**Worship Brainstorming Summary**

**“Belonging: Finding Your Heart’s Home”**

Mon., October 10, 2022 at LHUMC

November 6-20, 2022 (3 Sundays)

**Members present:** Pastor Mary Ivanov, Marie Kordecki, David Booth, Jean Kelly, Betty Kinney, Carole Koch, Barbara Gripton, Karen Post, Diane Thompson, Lynne Richmond, Karen Tooth, Jim Post

**2022 Theme:**  The Spiritual Journey Continues…

* Picking up the pieces
* Connecting the pieces
* Transformation
* Serving others (passionately)

**Synopsis:** Everyone wants a place to belong. Home. Family. They should be places where we feel safe, loved, and comfortable. What happens when we lose life-giving relationships and our sense of belonging? How does God’s grace help us to find a place to belong and ultimately find our heart’s home?

**2022 theme connection:** We want the pieces of our live to fit together and create a beautiful picture.

**Synopsis for series:** Do you ever feel like you don’t belong? Maybe we remember feeling left out when we were younger, but sometimes that feeling remains, especially as we struggle with disconnection even as we’re more connected than ever. It seems that loneliness more of a reality than ever before, especially as we come out a global pandemic where some of our connections were compromised. Whether we feel unworthy, alienated, anxious or uncertain about our place in relationships or in the world — the struggle to belong is a “silent, hidden wound” that is real for many people.

Maybe we think of belonging as a place and spend a long time searching for that place, but what if belonging isn’t so much about a particular place? What if it’s about connection with God and others that can help make us feel at home, wherever we are? We’ll use Scripture passages from New Testament letters as our foundation.

**Resources:** Dave and Karen Booth own *All Saints* and *Show Me the Father* on DVD.

* **Films** that follow a theme about belonging and community and **related articles**
  + “All Saints” is based on the inspiring true story of salesman-turned-pastor Michael Spurlock, the tiny church he was ordered to shut down, and a group of refugees from Southeast Asia. Together, they risked everything to plant seeds for a future that might just save them all. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCUBHlqzFDE>
    - <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/all-saints-2017>
    - <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-all-saints-review-20170824-story.html>
    - <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/all_saints>
    - <https://variety.com/2017/film/reviews/all-saints-review-1202538667/>
    - The Tuesday morning bible study watch it together.
  + “CODA”: As a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) Ruby is the only hearing person in her deaf family. When the family’s fishing business is threated, Ruby finds herself torn between pursuing her passion at Berklee College of Music and her fear of abandoning her parents. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pmfrE1YL4I>
    - <https://www.premierchristianity.com/reviews/coda-why-christians-should-pay-attention-to-this-oscar-winning-film/12771.article>
  + “Show Me the Father.” This documentary by the Kendrick brothers explores the influence of men on children, fatherlessness, adoption, coaching, and a father’s blessing and invites you to think differently about your earthly father and also how you personally relate to God. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2l0s9U4jh8](about:blank)
  + “Luca” is a coming-of-age story about one young boy experiencing an unforgettable summer filled with gelato, pasta and endless scooter rides. Luca shares these adventures with his newfound best friend, but all for the fun is threatened when by a deeply-held secret: they are sea monsters from another world just below the water’s surface. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYfJxlgR2jw](about:blank)
    - <https://christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/2021/luca2021.html>
  + “The Mitchells vs. The Machines.” A quirky dysfunctional family’s road trip is upended when they find themselves in the middle of the robot apocalypse and suddenly become humanity’s unlikeliest last hope. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\_ak5dFt8Ar0](about:blank)
    - <https://www.christianpost.com/news/the-mitchells-vs-the-machines-highlights-importance-of-family.html>
  + “Marcel the Shell with Shoes On.” Marcel is an adorable one-inch-tall shell who ekes out a colorful existence with his grandmother, Connie, and their pet lint, Alan. Once part of a sprawling community of shells, they now live alone as the sole survivors of a mysterious tragedy. However, when a documentary filmmaker discovers them, the short film he posts online brings Marcel millions of passionate fans, as well as unprecedented dangers and a new hope of finding his long-lost family. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k98Afd7Nf3Y](about:blank)
    - <https://thinkchristian.net/marcel-the-early-church-member>
    - <https://screenfish.net/marcel-the-shell-with-shoes-on/>
    - <https://sojo.net/articles/i-needed-tiny-shell-play-me-amazing-grace-curly-pasta?fbclid=IwAR2flGxtcB7IxjEZ1zK9Kr2GbR2kM0jjoLSAbcyeE8A9utxcaYvCrm73DI8>
    - The back story: <https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/movies-tv/jenny-slate-shares-the-origin-story-of-marcel-the-shell-it-felt-refreshing-and-affirming>
    - The original short clips: <https://www.slashfilm.com/822923/watch-every-short-that-inspired-the-marcel-the-shell-with-shoes-on-movie/>

How and when could we show these films during late October or early November?

