

Currents FOCUS

In Remembrance of . . .

Larry D. Laine

Father (poems), pastor

Christ Lutheran Church, Mt. Bethel, Pennsylvania

Diane M. Laine

Mother (poems), retired teacher, Bangor, Pennsylvania

Karin M. Laine McMillen

Sister (poem), self-employed artist, Bangor, Pennsylvania

Britta M. Laine

Sister (cover art), self-employed artist, Bangor, Pennsylvania

Preface – Ingrid

These are poems of grief, love, and reconciliation over a period of months following the death of our daughter, Ingrid. They document our feelings and emotions, our observations and questions occasioned from her death. Although we will never fully accept what has happened to her and to us as her parents and siblings, nevertheless, these poems were helpful in the grieving process to return a sense of normalcy in our life. Hopefully, they may be of help to you in your grief and in your life.

We, like you, have read about and experienced the death of people. Being a pastor and pastor's spouse, we have lived with people going through the grief process. We have conducted funeral services and counseled people who have had this experience. There are dynamics that are similar in all of us – dynamics of shock, numbness, loss, anger, hurt, resentment, denial, futility, disappointments, unfulfilled dreams, unspoken words, acceptance, memories and the joy and love of our relationship with the diseased. There are no right feelings and there are no right answers as to how your grief journey will travel. Nor is there a timetable for what and how you will travel. There are no right sentiments that can express what might give you comfort and ease your pain. We have found that in sharing our vulnerabilities there is comfort, healing, and strength.

These poems express the road we traveled over the months that followed her death. No doubt your trek will be different and uniquely your own. However, there may be reflections that we have shared in these words that might lift you up, give you hope, and affirm that others have and will travel a similar road that you travel. In that sharing of our mutual experience you might find some consolation and comfort.

It is for that purpose that we have shared these words with you. Blessings to you as you work through your journey of grief and sorrow. May you find peace in these turbulent times and help others to find peace and comfort.

Blessings – Diane M. Laine and Larry D. Laine



Contents

1. Prayer: O Lord God
2. Informed
3. When She Died
4. The Call
5. Our Whole World Stopped
6. Living in the Fog
7. Ingrid's Illness
8. 24th Day
9. 29th Day
10. Autopsy
11. Autopsy Feelings
12. Three Months
13. Ingie On My Shoulder
14. Crystal Bell
15. Angel
16. Angels Surround Us
17. The Snow is Gone
18. February
19. In Springtime
20. Deleted—Erased—Never Forgotten
21. Ashes
22. Decision
23. Burial Ceremony
24. Committal
25. You Are Home
26. Ingrid, Come Again
27. Ingrid's Legacy
28. A Year Later
29. The Tissue Box
30. Part Two – More Than A Year Later
31. It's Been more than a Year Since . . .
32. The Walk
33. Lost Sister
34. A New Morning
35. Karin, Britta, Larry
36. In Times of Grief . . .
37. Benediction
38. Unwelcomed Guest!
39. Photo of Ingrid

Prayer: O Lord God!

O Lord God,
You gave us Ingrid as a gift
a kind, loving, sensitive soul
who touched us more
than we will ever know.
Now we give her back to you
against our will.
Help us accept
what we cannot know
and trust you forever now.
Hold her in your arms
as only you, a mother, understands.

Hold us, too
in mercy, love, and grace.
We trust.
Amen.

Informed

A message on my cell phone:
"Call immediately!"
I left the meeting
went outside to respond.
"Dave, this is Larry."
"Ingrid died."
I asked some questions,
immediately
returned
to
the
meeting,
sharing this information
with a close friend,
telling her I was leaving
for home,
an hour and a half drive.
Glassy eyed
I was driving through a storm.
I pulled over,
called Diane several times.
The phone busy,
I assumed
she talked
with our daughters.
She was.
I called a friend.
She stayed on the phone
with me
while I drove home,

talking me through
what had happened
how I knew
and was informed.
When I finally spoke
with Diane, she had
heard the sad news.
Ingrid had died
about 1:30 pm
on Sunday, April 30,
the day of
my birth.

