

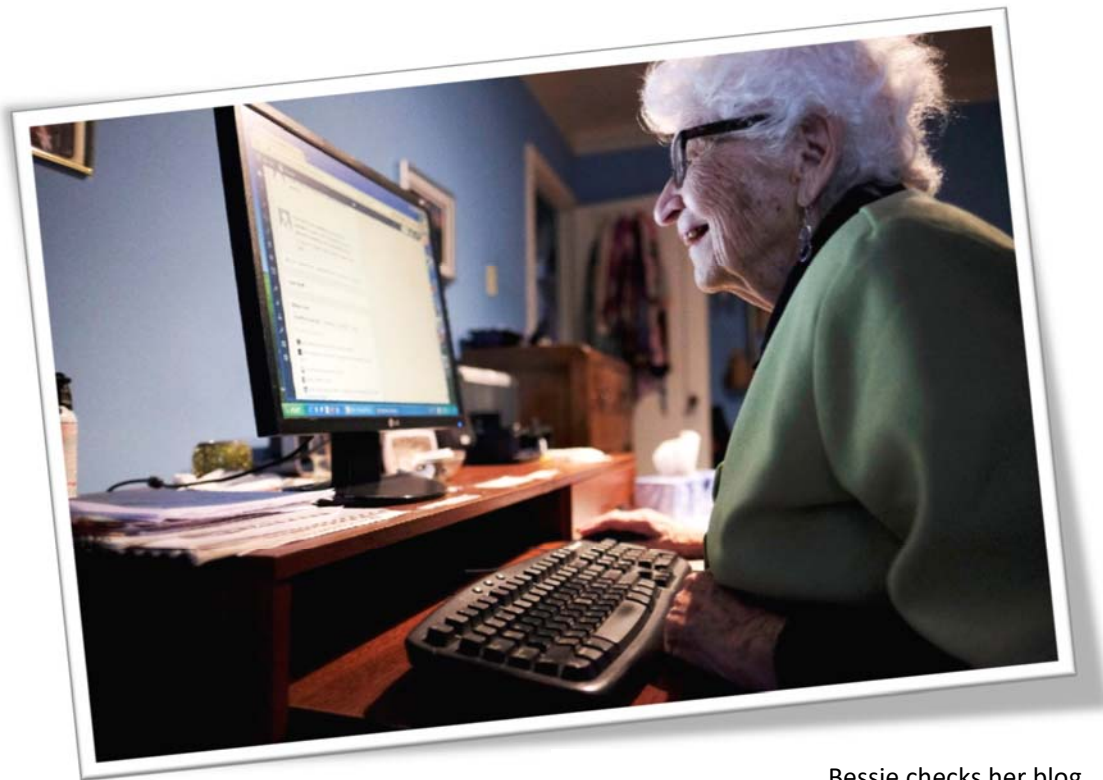
An Anthology of Living



Thoughts, Prayers,
Stories and Reflections
by Bessie Stallworthy

December 2018

Go to bessieat100.wordpress.com to
access all Bessie's books and posts.



Bessie checks her blog
Photo by Justin Greaves, Metroland

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“I have been very lucky as well as gone through the tough stuff and hard times, but I believe that life is bound up with blessings and problems and we have to have the strength to manage and to believe the world is a good place to be.”