* *A Place to Belong: Learning to Love the Local Church* by Megan Hill

Synopsis: Christians know church is important, but sometimes it doesn’t seem worth the effort to connect. An eclectic assortment of people with differing personalities, political views, and parenting styles can make for awkward interactions and difficult connections. What’s the point of putting in the tough work to build relationships? But the Bible says God’s people ought to be bound together. It uses words like beloved, brothers and sisters, saints, and fellow laborers to describe their mutual relationship in the church…. (The author) encourages and equips both first-time visitors and regular members to delight in being a part of the local church – no matter how messy and ordinary it seems today. It is only when God’s people begin to see one another as the Lord sees them that they will truly find a place to belong.

<https://static.crossway.org/excerpts/media/6e6170567afbb15fd3577cd664d87e135624f7c8/A_Place_to_Belong_excerpt.pdf> **Discussion points:** 1) The author comes out of a different faith tradition in which only men can become elders. She otherwise offers many good reflections on belonging in the context of the local church. 2) There was never a time when the church or its members were perfect. People are human/flawed. 3) People are less connected to a local church today and more suspicious of church in general than they have been in the past. 4) Jesus needs to be the authority in people’s lives, not the church. 5) Christian nationalism: Since this came up again, it seems appropriate to make sure we have an understanding of what that means. The following is from Wikipedia:

Christian nationalists believe that the US is meant to be a Christian nation and want to “take back” the US for God. Experts say that Christian-associated support for right-wing politicians and social policies, such as legislation related to immigration, gun control and poverty, is best understood as Christian nationalism, rather than as [evangelicalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism_in_the_United_States) *per se*. Some studies of white evangelicals show that, among people who self-identify as evangelical Christians, the more they attend church, the more they pray, and the more they read the Bible, the less support they have for nationalist (though not socially conservative) policies. Non-nationalistic evangelicals agree ideologically with Christian nationalists in areas such as patriarchal policies, gender roles, and sexuality.

* This is an older article, but may offer some insights: <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/9615/gallup-number-of-americans-who-belong-to-a-church-or-house-of-worship-plummets>

**Questions and notes for reflection:**

* St. Augustine’s Confessions: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”
* Belonging is different than fitting in. How?
  + Fitting in is about conforming.
  + Belonging is about being accepted for who you are.
  + Example: Jean said she might be able to fit in the choir if she sang solo (so low that no one could hear her). She doesn’t think she could belong if others heard her sing.
* Do we belong before we believe?Yes. Connection usually comes before believing. Being loved and accepted by others is a reflection of God’s love for all of us.
* Belong, behave, believe - what does this look like in a family? In the church? We can be different and still talk to each other in church (and in some families).

**Visuals:** stick heart (ribbons for All Saints Day)

**Music:** *Good, Good Father*; *Bind Us Together* (FWS 2226); *Pues Si Vivimos/When We Are Living* (UMH 356)

**Social Justice Issue for November 2022:** Homelessness

**Early Service worship leader for November:** Ken Luckett

**General discussion points:** 1) Mary Scott recommended reading Brené Brown and Zaretta Hammond’s books on belonging. Both authors examine the idea of belonging as it relates to education. 2) There are huge generational differences in what belonging means, especially in terms of sexuality orientation and gender identity. Teens are comfortable including and accepting peers of every orientation – it isn’t anything to get worked up about. Many (older) adults find that more challenging. Jean recalled a coworker who was very upset about her high school aged daughter transitioning to a male. 3) It doesn’t help when issues become political. Betty’s friend asked when the Fruitport School Board meets. She had the sense that her friend was more concerned about politics than educating kids. 4) Our denomination has had its share of political woes. Jim and Karen recently attended his high school reunion. When his coach’s friend noted that they were also Methodists, she said, “Aren’t we a mess?” 5) Recent news of a United Methodist pastor in Mississippi refusing to baptize a baby because the parents aren’t married is another story that doesn’t reflect well on United Methodists. Most UM pastors would be delighted to baptize a baby. 6) Southern Baptists have their own messes. Their president, Bart Barber, discussed them on [*60 Minutes*](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/southern-baptist-convention-president-bart-barber-60-minutes-2022-10-09/) this past week.

