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UU Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes
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Share joy that it may live on.

Tell Me Your Joy

At the bakery, my good friend leans in as if he has important news. “May I tell you my joy?” he says.

“Let me guess!” I say. “Is it the birds?” He takes pictures of birds.

“No...” he says, “but that *is* a joy....”

“Let me guess,” I say, “is it about chasing the corner of the canvas?” He’s an artist and calls the rush of a new idea “chasing the corner of the canvas.”

“No,” he says. “But that’s a joy, too....”

“Oh I know, is it the snow fort?” He loves playing in the snow with his sister’s kids.

“No,” he says, “and that *is* a joy. You’re getting close. May I tell you my joy?”

It doesn’t get any better than seeing each other’s joy. Sure, sometimes we give in to the temptation to see the other’s faults or even undermine their best efforts—and that temptation can feel appropriate, even pleasing, in the moment, though not as pleasing as when we’re able to focus our energy on seeing *goodness* in each other.

I’m not saying evil doesn’t exist—we know it does. I’m talking about everyday appreciation of each other. Sometimes we have to call out a person’s words or actions, but that doesn’t hold a candle to seeing their joy. Some stories of joy:

In the 1950s an elderly grandmother loves her poetry books. One of those ladies who’s always dabbing at her nose, she keeps a tissue tucked in her sleeve. When she likes a poem, she tears off a bit of it tissue to mark the page. Today, her 90-year old daughter and *her* daughter treasure that book of poetry, the pink, blue and yellow bits of Kleenex still in the pages. “What is Grammy thinking today?” they’ll say. They let the book fall open to a poem and read it aloud. Describing this ritual, the adult granddaughter smiles through her tears, joyful.

You may have heard the story on the radio show *Fresh Air* about reporter John Leland’s following six very old people for a year.¹ One person often said he was done with life and wanted to die. Did he wish he’d died yesterday, the reporter asked. Well, no, because we’re having such a nice conversation today. Would he like to die tomorrow? Well, no, his niece was coming over tomorrow—he wouldn’t want to miss that. Can you feel the joy of knowing what this stranger lives for?

¹ John Leland, “Reporter Shares Life Lessons from a Year With ‘The Oldest Old,’” *Fresh Air*, 24 January 2018.

Last week in this building, I heard stories of *your* joy.

Ingrid, excited about the smooth, clear ice on ponds this year, left her to-do list at home and joyfully—laughing like a schoolgirl—went out skating.

Margaret took her son Ben skating too. The ice was so good that, even though they'd skated before, for him it was like discovering something wonderful and new in life :
“Why,” he said, joyful, “did we never do *this* before?”

Warren emailed about a hilarious running joke he and Phyllis have been amusing each other with. “She,” he joyfully wrote, “is a very funny person.”

Diane wrote about Phyllis, too, who joyfully hopes UUFES friends will come visit soon to sing, play music and eat “good sweets” together.

When Annie arrived Wednesday bearing the rainbow banner that she, Anneliese and Margaret created, she glowed with the joy of accomplishment.

And just the other night, making plans for this service, Shelly wrote that she'd spent a day skiing with 1st graders. “Talk about joy,” she wrote.

Stories of a child's joy, a grandmother's joy, an artist's joy gives us joy in the telling.

Why talk about joy in church? Well, “joy” is a religious word. While the word “happy” appears only thirty times in the Bible, “joy” appears hundreds of times. When we feel it, our life feels blessed.

Anne Sexton writes of joy in the poem, “Welcome Morning”:²

There is joy^[L]
in all^[SEP]
in the hair I brush each morning^[L]
in the...towel, newly washed...

She writes of joy in breakfast, in setting the table, “in the chapel of eggs I cook/each morning....”

“and I mean^[L]
though often forget^[SEP]
to give thanks^[L]
to faint down by the kitchen table^[SEP]
in a prayer of rejoicing^[L]
as the holy birds at the kitchen window^[SEP]
peck into their marriage of seeds.^[SEP]

² Anne Sexton, “Welcome Morning,” Everyman's Library, 17 September 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/everymanslibrary/photos/a.326836727339018.74036.326823800673644/1515306718492007/?type=3>

So while I think of it,^{[L] [SEP]}
 let me paint a thank-you on my palm^{[L] [SEP]}
 for this God, this laughter of the morning,^{[L] [SEP]}
 lest it go unspoken.^{[L] [SEP]}

The Joy that isn't shared, I've heard,^{[L] [SEP]}
 dies young.

“Let me tell you my joy,” says my artist friend. And out comes the story. He has spent the week shoveling all the snow on his small backyard to create a veritable mountain--a sledding mountain. The trail starts at the top of the mountain and runs down, around the corner of the house, onto the driveway below. Beyond happy--joyful!--he holds up his phone and shows me the kids careening down the hill, screaming their pleasure.

“The Joy that isn't shared, I've heard,/dies young.”³ So share your joys that they may live on. UUFES is of a size that we can do that! Joy makes a community glow.

Amen.

³ Ibid.