When She Died

Dave told us how he
discovered her.
She got up early
on Sunday morning.
She fed the dog
told Dave
her ankles were hurting.
She was going
back to bed.
At about 1 pm, Dave
went to wake her up
that she could call me
on my 78th birthday,
a ritual she had done
for years.
She was unresponsive.
I thought about those moments,
not knowing when
exactly
she died.
Dave said she died
of heart failure.
I suspect that is true,
but I didn't know when
or if she suffered.
Did she just go to sleep
without any notice of
heart failure? Did she
grasp for air and reach out
to seek help?
What were those
final
moments like?
No parent should need to
think about these things.
We don't want our children
to suffer,

*to grasp for air,
to reach out for help
and find that no one was there.
I should have been there
long before this occurred.*

The Call

*Sunday morning, April 30th, your dad's birthday.
He turned 78. You were 47.
The phone rings.
I answer.
I don't want to hear Larry's shocking words,
"Ingrid is gone!"
There are no tears, only shock from her sudden death.*

Diane Josephson Laine

Our World Stopped When You Died

*Our world stopped when you died, but
the rest of the world kept going.
We still must try not to cry when we:
grocery shop
cook
drive
plan your service
plan the meal after your service
order flowers for your service.
make phone calls to announce your
sudden death.*

*We cannot sleep and we are exhausted, in shock and inconsolable.
We are worried about your children and your sisters who you left
so suddenly.*

*We are thankful for our family and friends who are helping us,
for our Faith, and your voice in our brains, but
we need to see the blanket of brilliant stars in the midnight sky,
hear the waves at the beach
feel the sun on our faces and the sand on our feet
swim in the cold Michigan lakes
walk through the fields of sunflowers
watch the phenomenal show of the
Northern lights.*

*We need to do these things again.
It will help us heal.
Then your soul and our souls can be at peace.*

Diane Josephson Laine

Living In the Fog!

*It is difficult to see through
crying eyes,
to focus on most anything.
I remember walking through the fog
on my way to school as a child.
I walked down this lonely road between
the grape vineyard on one side and
alfalfa field on the other.
I could not clearly make out
which way was which.
I just knew the road
having walked it many times before.
This was a new road,
one I had never walked before.
I felt there was a cliff
on either side
waiting
for my fall.
The fog was so thick,
my eyes glazed with tears,
I held my outstretched hand
in front of me and yet
could not see a clear outline of fingers,
back hand, or wrist.
I trusted my legs to carry me
along the winding,
twisting
road and not
fall into
the abyss
on either side.*

Ingrid's Illness

*David commented on the death of Ingrid.
"When did you know she was ill?"
"About a year ago."
"What did you do about it?"
"I tried to get her to the doctor,
but she refused to go."
"So, you did nothing more!"
"She was not willing to go."
That answer is not an answer.
It is an excuse,
a refusal to help with compassion,
beyond a suggestion
to see a doctor.
It is difficult not to be
incensed and angry*

*at such a response.
It has been three weeks now
since she died.
It hurts.*

24th Day

*It has been 24 days now.
I can still see the image of her face
from the photograph
that was taken
at the mortuary.
I had to identify her as
my daughter
of some 47 plus years.
Her eyes closed,
her face bloated.
She appeared an image
coming from the clouds
around her swollen cheeks,
forehead and chin.
There was no body
in the photograph,
just her face –
enough to identify and confirm.*

*She was
our daughter.
No parent should have to do this.
I will never forget
that photograph and
the feelings
deep within.*

29th Day

*It has been 29 days since
she died.
It is so unreal,
so not having happened.
I find myself lost at times.
I had a dream where I was driving
I did not know what direction was
north or east – the general direction
that I wanted to go.
In my dream I discovered that I was
headed east and south, away
from home, away from my destination –
disoriented, confused, foggy, at best.
Now I find myself not wanting to
do anything – just pause, wait*

*and sit. I think about what I
could possibly do and yet
remain unmoved. I rehearse
possibilities, but the reality of
doing something becomes remote
and unexciting. I listen to Diane who is
still recovering from COVID-19 – foggy,
strange taste in her mouth, body aching,
stomach squeezing, headache.
She, too,
is in a fog and will often
say, “I can’t believe it!
I keep thinking Ingrid will call.”*

*That is the phrase that keeps coming
back to both of us like
a screen door on spring hinges
that bangs against the
door frame and
rattles the glass window nearby.
Someday the glass will break.
The force of the screen door
will be too strong.*