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**November 6, 2022:** “For All the Saints”

22nd Sunday after Pentecost

All Saints Day

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1: 11-23 (NLT)

**11**Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan. **12**God’s purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. **13**And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. **14**The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

**Paul’s Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom**

**15**Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God’s people everywhere, **16**I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, **17**asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. **18**I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. **19**I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power **20**that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. **21**Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. **22**God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. **23**And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

**Scripture reference:** Romans 14: 7-8 (NIV)

**7**For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. **8**If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

**Synopsis:** We are all called to be saints – those who help one another to know God better.

**Felt need:** To remember the faith of those who were a part of our community and find strength in the faith we claim together

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:** seed, ribbon

**Activity:** remembering the saints – bell toll, Holy Communion

**Media possibilities:** Show a clip from *All Saints* when Ye Win describing his “church hut” in refugee camp where they are one family in Christ. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmuEyvcSMf0> – very short clip at 4:15).

**Music:** *For the Beauty of the Earth* (UMH 92), *My Hope Is Built* (UMH 368), *For All the Saints* (UMH 711)

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**NOTE:** Charge Conference will be held in the afternoon.

**Discussion points:** *All Saints*:

* The church’s members and Burmese refugees come to know God better through each other.
* Michael Spurlock’s son asked his dad what would happen to the refugees if they failed. Michael said they would have to pray for God’s help. The son asked, “Aren’t you God’s help?”
* DVD extras: The real pastor’s wife makes it quite clear how difficult it was.
* Ye Win becomes the missional pastor of the church.

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**November 13, 2022:** “I Belong”

23rd Sunday after Pentecost

**NOTE: Pastor Mary may invite someone (or more) to share this message.**

**Scripture:** I Peter 2: 1-10 (MSG)

**2 1-3**So clean house! Make a clean sweep of malice and pretense, envy and hurtful talk. You’ve had a taste of God. Now, like infants at the breast, drink deep of God’s pure kindness. Then you’ll grow up mature and whole in God.

**The Stone**

**4-8**Welcome to the living Stone, the source of life. The workmen took one look and threw it out; God set it in the place of honor. Present yourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, in which you’ll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God. The Scriptures provide precedent:

Look! I’m setting a stone in Zion,

a cornerstone in the place of honor.

Whoever trusts in this stone as a foundation

will never have cause to regret it.

To you who trust him, he’s a Stone to be proud of, but to those who refuse to trust him,

The stone the workmen threw out

is now the chief foundation stone.

