



Today is a bittersweet day. We give thanks for the life of Linda Johnson even as we grieve that she has died. When someone has not been well for a long time, we are glad they are reunited with the Lord and so restored to full health and abilities.

Even as we are glad, we can feel guilty for we are only human. Caring for someone who is chronically ill is no easy thing. It is a day-by-day and sometimes even hour-by-hour task that can try us in ways we never thought possible.

Today, though, is a time to remember the good but also not to sugarcoat it. Dick has been kind enough to share with us some of those memories. I encourage you to talk with Claude, Chris and the family about Linda. Share your memories of her.

In preparing for today, Claude asked that we pray the General Thanksgiving. We will do that in a few minutes. We are asked to thank God for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side. Today it is the blessing of family and friends and the loving care which supports Claude, Chris and the family. I hope that this blessing and this care will extend beyond this service and continue to support them as they move into a life without Linda.

In the prayers, we thank God also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on God alone. Linda's health challenges are certainly not the way that she or any of us hope that our later years will be. Life has disappointments. Things that we wanted to accomplish are not accomplished. Things that we hoped for do not come to pass even when we give it our best efforts. We can feel like a failure. We can take comfort, though, in knowing that God is always with us, despite our feeling or the world labeling us a disappointment or a failure, or our seeing our life or a part of it as a disappointment or failure.

Then we remember why we are holding this service in this place. St. John's has been part of the fabric of the life of Claude, Linda, Chris, and Sophie for years. There have been many smiles this last week remembering the activities, the sense of community, the fun- that were part of Linda's life here at St. John's. Even so, it was not always a happy, carefree relationship. No relationship is.

Through all that, though, the hope and the plea is that we can come together, here at St. John's and in other places or groups, to provide support and care for each other. To remember that above all, we thank God for the Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of God's Word and the example of the life of Jesus; for the steadfast obedience of Jesus, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he overcame death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of God's kingdom.

Mourn Linda. It is right that we grieve the death of one we knew. Know, too, that nothing can ultimately separate us from the love of God, and that at this time, includes our confidence that Linda rests in peace and with the Lord and thus her love for Claude and family and friends continues to this day. Focus on the years when Linda was healthy and able to be part of the community. Remember the times of fun and fellowship. Give thanks for Claude and his willingness to be a caregiver these last several years so that Linda was able to be at home and with her canine companions. Even as we grieve there is much to celebrate. Thanks be to God. Amen.