Autopsy

*We received the report:
enlarged heart,
enlarged kidneys,
deteriorated liver.
Signs of alcohol abuse.*

*Cause of death:
blood clot in
the heart.*

*It took alcohol
30 years to
end her life.*

*It only took a
moment for
the clot to
block the heart valve.*

*She was gone.
She was 47 years old.*

Autopsy Feelings

*The autopsy was
descriptive – cold
like her body that
lay on the pall,
void of feelings.*

*Once again, we are
empty and numb.
It was so rational,
precise, and
void of life.*

Three Months

*It's been three months.
I listened once
to the song, "Jesus, take the wheel" –
a mourning cry to feel.
A bracelet worn on her wrist
to God I know she wished.
Beyond her self-control
t'was the wish to make her whole.
Just give her one more chance,
save her for one more dance.
It was her favorite song.
It gave her strength to carry on.
It was her helping cry
in hopes she may not die.*

*I didn't know the song was hers
her favorite song for years.
I didn't know the theme
was her cry for help it seems.
A few days after she died.
I wish I had known.
I cried.*

Ingie On My Shoulder

*Her head leaning on my shoulder
against my cheek.
Her hair soft and warm,
she smiled
when I rocked and fed her
the last evening bottle as a baby,
when she finished playing in
the treehouse I built for her,
and wanted a lift down,
when she graduated from college
and wanted to thank us.*

*Now, her head lies on a pillow
no longer softness against my cheek.
Her body still and stiff,
eyes closed,
she lies motionless.*

*Her body now like a marble statue –
cold, smooth.
Long she lies alone
never again to lean on my shoulder,
smile and want to be picked up.*

*Her hair, reddish in tint,
stretches from the pillow to her waist
in a long wave as if to
say, "Good bye!"*

*I have seen her in my dreams
with the smile, the gesture of
farewell,
the long reddish hair falling
down, no longer waving
or moving.*

The Crystal Bell

*It sat on the little round glass table
under the bay window
where the light from the sun
reflected through the crystal
into the room.
The light would dissipate into
geometric patterns from the cut glass bell
on to the hardwood floor,
the piano, the hutch, the walls and more.
Faint through it may have been
the prism colors would tint
rainbows as the room came alive and
gave birth to a cinema world.*

*I remember carefully picking up
the bell by the yoke
and giving it a gentle shake.
The sound created by the clapper
against the crystal was a chime
so clear, so pure, so angelic.
The sound would travel through my
fingers, my hand, my arm, my body
and find a home in my heart.
There it would find rest
and gradually fade.
It was gone all too soon.*

*Now I hear the chime from memory
the crystal bell having been put away
forever.*

*In my heart it rings
when the rainbow appears
and the sun shines clear.*

Angel

*She collected angels
from around the world
some made from clay, porcelain, and glass.
Some angel ornaments hung on the Christmas tree
sculptured from wood – carved walnut and teak,
some stitched from cloth, some crocheted
like white snowflakes –
none the same.*

*One angel I shall never forget.
As other angels on
Christmas Eve this angel
descends like a tiny star bringing
light and life to
a child who wraps her
arms around the soft white form.
I could almost hear the angel
hum a lullaby as night falls
and darkness fills the sky.*

*And now I see the angel wings
wrap around the child that
loved and laughed and
played with her at
Christmas time.
Asleep and at peace
the child and the angel
become one and fly
back from where they came.*

*I sat the angel back on the tree of life
and look forward to another
day when the angel would
visit once again.*

Angels Surround Us

*She welcomed angels into
her real and imaginary world.
Some were as tall as the width
of her outstretched fingers
and lounged in
the warm palm of her hand.*

*Some she would hold
up to the light and watch them dance
as tiny delicate crystal glass sculptures.
Some were made of teak and rosewood
carved in ornate figurines
with fragile wings of butterflies.
Others were made from white cloth yarn
crocheted starched stretched blocked
with flowing gowns and silver crowns.*

*They stood erect or knelled
near her pillow.*

*Each night imaginary angels
came with choreographed.
swirling, bowing, hovering like
migrating birds in springtime.*

*They would fly from
here to eternity and back
touching the holiness of God
bringing happiness, joy, and peace
into her world.*