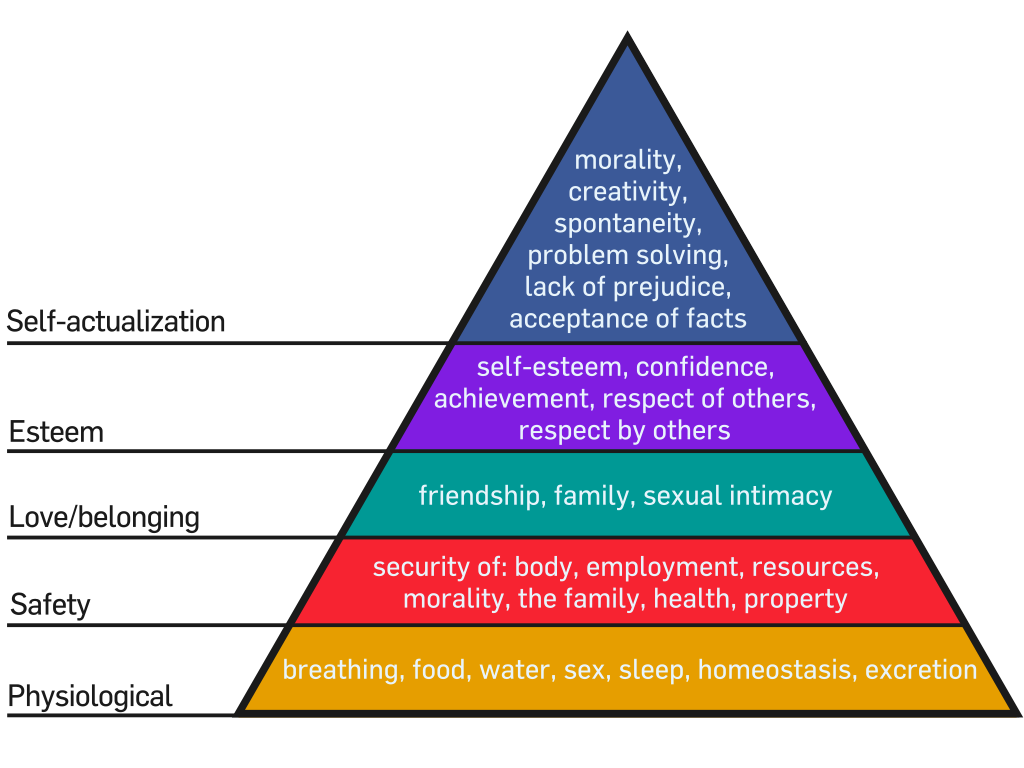
For the untrusting it’s

. . . a stone to trip over,  
a boulder blocking the way.

They trip and fall because they refuse to obey, just as predicted.

**9-10**But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.

**Scripture:** Ephesians 2: 19-22 (MSG)

**19-22**That’s plain enough, isn’t it? You’re no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You’re no longer strangers or outsiders. You *belong* here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He’s using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he’s using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

**Synopsis:** We need the basics to survive like food, clean water, air,

sleep, shelter, and security. The need for love and belonging follows close behind. (See Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.) How does a community of faith provide that need, and how can we offer it to others in the name of Jesus?

**Felt need:** To share and hear stories of what it means to belong and believe

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** Acknowledge Veterans Day

**Media possibilities:**

* “#BeUMC.” Length: 1:56. Cost: Free. Web license: Yes. We are the church. Together. Let’s #BeUMC. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vi1k7uAJ9zM&t=11s>
* “You Belong.” Length: 1:24. Cost: $19.99. Web license: Yes. This upbeat video welcomes visitors, encourages members, and invites everyone to sing, praise, and worship God. Everyone is welcome at church. <https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/116274/you-belong-here>
* “A Place to Belong – Worship.” Length: 1:23. Cost: $19.99. Web license: No. Start your service with this inspiring look at how everyone – members and visitors alike, are welcome at your church and have found a place to belong. <https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/67935/a-place-to-belong--worship>
* “Belong.” Length: 2:19. Cost: $20.00. Web license: No. As we are looking for significance and searching for who we are, those around us help to uplift and encourage us. It is those people we call friends and family, and it is those people that help us feel like we belong. <https://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/54156/belong>

**Music:** *Cornerstone*, ask for favorite hymns

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**NOTE:** This could be a series of vignettes (from different people) about what it means to belong to God, the Body of Christ, a community of faith, etc. The vignettes could use an example from one of the films.We can record the vignettes and play them back as a video in worship. Possibilities:

* + Family: Jean told how her family welcomed her dad’s cousin’s partner at a time when gays where often left out or shunned.
  + Church friends: Karen Post came to realize the point at which she would have been very comfortable with her church friends offering “parental advice” to their kids if Jim and Karen were gone.

**Discussion points:** 1) Big question: How does a community of faith provide the need for love and belonging, and how can we offer it to others in the name of Jesus? 2) Belonging starts with family, which might not all be related biologically. 3) People join gangs to belong. Too bad gangs aren’t healthy places to belong. 4) TV Show, “Cheers,” where everybody knows your name. 5) Belonging requires an emotional attachment and investment. 6) Belonging at church: Begins with being welcomed, probably more than one person several times, and not overwhelmed. There should be space for new people in established groups/cliques. 7) Friendsgiving. 8) Not hellpful: name calling, exclusion, disowning friends/family, divisive political discussion, avoiding each other. 9) Pastor Mary has come to believe that every marriage is cross cultural. Couples rarely have a common background today. Hallmark Channel offerings reflect that diversity. 10) It was more common for families to shun members who married someone different (Betty – Catholic relative’s name was left out of the family bible). 11) Diane’s family with Swedish roots, now includes members from six other countries. 12) The brouhaha over President Kennedy’s Catholic faith turned out to be a whole lot of worry over nothing. There was also fussing over President Reagan having been divorced – odd given that extramarital affairs were sometimes given a pass. 13) Luka’s friends are a diverse bunch of kids. 14) Places where people belong (levels of belonging): earth, country, states, clubs, families, church, neighborhoods, work groups, sport teams, college/school, committees, Mahjong, book club, music groups, hobby clubs, shopping lines, therapy groups. 15) Why belong to a community of faith? Support during an illness or loss. Helpers. People you can trust. 16) Funerals are an opportunity for outreach and connection. On a related note: At Jim’s dad’s funeral, some of the cousins he had not seen for a while mistook Jim for the mortician since he was so calm. When asked how that could be, Jim gave credit to his faith and being part of a church. 17) Jean went to a big church in Grand Rapids for the organ and because she just wanted to go and “be” connected to God without being part of everything. She still had a sense of belonging. On a day when she was feeling sad, a homeless man noticed her tears and offered a tissue – a very touching moment.

