

# THE PARISH LIGHT

The Parish of the Northern Lights Newsletter - May 2017



## These Hands

While visiting Mamaw, she said, "look at these hands! Have you ever seen hands like these?" She was disgusted.

I just thought to myself, no, I have never seen hands like those. Those hands may have never touched a keyboard, been behind a wheel of a car, or held wads of money, but let me tell you what those hands have done.

Those hands held her husband up until she laid them on his chest to tell him goodbye.

Those hands raised a family of 8 and helped raise several grandchildren.

Those hands have cooked thousands of meals, peeled countless potatoes and strung bushels of beans.

Those hands pulled me to the garden and pulled many weeds.

Those hands led me to church and to the Lord.

Those hands showed me to always flip through the Bible and stand on faith and stand strong no matter what.

Those hands showed me the right way to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and make do with that we had.

Those hands washed my hair, dried my tears, and patted me to sleep.

Those hands have worked until they bled.

Those hands showed me how to be humble and kind.

Those hands were crossed and prayed for me many times to count, and taught me to pray.

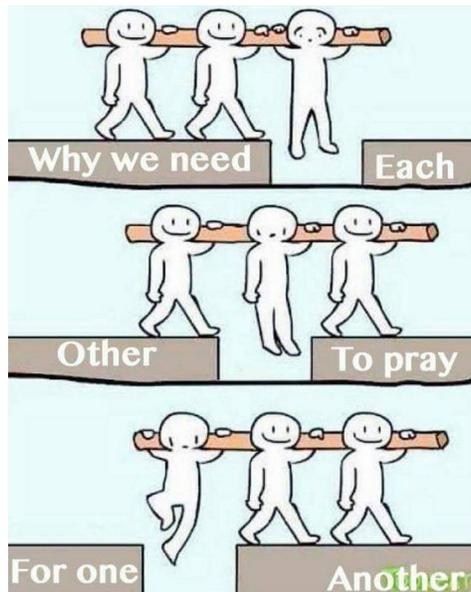
Those hands worked a dozen puzzles when they didn't want to and let me win at checkers.

Those hands showed me how to be a wife, mother and a better person.

To her, they are just withered hands that cause her pain and aggravation. Hands that can't even hold a pen or open a bottle anymore, but to me they are hands that hold the world.

I will hold and cherish these hands for as long as I can.

..... Jeanie Sparks



## Sweeping the Places No One Sees

I must admit I'm not a very thorough housekeeper. As long as things are reasonably organized and superficially clean, I'm satisfied. Though I have a horror of clutter, I tend to neglect ceiling fans and baseboards and the rather out-of-the-way areas that a more conscientious cleaner might maintain well-dusted and well-scrubbed.

But I'm indebted to an elderly woman in England for reminding me of the importance of sweeping the places no one sees.

Early in the morning on a recent trip to England, I looked down from my bedroom window and spotted a small gray-haired woman slowly and meticulously sweeping the concrete slab in front of her home. The street was lined with row houses and this particular woman had basement rooms, just below street level, so that you would actually have to lean over the railing to see her front porch.

Why, I wondered, would anyone wake up so early in the morning to sweep a place so inconspicuous, so out of the way ... a place that no one ever really sees?

Perhaps she was expecting a special guest. Perhaps she was obsessive-compulsive and couldn't rest knowing that the porch remained unswept. Whatever her reasons, it struck me as I watched her that I, too, have unswept places that no one sees. Often I'm so busy fixing and cleaning the more obvious places that I don't take time for the places that only God and I can see. I know deep inside that it should be the other way around: if I start by allowing God to sweep out the secret places of my heart, then some of the more visible places will take care of themselves.