*Her angels talked with her
when she was lonely,
brought comfort when she was wounded,
sang to her in her sorrows.*

*The angels lifted her when she would fall,
walk with her when she needed a friend.*

*The angels filled her life with songs,
music and choral notes.*

*She laughed with them in their humor
always surrounded in
the warmth of their presence.*

*She, too, was an angel.
She came to us from the skies
and lived with us in our
real and now imaginary world.*

The Snow is Gone

*Last night the rain came down.
This morning the sparkling snow had suddenly gone.
It is January 30th of another year.
It has been nine months since you died.
Nine months you were in my womb.
Nine hours to give birth to you.
Nine seconds for you to die.*

Diane Josephson Laine

February

*Nine days in the hospital with pneumonia and flu
Three months of alliteration in
isolation/hibernation and depleted gamma globulin.
I hear you say, "that sounds like bibity-gobbily-goop."
One day of a 12 hour IV of
experimental miracle medicine called Exosomes,
thanks to your elder sister.
You give a cheer for Karin.
I wonder why I am allowed to
still be alive while you are gone.
Twenty-nine leap year days in
February to remember you.*

Diane Josephson Laine

In Springtime

*The tall trees begin to clothe themselves
with the new growth of leaves while
tiny buds form on the smaller dogwood,
the neighborhood's white floral base.
Above the base in the air stands a lonely tree.
Its bark is gray and there are no leaves
nor will there ever be again.
The shade from the sun in
summertime once sheltered
birds, squirrels, and chipmunks.
Today it stands alone
surrounded by its neighbors of
maple, spruce, pine, and tender birch –
quilting a blanket of color on the earth.
What once was, no longer is
as bark begins to peel
away from its once beautiful branches.
Oh, it will stand a while longer
in this state as we remember its
full mighty power to reach and sway.*

*Then it will fall
to the ground and forever decay.
Someday, however, a seedling will rise from
the decomposed pile and
life will begin again.
I yearn for that day,
remembering the majestic tree.
I once carved my name upon its lap
and sat beneath its cooling rack
to read a book and then to nap.
Such joy I shall never forget
A past I will never regret.*

Deleted – Erased – Never Forgotten

*It is so easy to press a key
on the computer, then it is gone.
What once was is no more. –
the last email from her –
announcing Soren's performance,
his comic monologue at school.*

*The last luncheon we shared – Sushi,
her favorite – I will never forget.
The last phone call and the last
message left on our phone.
The last time we saw her
she fell citing no feeling in
her legs and feet.*

*I heard a young Grammy Award singer
on NPR sing. "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is
Mine, Oh What a Foretaste of Glory Divine."
Her voice was the voice of an angel
so clear, so pure, so sure.
The last time we heard it –
the last time.*

Ashes

*Her ashes arrived in a cardboard box
delivered by the postman.
We placed the box on the
round maple table in the sunroom.
Not knowing what to say to each other
We walked away in silence.*

*The afternoon sun was warm and bright.
The air was still and the leaves on
the green trees held their posture.
Yet, the clouds formed in our hearts*

*and the pending storm
broke into flooding tears
as we walked away from the
lifeless box sharing our loss in silence.*

*The sun was shining,
the grass reflected green
against the blue afternoon sky,
the flowers reached for the light.
From time to time we would again
walk past the table with the box.
In our hearts the clouds gathered
and the storm poured tears
of sadness again and again.*

*At dinner we talked about
what to do with her ashes.
It was such a final statement on her life –
a life filled with engaging humor,
empathetic friendships,
and authentic love for others.
She learned in tactile, auditory
words and phrases creating
clips and quick wit we all enjoyed.
She lived to love and
affirm the life of others.*

*Addiction was her Achilles heal,
she nursed with wine,
her beverage of preference.
Over years it worked its woes,
finally, destroying her organs –
liver, kidneys, and heart.*

*Many conversations and encouragements
to seek help and find resolve
were of no avail and she lived
with her addiction unattended.*

*As parents, we often talk and wonder
where we failed her.
What did we do wrong?
How could we have saved her?
What roads did we open for her
that she should not have followed?
Could it have turned out differently?
Might we still have her present?*

