

From the Pastor's Desk

Joey

I was at the Italian Festival with Joni a few weeks ago and decided to return home, while she stayed to talk with friends. I felt a lump in my throat driving into the garage. I opened the door and called out for Joey but there was silence. I continued walking through the house calling his name. More silence, but it felt comforting to call his name. Joey! Precious Joey! I would have given anything for him to have been waiting at the door with tail wagging and swooping him up in my arms, him licking my face and me kissing him behind his ear. But silence. I went out into our yard, sat next to his grave and wept.

A couple of weeks earlier we took him to the veterinary office because he was vomiting and knew something was wrong. His blood work revealed kidney failure. Then began a very difficult journey culminating back at the vet's office the morning of the Italian Festival, both of us holding our beloved companion as the shot was administered. Within 30 seconds his body went limp. Joni drove us home as I held Joey's little body in my arms. The grave was dug a few days earlier anticipating this dreaded day. We spent a couple of hours with him at home before the burial. Our tears continued for weeks because a chunk of our hearts was also in that grave.

One sympathy card we received read:

*To make Heaven the perfect resting place for loved ones we adore,
God made sure those Pearly Gates contained a doggy door.*

Another friend included this message she received when her companion died:

My beloved pet has made her transition. For those of you with beloved pets, you know... For those of you who aren't "pet people", please know that these precious creatures become family as much as, and sometimes more than, any human in our lives. It's an insidious process, they are adorable little critters who bounce around and make us laugh, then at some point, when we aren't looking, they bore holes in our hearts and implant themselves, they grow and become not just a part of our lives, but a part of the very fabric of who we are.

I knew the time was coming, drawing closer each month. The last four days turned that corner to Now, the time is Now. What a beautiful journey our loved ones carry us on, no matter their species. They push our buttons and pull our heartstrings as we learn and love and grow with each other. When it is time for them to leave, all of that is up in our face as we grasp at how to do this... How do we allow them to leave, to flow with the process, to detach, to honor and release them to all that is their contract, their journey? How do we separate the cords that bind us, while still holding them in comfort and love? And how do we carry on with the emptiness, the grief, the loneliness?

Cheryl Lund

My first experience with bereavement came as a child when our pet dog Jigs died. I

felt a strange sickness inside and didn't know what to do with it. I felt like I wanted to cry but knew "big boys don't cry", so I stuffed it. I remember my family walking around with heavy hearts but little was said about this elephant in the living room—death, sadness and grief.

I began to fear emotional pain. It showed up again in high school when my girl friend and I went our separate ways. But the mother-load came when my father died and a year and a half later my mother. The flood gates were opened and I was up to my eyeballs in emotional pain. Slowly I learned it would not kill me and that God was somehow mysteriously present in the midst of it. The death of our precious ones sends us into a tsunami of pain, sadness and confusion. The only way out is through the storm, which may take months and years.

Although the loss of Joey has been profound, there are others far worse such as the loss of spouse or a child. Long time member of Shepherd of the Hills, Bill Schreiner was married to Lydia for nearly 70 years. She died on June 17th and Bill on October 12th, about four months apart. All surviving spouses have a challenging time reorienting their lives after so many years of marital companionship. Only those who have experienced this know the pain involved.

Navigating the inevitable losses we will experience in life is a challenge for all who are blessed with longevity. Our faith accompanies us on the journey providing companionship and love, as well as the mystical nourishment of Christ's body and blood as we feast on the Lord's Supper.

Lo! I tell you a mystery. This perishable nature must put on the imperishable and this mortal nature must put on immortality. I Corinthians 15

All Saint's Sunday is November 2nd where we will ring a bell, proclaim the names of those who have recently died and light a candle for each one.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. Revelations 21:4

~PB

Joni and I wish to Thank You for your condolences upon the death of our beloved Joey.