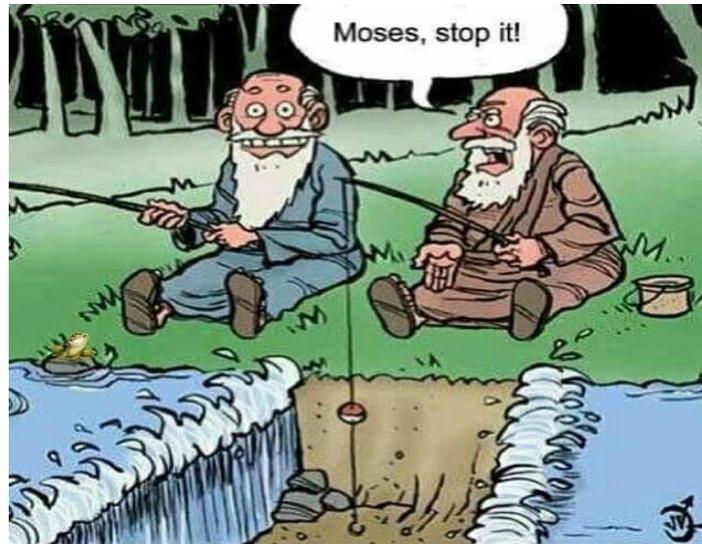
King David understood and demonstrated the importance of coming clean before God when he prayed such transparent prayers as, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” ([Psalm 51:10](#), NIV) and “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” ([Psalm 139:23-24](#), NIV)

Do you desire to keep your heart continually cleansed before God? Praying without ceasing, as Paul commanded in [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#), is a good place to start. Here are ten easy ways to incorporate prayer into your day:

1. **Pray in the morning when you first open your eyes.** Thank God for making it through the night and for the day ahead.
2. **Pray in the shower.** Thank God for his many attributes, like his goodness, faithfulness and grace.
3. **Pray over breakfast.** Thank God for the food he has blessed you with and that you don't have to go to school or to work hungry.
4. **Pray during your daily quiet time.** Pray for your family, your friends, your neighbors.
5. **Pray during your morning commute.** Pray for the people on either side of you. Pray over the work day and ask the Lord for wisdom, guidance and divine appointments.
6. **Pray over lunch.** Thank God for food to nourish your body and give you strength for the day.
7. **Pray during the mid-afternoon slump.** Pray that the Lord will help you finish the day strong. Pray for your colleagues and bosses.
8. **Pray during your commute home.** Pray for the people on either side of you in traffic, that God will reveal himself to them in a special way. Pray over their homes and their lives.
9. **Pray over dinner.** Thank the Lord for a productive day and a chance to unwind.
10. **Pray before going to sleep.** Pray that God will give you and yours the peaceful rest that you need. Thank him for the day and for his many blessings.

Remember the elderly lady in England to whom I'm much indebted? There's a little more to her story. Later that day, I glanced out of my window and saw an elderly gentleman arrive at the woman's doorstep, flowers in hand. Mystery solved! Love is a powerful motivator. And love, too, should motivate us to rise early in the morning, to sweep out the inmost places through communion with God, getting everything straightened out before the “day-to-day” has a chance to introduce its dust and grime into our lives.

This spiritual housekeeping is our most important task of the day.



## God and Lawn Care

**GOD:** "Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there on the planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, milkweeds and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long-lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honey bees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But, all I see are these green rectangles."

**ST. FRANCIS:** "It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers 'weeds' and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass."

**GOD:** "Grass? But, it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees; only grubs and sod worms. It's sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?"

**ST. FRANCIS:** "Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn."

**GOD:** "The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy."

**ST. FRANCIS:** "Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it-sometimes twice a week."

**GOD:** "They cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?"

**ST. FRANCIS:** "Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags."

**GOD:** "They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?"

**ST. FRANCIS:** "No, Sir, just the opposite. They pay to throw it away."

**GOD:** "Now, let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And, when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?"

**ST. FRANCIS:** "Yes, Sir."

**GOD:** "These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work."

**ST. FRANCIS:** "You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it, so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it."

**GOD:** "What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn, they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. It's a natural cycle of life."

**ST. FRANCIS:** "You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away."

**GOD:** "No!? What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter to keep the soil moist and loose?"

**ST. FRANCIS:** "After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves."

**GOD:** "And where do they get this mulch?"

**ST. FRANCIS:** "They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch."

**GOD:** "Enough! I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?"

**ST. CATHERINE:** "'Dumb and Dumber', Lord. It's a story about...."

**GOD:** "Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis"



There was a terrible blizzard and it was snowing and snowing all weekend. Sunday morning came and the Pastor saw that the snow had reached his window. He didn't think anyone would be coming to church this morning, but he felt obliged to go anyway. The pastor fought his way through the icy wind and snow to get next door to the church. He waited in the sanctuary, reading, for ten minutes.