*She is not here.
She is silent.*

Decision

*The places she knew
as home with family and friends
always drew her to Interlochen,
the summer arts academy.
She worked the concessions,
lifeguard at the lake front,
counselor to campers.
Her name as well as her sisters
indelibly written on the walls
of the dorms still show her presence.
We will scatter her ashes
in the lake and some
around the camp grounds.
No one will see the ashes,
nor will they know.
Yet, we will always remember
that she lives there.*

Burial Ceremony

*We boated out to near
the middle of the lake.
The lake was clear
and calm with
a slight breeze caressing
the rippling water.
The loons sounded their call
announcing the occasion
as they swam near.
We read the spirit prayer,
“We give back this gift to you
not wanting to . . . “
Each of us said
our farewells and poured her
ashes into the water.
The ashes sprayed a
gray white to blue green
becoming one with the water
and forever spread to vanish
beneath the wrinkling surface.
The water reflected the image
of clouds as the loons touched
the edge of the boat
and gently swam away.*

Committal

*Almighty God, hear our prayer.
We commit the body of
Ingrid Johanna Laine to
her final resting place with the angels.
Born from your earth she came
now she journeys to the angels above.
No ashes, no dust,
flesh of your flesh,
soul of your soul.
Her body vanishes like morning mist
as your sun warms the spacious skies.
Bless her and keep her.
Shine on her with grace and mercy
look upon her with favor and give her peace.
Receive her, O Lord, into your arms of
forgiveness and compassion –
such an amazing person of your making.
May she find rest on the wings of angels,
sing with the angelic chorus,
and forever be in the company
of your almighty presence.
Amen.*

You Are Home

*You dwell now
beyond the sunflower fields
beyond the meadows
where the cattle lie,
beyond the streams and lakes
where the blue heron speaks,
beyond the lofty mountain peaks,
beyond wings of eagle's flight,
beyond the seas of
roaring waves,
into the twilight of the
golden prism light.*

*Your colors reflect ever bright
to touch us with acceptance,
to embrace us with affirmation,
to warm our hearts with humor.
Your laughter, your smile,
and your love
will surround us like a huge hug.*

*In your light that never fades
as a star that twinkles ever,
you will dwell in the hearts of all
forever and forever and forever.*

Ingrid, Come Again

*She lives now beyond as
the faint light of a distant star.
Her memory shivers through
the fallen leaves of autumn
and the cold winter chill.
Yet, her scent is vibrant
as lilacs in springtime.
It is summer. She is sitting
on the dock – Lake Michigan, I suspect –
watching the wood ducks, and
blue-winged teal that stitch
through the white winded waves
in the rippling waters.
She is dancing music
with fingers twirling around
her amber hair.
Her body spirit soars
like the gray Northern Pintail
whose flight sweeps
across the water's edge.
It is the touch of her hands,
fingers tracing my cheeks and chin,
now the portrait of sadness,
that I remember her child embrace
as she wipes away a tear from my face.
The gentle whispering wind,
the air warmed by the sun
soothe my emptiness.
She has touched my soul.
Her memory will forever be
as the sun rises in morn and
is put to rest with
the twilight shadows.*

Ingrid's Legacy

*Everyone departs this world leaving a legacy
for others to follow, learn and discern.
Ingrid's legacy to her children and to us can
be summed up very simply:*

*First,
We must all survive
and never "fail to thrive."
She fought hard to grow all through her life
and disliked any kind of strife.*

Secondly,

*We must learn with pride
to carry the scar.
The suffering we endure
is who we are.*

Third,

*We must know that everyone
is our sister and our brother.
“We can never care enough
for one another!”*

Finally,

*We must know that life without humor
is an empty container of rubbish and rumor.
It is the smiles and laughter we share
that carry us in these times of despair.
It is the celebration of life
that conquers human strife.*

A Year Later

*The phone calls we missed at night –
the calls we didn’t take
because we knew
she had been drinking.*

*We knew but
we didn’t want to know.
It was easier not knowing
because it gave us hope.*

*Perhaps she had changed
her habits and
quit drinking,
but we sensed she hadn’t.*

*Then one day she called
in the afternoon.
That was different – the
time of day, the conversation.*

*She had had 19 days of
sobriety, of sanity.
She sounded different,
clear and with more wit.*

*What might happen on
the 20th day?
She called late that night.
Our hope vanished.*

The Tissue Box

*I am sitting at the kitchen table crying.
My Christmas gift from you, my eldest of three daughters,
stands jauntily before me with its defying angle and attitude.*

*It is pretty and shines brightly
spreading its aqua light around the kitchen.
It matches the shiny white surface of the kitchen table.*

I have fully loaded her.

