for fifteen years, and then to Middleton, Wisconsin. It was our privilege to be involved in the beginnings of both the Redeemer and Peace Thru Christ congregations and in building the churches. We have had unique relationships with the CLC’s foreign missionaries—David Koenig was our pastor, as was Matthew Ude’s father.

We had four children, three girls and a boy. The latter had Down’s Syndrome and lived with us until 1996, a dear loving son of 35 years. The memorials for him financed half the cost of an upstairs prayer hall at the CLCI orphanage at Nidobrulu.

In getting to 80 years, there are good things, like being able to sit and read good Christian books any time I want, having loving grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and daughters who bring meals so I don’t have to cook as much. I am also still able to golf—riding a cart over the course, of course. I can take my three-speed to the library and post office; I’m thankful it is a level route. Setting up five tables of bridge for old golfers every Tuesday morning, November through April, is a labor of love, being with friends.

Some less good things are that I can’t remember names, I can’t bowl or play tennis because of hip and knee replacements, I lose friends as I read the obituaries, I can’t get in and out of the tub for a good soak, and I must sit to pull weeds to help my gardener husband. When he gives me backrubs, I tell him, “It is better to receive than to give.”

We also look to the future now. We have our wills drawn, our obituaries drafted. Four years ago, I was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis—no cause, no cure. A lung transplant was said to be a possibility, but my immediate response was to decline, that I was ready to meet my Savior God. I am increasingly short of breath; my dry cough is more pronounced, and I no longer stand much in church or to iron. My lung specialist keeps tabs on me; I am getting along better than most. Only our Lord knows what is in store.

We all must put our complete trust in our gracious God, for His sure and loving handling of our lives, the giving and taking of our joys and our grief in their turn. The good Lord has blessed me with blessings too numerous to count.

**“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life?  
You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”**

—James 4:14

—Delilah Kellner Riggert, Peace Thru Christ, Middleton, WI



# *A Grandmother's Reflections on Parenthood*

**A**s I age, I have come to appreciate the importance of God's hand in my life. It was He Who gave me Christian parents, grandparents, teachers and coworkers that He has used to guide me along life's way, and it is He Who will bring me to my heavenly goal.

One of the questions I've asked myself is whether the CLC will remain true to God's Word. The fact is that the future of the CLC depends on God's grace in helping our children and grandchildren remain true to the scriptural principles on which the CLC was founded. As elder members of the CLC, we can reflect on what God, by His grace, has already done for us and promises to do to help our church body remain true to God's Word.

Our children and future generations, guided by the Holy Spirit, are a key ingredient in keeping the CLC true to God's Word. Parents have been given children as a trust from God to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Much time and effort goes into preparing a child for this life, but what an awesome responsibility we have when we realize what an impact our involvement in the faith-life of our children, grandchildren, and future generations has on their eternal future!

Parenthood brings much joy to parents and others. At their spiritual rebirth in baptism we rejoice that our child has become a child of God, and a new soul will join us who has been redeemed from eternal death, and will, by the grace of God, join us in our heavenly home. As God-fearing parents, we pray for the wisdom, patience, and parenting skills that come from our heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit in guiding our children on the path to heaven. Prayers to that effect become a daily, perhaps hourly, occurrence.

When our children are just babies or toddlers we have many chances to communicate to them the love of their Savior by speaking to them about Him, praying with them, reading Bible stories and looking at the pictures with them, singing songs about Him with them, and regularly taking them to church. Even babies and small children benefit from the Word they hear at home and in church and can memorize short Bible passages and learn to pray with us and on their own. Our Savior was very clear about the value of little children. Even discipline benefits our children when it is done out of love and following God's directives, emphasizing God's Law and the Gospel.

If the family goes to church together when children are young, it becomes a habit, and they develop a love for hearing the Word and the fellowship they enjoy there that is likely to continue for the rest of their lives. When children see their parents and grandparents studying God's Word and praying, it becomes a natural thing for them to do the same. For children, daily devotions, including studying Bible stories, pictures, simple hymns, and prayers, can help even small children relate their faith to their daily life. One young child I know recognized Jesus' cross in the telephone poles along the highway, so you know that child carried Bible truths in his heart and daily life. Another child, at a very young age, was able to sing and pray along with the congregation through the entire liturgy. What an example of spirit-filled worship!

