

HOME©

Psalm 84

August 16, 2016

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A Homily for the Service of Witness to the Resurrection for Christine Cook

All of us here have known Christine in particular roles. Some of you are friends who have known her since you were kids in school. Some have worked with Chris at the Credit Union where she was a valued leader and co-worker. Many of you have known her here, in church, worshipping together, raising your families, teaching the children, singing in the choir together serving on teams and just being in fellowship with one another. And of course, there are many of you here today who have that very special, close relationship as family.

As Christine's pastor for almost 5 ½ years, I have had the great honor of working with her as she led the Christian Education team, planning with her team, everything from Sunday School for all ages, to Bible Studies and congregational retreats.

Christine was a baptized member and an ordained Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA). She had been actively serving on our Session (which is like a board of leaders who are elected by the congregation to make decisions and oversee the ministries of the church.)

She was about to finish her 6th year in a row on the Session. Her calm, caring, non-anxious presence in meetings will be missed so much. Yet, I believe I will still see her face, just looking steadily at me and smiling.

Christine sang alto in the choir. She loved music and, oh how she loved to worship. I have seen such authentic, joyful praise on her face as we sang and prayed, here in this sanctuary.

I think the thing that stands out the most, however, in all the areas where Chris was so active and present here, was her work with, and her love for, the children – from the babies up through those in college. You've seen, I'm sure, the pictures of her with the kids – in Sunday School or at our special family events. She had such a great way with the children and they loved her so very much. She was fun. She was patient. She was smart. And they knew she loved them. She was willing to give her time, to come early, to spend time planning, to make sacrifices for her church.

Chris was one of the adults who helped our teens start the "In the Beginning Baby Pantry" – a ministry that has been and continues to be a very helpful and meaningful mission for well over one hundred families in our community.

She was also on the Finance Team and was a great believer in both the stewardship of time and talents, and also money. She had a gift for helping to plan pledge drives in the fall, and fund raisers for special needs. I know many of you took part in her efforts to raise money for Purple Strides, trying to eliminate cancer.

I am so grateful and honored to have been pastor to Christine Cook for the past 5 ½ years, and to have witnessed someone who exemplified Christian discipleship, someone who had a passion for serving her Lord and for being an active part of the Body of Christ. It is a privilege to serve with people who take their faith serious and put it into action – as Chris did, and as many others in this Church do. I have been blessed because of Christine.

There are many facets of Christine's life that you all have known and shared. Many things I did not have the opportunity to see or be a part of. But, I know how Chris was with her family. I saw her with Randy – her husband, her high school sweetheart. I saw the love and the fun they shared with one another. A love that will live on.

I saw what a wonderful, loving, proud mom she was to her daughters. Randy says she was always in tune with them; always knew what was going on with them. I used to get defensive when my mother would say "I know you better than you know yourself." But I think that is what Christine could say – I don't know if she ever did say it. But having your mom know you so well, understand what you're feeling, what you need – that's really a pretty special relationship.

I know Christine loved all her family. She looked forward to ski trips with her dad; she loved to be with her brothers and sisters. Of course, I heard that she was the one who never got in trouble. (I heard Randy say this past week, as he talked about how good she is, "She just should have been 'badder.'")

Her dad and Randy both told me she always had a plan for her life – what she would do at 16, 17, when she would get married, when she would have children – and she pretty much worked that plan out. Randy says he was just her pawn. Oh, but I know he loved every minute of it!

Christine loved the Cook family too and it is so obvious that they love her. In fact, it is a testimony to how she is loved by so many in how this place is packed.

I would guess every one of you would agree that to be with Christine is to feel right at home – wherever you are. She was comfortable, welcoming in her friendship, in her mannerisms. She certainly made her physical home a place of welcome and beauty and comfort.

Home. It's a place we all long for; a place we need in order to be ourselves; a place where we know we are loved, we are surrounded by our favorite things, by people who know us better than we know ourselves (in a good way).

One thing I feel confident in is that Christine is Home now. She enjoyed everything while she was here in her earthly home – with all of you. But now she is in the Home that awaits us all.

This is a Home that God has made; a Home that Jesus has prepared for us; a Home he comes to take us to. This is a Home with many rooms – lots of room. There's no need to worry that there won't be room when it's your time to go Home.

This is Home where there are many loved ones waiting to welcome us; a Home where there is no more sickness or sorrow; no more pain or tears. A Home where God, our Creator knows us intimately – knows our hearts, our hurts, our hopes. Knows us better than we know ourselves – and that is a very good thing.

This is a God who loves us so much he sent his Son to show us that love – to care for those whom others cast away; to heal, to forgive, to teach – and finally to give his life so we might have eternal life in that glorious Home. To conquer death so that death would not be the end. That even death could not separate us from God's love and from our final everlasting Home.

I can imagine Christine's joy as she is experiencing her new Home. Faith has become sight. I can almost see it and hear her proclaim what the Psalmist wrote:

*How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!*

*Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.*

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