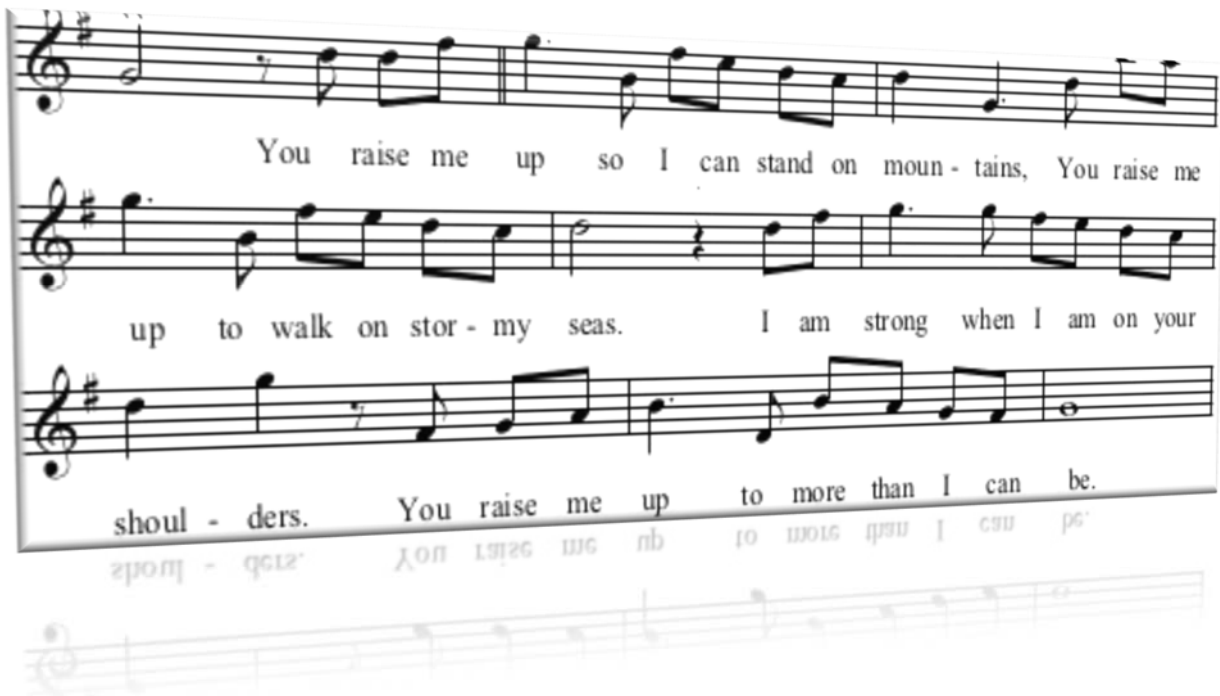
You Raise Me Up

When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary
When troubles come, and my heart burdened be
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence
Until you come and sit awhile with me

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas
I am strong, when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up... To more than I can be

There is no life - no life without its hunger
Each restless heart beats so imperfectly
But when you come, and I am filled with wonder
Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity...

Recorded by Josh Groban
Arranged by Roger Emerson
Words and Music by Rolf Løvland & Brendan Graham



The image shows a musical score for the song "You Raise Me Up". It consists of three staves of music in G major (one sharp). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the lyrics: "You raise me up so I can stand on moun - tains, You raise me". The second staff contains: "up to walk on stor - my seas. I am strong when I am on your". The third staff contains: "shoul - ders. You raise me up to more than I can be." There is a faint, overlapping staff of music visible below the main score.

Bessie's Reflection

When I listen to the song "You Raise Me Up" I clearly hear God's voice whispering in my ear. I find it so inspiring!

Like all the people I have talked to lately, this winter, that is finally slipping away, has been a very hard one to get through. I know it has been for me. Spending many hours indoors, not able to get out because the walking was so hard, I had to find ways to get my spirits up. I have had projects that kept my mind active and kept my fingers busy.

I think finally the weather is improving! These last two or three days have been lovely. When the weather is sunny, and I am feeling better, I always want to sing. I have several songs I find myself belting out! It is a good thing I live on my own sometimes. So, this week I got to singing "You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains", which was great for me because I remembered doing just that when I was out with my family in B.C.

A memory that always lifts me and my spirits is the thrill of standing on the top of a mountain and gazing at mountain upon mountain as far as the eye can see.