It's never too early to give children the chance to participate in tasks connected with the work of the Lord. They should be encouraged to join in helping in the upkeep of church property and to learn from the example of their parents the joy of Christian giving to do the Lord's work in their own congregation, and through mission gifts, in the world. There are many tasks around church property and for neighbors that can be done by children, and they can joyfully do them out of love for their Savior. There is joy in being able to help others, and the love of their Savior becomes the motivating force. Children should be encouraged to give back to the Lord some of the gifts He has given them, learning the joy of giving. This, too, becomes a lifelong habit by faith.

When our children are old enough to go to Sunday school or the Christian day school, parents, not teachers, still have the primary responsibility to bring up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. They willingly help their children with Bible lessons and memory work in addition to the studying they do for preparation for this life. The importance of continuing their Christian education at one of our high schools and Immanuel Lutheran College is an option that should not be overlooked, and if the child exhibits gifts that could be used for the work of the Lord in the preaching or teaching ministry, they should be encouraged to follow the Lord's direction for their

**Continued on Next Page**

## **A Grandmother's Reflections on Parenthood—Continued**

lives. Parents look at this as an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work deeper faith in their children, even if it means self-sacrifice for parents. Even if, after attending one of our Christian high schools or Immanuel Lutheran College, they don't become a pastor or teacher, God can use them to become valuable members of our Christian congregations.

Confirmation of their baptismal vows does not mean the end of our children's Christian education, but just the beginning. Young people may have excuses for not attending church or Bible classes when they reach this point in their lives, but caring parents still exert influence over

the lives of their children and should encourage their participation in church services, Bible classes, and other activities out of love for their Savior. Finding a Christian husband or wife is an important issue when children become old enough to date, but if the children are firmly grounded in God's Word, they have such a close bond with their Savior that they will ask the Lord's guidance in this important step in their lives, and will probably ask for guidance from their parents, too!

After guiding our children through life and when our children become parents themselves, we hope that they will still involve us, their own parents, in their lives and in the Christian upbringing of your grandchildren. Out of love, Christian grandparents willingly and happily involve themselves in the faith lives of their grandchildren. Under the Savior's influence, our children will have had a fine example to follow from us, their parents,' and grandparents' involvement and the love of the Savior in their lives. Under His guidance, we trust that He will bless our efforts to keep us and future generations faithful to Him and bring us all to our home in heaven.

—Rhoda Eserhut, *Luther Memorial, Fond du Lac, WI*



## *A Prayer for Those Growing Old*

Lord, You know that I am growing older.

Keep me from becoming talkative and possessed with the idea  
that I must express myself on every subject.

Release me from the craving to straighten out everyone's affairs.

Keep me from the recital of endless detail. Give me wings to get to the point.

Seal my lips when I am inclined to tell of my aches and pains. They are increasing with  
the years and my love to speak of them grows sweeter as the time goes by.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong.

Make me thoughtful but not nosey; helpful but not bossy.

With my vast store of wisdom and experience, it does seem a pity not to use it at all.  
But You know, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