He was about to go when the door opened, and a man staggered through.

"Hello!" said the pastor. "Church will have to be cancelled today. You're the only one who has come."

The man replied, "Reverend, if you had a big herd of sheep, and only one came home that night to feed, would you still feed him?"

The pastor was amazed and cried, "Yes! I would!"

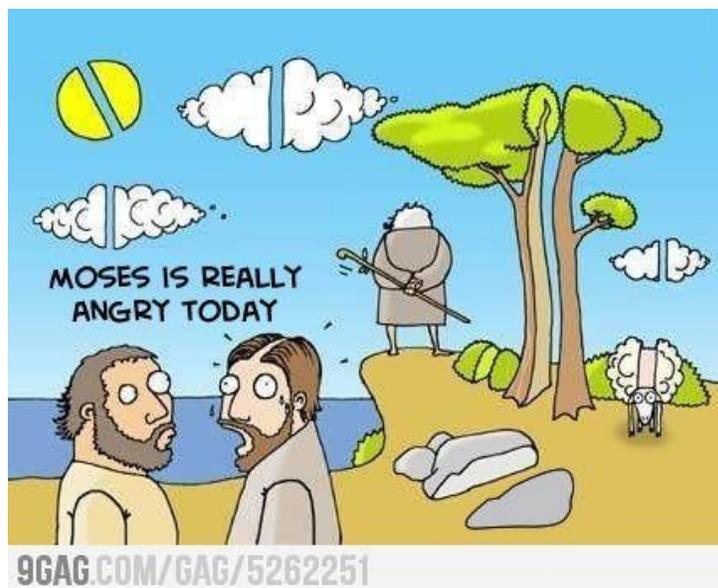
He then was filled with the spirit, and decided to preach the best sermon ever. He talked and talked

about all of life's trials and joys. He referred to passages from Genesis to Job, Psalms to John, Acts to Revelation. He did so with profound excitement and conviction. This went on for a long time.

After the minister had come to his final conclusion, he went down and talked to the other man.

"Did that satisfy you, sir?" he asked happily.

The man replied, "Reverend, if you had a herd of sheep and only one came home that night to feed, would you make sure he ate the whole bale of hay!?"



**It was Palm Sunday** but because of a sore throat, 5-year-old Johnny stayed home from church with a sitter. When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm fronds. Johnny asked them what they were for.

"People held them over Jesus' head as he walked by," his father told him.  
"Wouldn't you know it," Johnny fumed, "the one Sunday I don't go and he shows up."

# What's Happening

YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR...  
*Mother's Day Tea*



Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup>

1:00 – 3:00 pm

St Andrew's Zion Church Hall, Colinton

*See you there!*

Sponsored by St Thomas, Perryvale & St Andrew's Zion, Colinton churches

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## GARDEN & GREEN SALE



Get your local perennials, houseplants, garden plants,  
planters, paving stones, ALL THINGS GREEN!!

**Saturday, May 27<sup>th</sup>**

**10:00 am – 2:00 pm**

**St Andrew's Zion Church Yard**

**BBQ – sponsored by Parish Youth Group**





**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**  
**St. Andrew's Zion. Colinton**

Is Planning to Host  
Vacation Bible School (VBS) this Summer  
Anyone Interested in Helping in Any Way  
Please Join Us for a Planning Meeting

**Sunday May 7/17 Following 10:30 am Service in Colinton**

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- Parish Council Meeting – Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup> ... 2:00 pm at St Paul's in Boyle
- Coffeetime – First and Third Thursday - May 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> at St Andrews Zion, Colinton  
Join us for coffee, tea, snacks and fellowship with the community
- Prayer and Praise – May 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Seventh Day Advent Church in Ellscott (old Lutheran church) – this is a rotating service within Boyle and area