She is ready to go.

*She is Marilyn Monroe standing
over the sidewalk vent.*

She is every woman.

She is my daughter.

She is me.

I smile and wipe my tears.

*I stare and wonder if
Ingrid would have touched
the tissue delivered in such
a beautiful, feminine flourish?*

Ingrid hated tissues.

*In fact, you hate tissues,
and Britta hates tissues.*

You all prefer to sniff.

Funny gift! I laugh!

*One by one, I pluck the reincarnated
tissue to wipe my tears,
and blow my nose.*

*I watch each new tissue skirt
appear before my eyes as I weep.*

Did you think of this also when you bought the gift?

*I feel Ingrid telling me
to pull the tissues faster.*

*I create an animation of
flying skirts and moving legs.*

I laugh.

I choke.

I hack.

I blow.

I wipe my tears.

*I wonder if I can run away with her.
Such an amazingly appropriate gift for me.*

Thank you, daughter!

Diane Josephson Laine

Part Two – More Than A Year Later

*The 19 days we
shall never forget.
Remembering the times
in high school*

*She had dared a kid to fly.
He stood on his desk
and jumped as the
teacher opened the door.*

*In summer from college
at Interlochen she
loved to laugh
and swim and dance.*

*Just a few hours before,
her dog, more a horse,
she walked and fed
before she laid down to sleep.*

*For days, her dog
lay on the couch
mourning her death
missing her so, like us.*

It's Been more than a Year Since ...

*A year has passed.
She still appears
in dreams, on screens,
standing in crowds.*

*At first it haunted,
but now I welcome
her presence as
the reunion of love.*

*Yesterday I heard
her voice in the
trees where the birds sing.
It has been a year since ...*

*Her voice was as real,
as always,
chipper and crisp
fresh and alive.*

*"Hello!" I said
lapsing back to
the time when
she was present.*

*She did not answer.
I remember and
hope I never forget
her face, her presence.*

*It has been a year since ...
I long to call her.
I have forgotten her phone number –
something I should always remember.*

The Walk

*Together we walked
down the lane
toward the bay.
Windsor on the Water
the street was called.*

*The elegant homes,
with manicured lawns,
yellow and white flowers,
green shrubs fresh from showers,
lined the meandering lane
down to the water.*

*Together we talked
about her high school cheerleading,
her 'hooptie' car,
her friends,
her kids,
her dog.*

*I wish I could talk
with her again
like we did
when we walked together
down the lane to the water.*

Lost Sister

Lost

*half of myself, the un-uptight, fun half
gone the ability to love fully
gone my protector
gone the safety of our unconditional love*

Lost

*everything
my will to function
my will to speak
my will to explain
my will to achieve*

my passion for music
my desire to sing
my craving to practice and perfect Mozart
Lost
my speed dial #1
the familiarity of never saying hello
Lost
my self
my smile
my giggle,
my belly laugh,
my knee slapper laugh
the Citgo sign's brilliance
the vividness of art and fashion,
the delightful fresh fragrance of flowers
the sun's kiss of your red hair and freckles
the freshness of the morning rain
the union of the sacred sunset over Lake Michigan
Lost
the girl who convinced me of my worth
the girl who gave me a nickname because I asked
Lost
watching whatever movie I want while you cover yourself
with blankets
Lost
my bunkmate
my roommate
my soulmate
Lost
the crankiness of your morning
the bite of your wit
Lost
you believing I could find your things from afar
engaging in our twin speak
making fun of our parents
the dream of living together again
our shared memories
you, who filled in the blanks, now I'm petrified
Lost
my restful sleep
dreams of our adventures, replaced with nightmares of death
our next trip and all the trips to follow
telling you about menopause and laughing
Lost
your view
your morality – refreshing, strong, encompassing
my faith – gone with the essence of you
Lost
the new jokes you will never make
Lost
everything you will never do and never say

