

Pastor Kent's Miller Avenue Church Newsletter for December 2022

Dear Church Family,

We have lost our dear Laurelle; I have known her for three decades plus. She died at 9:30 a.m. just yesterday, November 27. Her wonderful daughter, Ingrid, called me at 9:45 a.m. to tell me. We want to stand with Ingrid as she undertakes a complex re-arrangement in her living.

After she was no longer able to regularly attend Sunday morning services, Laurelle and I would talk on the phone nearly every week. Shirley also kept in close touch with her. Over time I saw her lose capacity, physically, yet she was always concerned for our little congregation.

Now then, we have also lost Maggie Moore, who died early Monday morning at her home. I visited with Michael Brown, Maggie's son, later that day (yesterday at the point of writing this) and he told me she died peacefully. Maggie was part of MAC for over three decades.

The memorial services will take place for both Laurelle and Maggie on the third weekend in January—Saturday the 14th for Maggie and Sunday the 15th for Laurelle, following the morning service.

The death of a parent is something we never really get over. Early on, the loss can be crushing and may continue as time goes on. What helps is to be able to talk about how the death of a parent impacts us. Since both Laurelle and Maggie were born-again Christians, the loss is lessened to some degree, yet it will still be there.

We have not had someone die in our congregation for some time. And there will be others facing the ending of days, too. I personally see myself aging and know that I will face my own dying down the road. The Philpotts, on both sides, were long lived. My dad died at age 90, and this due to his eating a bad piece of meat. Long story, and my grandmother died at age 100. So, no matter how long I have or you have, the idea that we will one day face death is actually good for us to consider.

Now, that last statement may be surprising. For one thing, I more carefully appreciate my days on the planet, and I then cherish the time I have to be a follower of Jesus. To serve Him is the grandest of all living.

As a Christian I know that I will, at the moment of my dying, be in the presence of our Lord. This alone does not mean we welcome death or not experience the pain and tragedy of dying. These cannot be avoided, but the fear, that existential terror of eternal suffering, is not there. I have seen this over and over again in my fifty-plus years of doing funerals and memorial services.

A second topic for this newsletter came to me an hour before I sat down to type this piece out: our need for someone to back up Andrea on Sundays. I admit that I am a bit of a worrywart and I imagine that there will be circumstances where she will not be there, perhaps due to a needed vacation or an illness. At this point only Katie is able to do this. Andrea spends most of Sunday doing the work in the balcony, not only capturing the service, sending it out, but so much more, so much that upon hearing of it we would be absolutely amazed. What she does is a major part of our ministry. Katie and I arrive at the church on Sunday mornings looking forward to seeing Andrea. And every Sunday for a long time now, Katie and I find she has left a little treat for us. We are so blessed that she is with us. And now, we also have wonderful Rebeka.

To wrap up this newsletter, let me say that Katie's treatments have pretty much ended, so we can now go back to the work soon, beginning in January, and one of the efforts will be our Church for Those Without a Church, or CWC. More than a year ago we had to leave this effort off, but as we consider how many have left their churches over the past several years, and the closing of thousands of churches across the country, we hope to make a new start here. And much of this involves Andrea and our TV crew, Mary, Gabby, Sherry, Judy, and oh yes, Katie.

Pastor Kent