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**November 20, 2022:** “Sing from the Heart”

Christ the King Sunday, Sunday before Thanksgiving

**Scripture:** Psalm 100 (NIRV)

**A psalm for giving grateful praise.**

**1**Shout for joy to the Lord, everyone on earth.

**2**Worship the Lord with gladness.

    Come to him with songs of joy.

**3**Know that the Lord is God.

    He made us, and we belong to him.

We are his people.

We are the sheep belonging to his flock.

**4**Give thanks as you enter the gates of his temple.

    Give praise as you enter its courtyards.

    Give thanks to him and praise his name.

**5**The Lord is good. His faithful love continues forever.  
It will last for all time to come.

**Scripture:** Philippians 4: 4-9 (NRSV)

**4**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. **5**Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. **6**Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**8**Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **9**Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

**Synopsis:** Gratitude can be a powerful spiritual discipline that reminds us of our need for community in Christ. Taking intentional time to thank God opens us to be more aware of all that we can be grateful for. Saying “thank you” is a reminder that we need others – and that others need us.

**Felt need:** To cultivate gratitude for our connection to God and each other

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:** a thank you note to be written to someone who did something for you that you couldn’t do on your own

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:**

* Show a clip from *CODA* when Ruby is signing as she’s singing “Both Sides Now.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6_-L4esdvI> (Length: 3:56. Cost: Free. Web license: No.) or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhHz6FcrVmQ> (Length: 2:19. Cost: Free. Web license: No.) **Comments:** This had everyone in tears and reminded several people of the power of signing. Examples: Missy Post and Stacy Miller learning to sign. The girl with the “singing hands.” People who signed while the governor was delivering her messages to the state during Covid. Saturday matinee signers for Grand Rapids on Broadway performance.
* “Thanksgiving in All Circumstances.” Length: 1:43. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. Use as an opener to this year’s Thanksgiving Services. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/99669/thanksgiving-in-all-circumstances>

**Music:** The bells are ringing at 9:00 am.

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**NOTE:** Hanging of the Greens is in the afternoon.

**Discussion points:** 1) One of Pastor Mary’s close friends just gave her a gratitude journal from [*EM & Friends*](https://emandfriends.com/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwy5maBhDdARIsAMxrkw1Mf-DmcJrcl7euiG9WQe36cXkZdm4xqatebEFr8vQAlQMWnQXc9RkaAp13EALw_wcB), not because Mary needs to be more grateful, but because she sees how Mary wants to cultivate gratitude. 2) Do we express gratitude less in tense times? 3) Maybe there should be a “crying club.” 3) How does cultivating an attitude of gratitude affect us?

* I have a more positive attitude. – Karen Post
* Good manners, i.e., please and thank you go a long way towards making life better, but Betty had not always associated them with gratitude until now.
* Encouraging acts of kindness – Lynne doesn’t remember hearing so many thank yous from kids as she does now.
* Letting someone use a parking space or go ahead of us – it is nice to at least see a friendly wave as a thank you.
* Remember to thank family. It is easy to take their help for granted. – Karen P.
* Lynne didn’t hear “I love you” growing up. She had to learn the difference of a real “I love you” (from Roger) and the cheap ones from other boys. She felt that God was watching over her while she learned.
* Jim and Karen’s married friends sometime cope with things they don’t like about each other by being “divorced for a day.”
* Parents should show some physical affection for each other in front of the kids. – Betty
* There are things that we can’t do on your own and are blessed to have kids, grandkids, and neighbors who help out. – Marie and Betty
* It takes lots of people to raise kids.
* “Glass half full” people suck the life out of others. Why can’t they stop blaming others? Why are they so self-absorbed? Even if they had a terrible childhood there is a time to grow up and choose gratitude.