Karin Laine McMillen

A New Morning

It had different moods –
the flowing river –
often gentle and kind
she would move with ease
reflecting the golden rays
sparkling from the silver rippling waters
to the underside of the
overhanging limbs and leaves.
In the gentle breeze,
the sun's shadows from trees danced on
the aquatic crystal mirror in delight.
She welcomed both day and night.
With the thrashing wind
striking the foliage
lashing her cheeks,
numbing her face with the icy rain –
her mood changed and
at the water's edge
she bruised the floating logs, trees,
flowers, ferns, and leaves.
The rampant river flooding as it please
lost its movement of ease.
The dark clouds of night
increase the freezing rain and snow,
adding to the water's mood
of strength and show.
Once calm serene becomes
the glassy mirror
of broken shards cutting
deeply into the pulse of
the beating heart and
into the loving
souls of others,
both young and old.
No fault of hers
external foes
cancerous storms
infect her soul.
She yearns for morn
of another possible day.
When morning breaks,
the storm long passed.
Again, a normal calm,
gentleness, and balm.
Another world perhaps,
another sun,
another light.
No longer the fearful wind,
no longer the icy rain,
no longer the racing heart.
All is gone beyond the sight

*into the new day, a valiant fight,
the river flows again
once more with light
as the soul awakes – all is right.*

Karin

*Karin hasn't talked with us since October 2023.
Karin doesn't grieve with us.
Karin chooses to grieve with her friends.
Ingrid is gone.
Karin is absent.
Now there is one daughter.*

Britta

*Britta calls every night.
She is grieving.
She is caught in her own cyclical drama.
I am caught in my own literal and figurative lack of oxygen.
I can't help her.*

Larry

*I hand the phone to Larry.
Larry didn't grieve with me.
He grieved with his parishioners.
Slowly, it is getting better.
He is beginning to share his thoughts with me.*

Diane Josephson Laine

In times of grief...

*Those of you, spouses, family
and other 'soul mates,'
are usually the people,
in times of loss,
who experience grief with
more intensity, more passion,
more feelings, more emotions.
You go through moments
(sometimes days) of shock,
moments of anger and depression,
moments when you doubt
and ask why, why, why.
Finally, you will arrive at
some level of acceptance.
It often takes three months
to three years or longer,
but you will come to grips
with the loss in your own way,
your own time,
through your own understanding.
Time of feelings and insights
will hit you when you least expect it –
like seeing a dandelion or a seashell,
walking on the beach or
sitting by a campfire,
riding a bicycle or
eating a piece of fudge,
watching a movie or
holding a child,
dancing and singing in the kitchen
while stirring macaroni and cheese.
Something – some event, some word, some sound,
some food, some clothing, some place,
some picture will trigger a memory and
you will feel the intense sadness,
separation and loss.
You will also feel the warmth
of a moment in that time
when the loved one is re-visiting you.
Time will stand still and
you will know that person is present.
Savor and embrace those moments dearly.
They are precious and so meaningful.
They are the life of the one
who has departed.*

Benediction

*May the God who brought us
into this world as a gift
be forever with you,
raise you to new life,
fill you with hope,
turn your mourning into dancing.*

*May God give you light when evil darkens your world.
May God bring you hope when despair numbs your soul.
May God lift you up when you stumble and fall.
May God give you faith when doubts assail you.
May God bring you trust when nothing seems sure.
May God raise your vision when ideals fade.
May God become your guide when you lose your way.*

*In God's presence, may you find serenity and peace.
In God's kingdom, may you find purpose and meaning
on earth as it is in heaven.
Amen.*



Unwelcomed Guest!

*Grief the
silence of footprints
in the snows
leaves a trail
with no sound,
a vision walking away
without form.*

*It arrives
mute invisible
to loved ones
its presence shouts
and shakes – louder,
stronger than an earthquake.*

*It visits while unprepared
in timeless moments
of shock disbelief
catching us breathless
unable to speak.*

*Its presence root
unresolved issues
heartaches, wishes
unfulfilled dreams.
It plants hurts and
leaves scars.*

*The footprints do
not move or vibrate
they are swept away
by the winds
melted by the sun
leaving us with
faint whispers
daunting memories
and eternal hopes.*