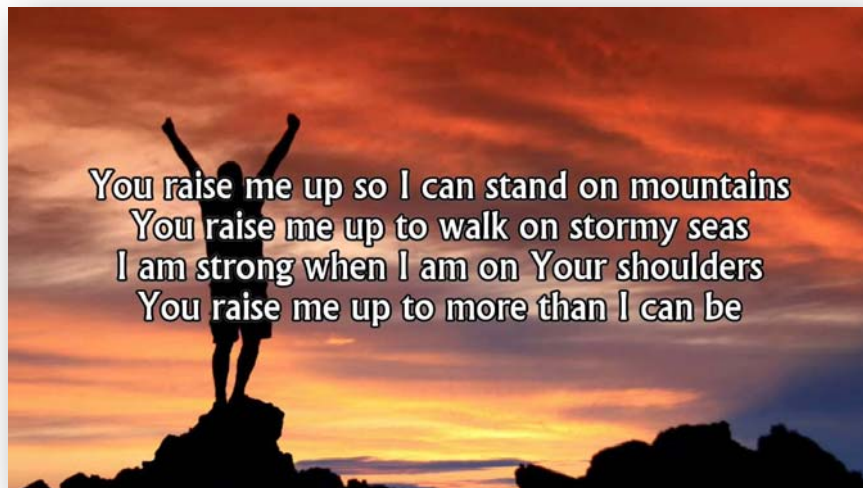
Singing the words made me realize I have had a few stormy seas this past winter and I got through the days fairly well. I seemed to be able to cope.

I truly think for all of us, God has a way of reaching us. When things get us down, we all have such a need for really feeling God active in our lives. There are so many times we feel like giving in to the pain and loneliness we feel. But that is not God's way for us. We have to make our life count for something.

The other day, while listening to the song, a different meaning came to me. Am I supposed to be the You in the song? Am I being gently told I should be the one to be raising someone up? Should I be finding someone out there who needs my help? I sat down to think about it.

I realized that God works through people. We all have the task of helping in whatever way we can. We need to be able to show what God has done for us in our lives and pass on our experiences of times when God was there for us.

I then started thinking, how? Here I am, a very old lady having trouble dealing with my own wants. How can I do something like this? Well, for one thing, I can be a good listener. People need someone who will listen to them. So often their relatives are too far away and are often busy anyway. I know that happens in my own case. My family are out of town. I see my daughter once a week when she is not away on a trip. So, when I get down in the dumps, as I do sometimes, I find my thoughts start running around and around like a squirrel in a cage, going nowhere and I get more and more upset. As often happens, the phone rings, I answer, and someone says, "Hi, Bessie. I was thinking of you. How are you?" I immediately feel happier. Was it a coincidence or was God in the picture filling my need??



I prefer to think God is looking after me! So, in turn, I must listen to my inner voice and be ready to pick up the phone. I know no one can change anything by listening but the person telling you their problems begins to feel better by just telling someone, and often nothing seems so bad any more.

Then I remembered something else. I have a friend who sends me a thinking of you card frequently. They always make me smile. Yes, I too could send out thinking of you cards. I haven't done that too much in the past. I would rather pick up the phone, but I got to thinking, very sick or depressed people don't always want to talk so, sending cards made sense. It only takes thinking about things we can do, and God will do the rest!

We all have gifts we can use. I imagine many of you find ways of helping, of sharing yourselves with others. Helping in any way you can. I bet you have never thought of yourselves of being God ambassadors.

So, now when I seeing “You Raise Me Up” I not only know God is telling me He is always with me ready to walk with me on my stormy seas and to make me feel better and more worthwhile, He is also reminding me He has given me the task of being there to help someone else walk on their stormy seas and stand on mountains, knowing that God is standing up there with them!

I need to remind you that you are never alone! God is always with you! Also, God expects us all to somehow pass on the good news, to reach out to help somebody. The blessings are great when we reach out. God will make sure we are rewarded.



Accentuate the Positive. Eliminate the Negative. Definitely Appreciate the In-Between.

I have decided this is my resolution for the new year 2018. To me, this is how I should live! I am about to experiment.

Most of my years I have had a purpose that gives direction to my life. I have collected red-letter days. I still record awesome moments. I have written about many things in past years, but this is where I am today.

Life dictates how we live it. Things happen. Good, bad or just plain everyday things. We can't always be in charge of our own destiny. We are part of a family, part of a community interacting with each other. For me, I am an integral part of my church.

I must try to stay positive about my life every day. It is harder some days than others which is where, for me, the awesome moments come in. Sometimes I must make a positive effort to get up and get on with my day even when my body says, "just a few minutes more in bed". If I get going, I nearly always find something good will happen.

