

Every year after Thanksgiving I take out 2 of my favorite audio books to listen to when I'm in the car. I find that I need the calming effect of these good stories during what can be a hectic time of year. The 2 books are Anne of Green Gables and Little Women. I got them several years ago from focus on the Family and they are in Radio theater format. For those of you who remember the days when most all of our entertainment came from the radio you will understand how refreshing it is to listen to a story and use your imagination to flesh out the characters. To those of you who are too young to know about this, I highly recommend it.

While I was listening once again to Little Women, the lovely story of 4 sisters who lived in Concord, Ma during the time of the Civil war I was struck, as always by how much they appreciated their lives even in the light of the fact that they had so little. Their struggles to survive while their father is away, serving as a pastor to the troops, is an inspiration to me each year.

At one point in the story, one of the sisters, Jo, who aspires to be an author, and has gone to New York to be a nanny and to write. There she meets a professor from Germany who is concerned about the direction her stories are going in and as he is talking to her about the pitfalls of writing about the sensational instead of what is in her heart he quotes a passage from the bible. It is Paul's letter to the Philippians, Ch. 4:8. and I'm read from the New Living Translation:

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

Every year I think to myself what a powerful message this is and in light of the horrific things that have occurred in the past few months I thought that it was even more important this year to think of all the good things that have happened in our lives and to dwell on them. I am grateful that I can reflect on so many good things that have occurred to me personally and then I started to think about the many things for which we can all be grateful in our church family.

I think you will all agree that this past year has been a revelation to all of us. We have been blessed by the presence of our newly installed pastor. He has brought to light for us the many good works that we as a congregation do on a regular basis and he has encouraged us to be proud of these things. We continue to bring in more and more food on our Brown Bag Sundays

because he has challenged us. We have found ways to keep the Family Promise going when we thought that we would have to stop our involvement in this wonderful program. We keep up our good works at the shelters and we deliver Communion to Mill Pond every month. We will be doing some Mission work this spring for the Habitat for Humanity and our youth have been involved in projects throughout the holidays. We had a series of very successful cottage meetings from which information has been gathered so that we will better know the direction in which our church should grow. We have a group of people who meet twice a month in discuss readings from the Upper room. Our thrift shop is thriving and our Fair was a day of hard work but fun for us as well as the community.

We have prayed for Leslie's daughter, Kerry and the Mancini's son Adam as they were stationed overseas and are thankful for their safe return home.

So when I look back over the past year in our church I see so many things for which to be grateful. I'm sure that if you all think back you will see how fortunate we are to be in this place and to share in the good works of so many good people.

I hope you will all take a minute now to think about this and to pray for the future of our church and all of its people. I would like to read once more the passage from Philippians, Ch 4:8-9

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me- everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

I hope that you will somehow see that there are so many more good things in this world to focus on and believe in and will gain some measure of peace in so doing.