—Author Unknown, submitted by Carolyn Matzke, Immanuel, Mankato, MN

# Calligraphy, Cards, Banners, Watercolors, and More!

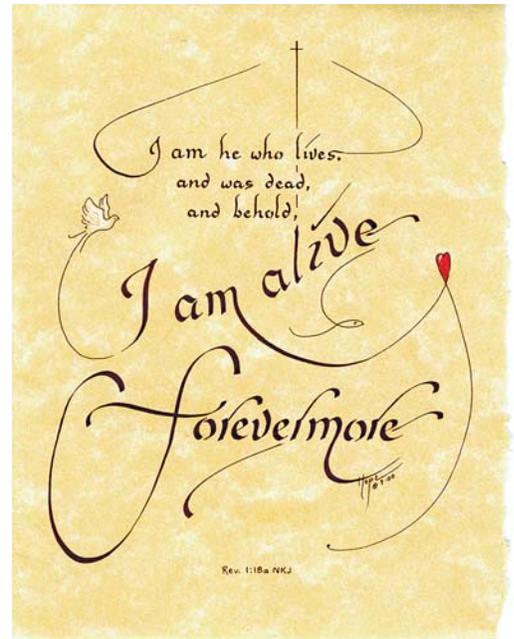
About four years ago, I met a wonderful lady who had a table set up outside of the gymnasium at Immanuel, Eau Claire, during Convention. This woman was Hope Luurtsema, a member of Rock of Ages, Grand Rapids, MI, and she had beautiful artwork displayed on her table, on the wall behind her, and in boxes all around. Calligraphy note cards, watercolor artwork, quite stunning pencil portraits... and the calligraphy and watercolor combination prints of Bible verses swept me right in to make a few select purchases that hang on walls in my children's rooms. About a year later, the ladies' aid group I was in purchased a graceful watercolor Reformation banner from Hope—a hand-painted original—that added that certain touch to the church's festive decor.

Hope does this artwork on one day off her 40-hour work week. She also paints acrylic landscapes, portraits, and an occasional oil, as well as photography.

I have finally convinced Hope to let me share some of her work with you. Accompanying this article is the cover of one of her Easter note cards. I think I'm going to frame it to hang! The outside verse is Revelations 1:18a, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore." The inside note reads, also in calligraphy: "It is finished! Salvation's won—For you and me By God's dear Son. May this be your Easter joy!" And the little bonus verse on the inside cover reads, "Because I live, you will live also. John 14:19, NKJ." What a beautiful way to proclaim the message of Easter!

If you'd like to see more of Hope's work, contact her at her business phone (1-800-996-3217), and be sure to leave a message; Hope will return your call as soon as she can. Thanks Hope, for sharing your talent!

—Abby Matzke, Immanuel, Mankato, MN



## Congratulations Chris and Katie Sumey

**Elijah Jacob Sumey**

**February 13, 2008, at 6:45 AM**  
St. Louis, Missouri

6 pounds, 11 ounces and 20.5 inches

**Proud Parents** are Chris and Katie Sumey of Faith, St. Louis, Missouri

**Grandparents** are Steve and Deb Sumey of Fairmont, Minnesota,  
and David and Elizabeth Marshall of Helena, Montana

**Baptized:** March 2, 2008 at Faith Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Missouri  
**Sponsors:** Jeff and Jessica Kesterson.



## Our Fifth Year! 2008–2009 Renewal Time!

We're beginning year 5 of *The Branches!* July 2008-June 2009 subscriptions are **due June 15, 2008** to ensure that you receive your July issue. Rates will remain the same at **\$12.00 for 4 issues per year.**

To celebrate the start of our fifth year, we're offering a \$1 discount on your subscription for each friend who signs up as a new subscriber. Simply send your subscription information and payments in together, listing your friends names on your renewal form (below), and deduct \$1 from your own subscription price!

**Fifth Year Bonus Special!** Find five friends to sign up as new subscribers with you, and you can enjoy the entire fifth year of *The Branches* **FREE!** Simply list their names below and send your subscription information and payments in together to ensure your free year!

Individual subscribers will receive a postcard reminder to renew in addition to bulletin inserts at church. Please contact the business manager with any questions regarding your subscription (info on back page).

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*Duplication of this form is permitted and encouraged.*



417 Woodhaven Lane  
Mankato, MN 56001

***I am the Vine,  
you are the branches.  
He who abides in Me,  
and I in him,  
bears much fruit;  
for without Me  
you can do nothing.***

—John 15:5

***“Even to your old age, I am He,  
And even to gray hairs I will carry you!  
I have made, and I will bear;  
Even I will carry, and will deliver you.”***

—Isaiah 46:4



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