Sometimes, even when all is going along smoothly, I can get such a down feeling of absolute "why I am still here" and I feel so lonely and lost that I could cry! I have no idea what brings these feelings on. I can be with friends having a good time. I can be with my family with all of us laughing and chatting together and I feel so alone. It is awful.

I most often quietly leave the room, step outside, and take some deep breaths and ask myself why does this happen? I really don't know.

Also, the exact opposite happens. I can be moved by something to the depths of my being. I call it my mountaintop feelings.

I am determined this year to stay up, to appreciate the in-between, to tackle what comes in my days with a positive attitude and find myself satisfied at the end of the day. Staying positive on my in-between days will mean I will be ready for awesome moments.

Spirit of God

Breathing is essential. Without breathing we would die. I think of my husband Phil when I think of breathing. He died of lung disease. It was a nightmare to hear him trying to breathe even with oxygen being administered. I think of him often as he struggled.

I had the biggest scare of my life a few years ago when I had a dreadful cold. Some of the mucus got trapped and I couldn't budge it from my windpipe. I sat gasping for air getting more panic-stricken by the second. Fortunately for me, my sister who lived with an asthmatic husband all her married life and had experienced his distress was able to calm me down. It seemed like a long time before my windpipe cleared. I sat up in bed for the rest of the night too scared to lay down in case I choked again.

I have realized this life-giving breath cannot be seen. It is vital but invisible.

It is the same with the wind bending the trees as it rushes by, taking hats off people's heads, blowing garbage cans down the streets. We see the effects of the wind but can't see it.

Just as essential to our life is the Spirit God sent us at Pentecost. We need that Spirit in our lives as much as we need air for our lives to be full of meaning and peace. We need the Spirit within us.

I think without it we become prime candidates for self-pity, depression, and tiredness. All our lives have times of stress and trial, illness within ourselves or our loved ones.

We really feel we can't go it alone. It is easy to say why does this have to happen to me? We can all think of ways to improve our lot, most completely impractical. Often the more we think, the more we realize we are stuck and all we can do is to go on.

That is where I think God's Spirit comes in to turn us around, to change our attitude, to let us know we needn't go it alone. Help is there for us. It is like taking a deep breath when you first step out of the house on a nice sunny day with a little wind blowing. It feels so good, you take another one!

Take a deep breath of God's Spirit and let God take over. It does work. I get very lonely and depressed sometimes. I still miss the men who were in my life and some days self-pity takes over. I am sure God understands how hard it is and makes allowances for me.

But I can't stay wallowing. Life goes on and I am still here and must make my life count in God's eyes. So, I take a deep breath, ask God's blessing, and get myself busy.

I will Light Candles this Christmas

by Howard Thurman



*I will light Candles this Christmas;
Candles of joy despite all sadness,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of courage for fears ever present,
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles of love to inspire all my living,
Candles that will burn all the year long.*

Stormy Weather

Have you ever sat and watched a storm come up? I did the other day. I sat out on my porch in the front of my house and there were huge black clouds to the west of me. I thought to myself, "I don't think this storm will come right over me. It is too far north."

The birds were getting worried, I could tell. It was the way they took off from the telephone wires and roof tops. Suddenly they were all gone. Birds are smart. They know when to get out of the rain.

The dark clouds were moving quite fast to the north of me and I thought, "Oh good, it is missing me."

Then the wind blew! It blew my little table over. It blew the plants I have on my deck over and I had to rescue them. I wanted to stay out there as it was exciting, but down came the rain. It drenched me in a few seconds. The wind was blowing so hard I couldn't get my front door open. I got in and watched from indoors.

I was so amazed at how clever all the birds were around me. All had gone to safe places. Sparrows, starlings, and pigeons, not a bird in the sky. They are so smart! In a little while the storm passed, and all was clean and bright again. I had fun though.

We grown-ups need to do fun things too!

A Week in the Life of Bessie

I think it could help me to look back on what I do each day, to give me a perspective on who I am.

I need to have a routine in my life, so some planning goes into my days. I have a big calendar that is needed to help me remember the things I need to do. Forgetfulness is one of the small nuisances of one's ageing life. For me, the need to put everything down on paper is imperative.



I usually wake about 8 am. My nights can be a bit chaotic, depending on my aches and pains or restless legs. I have been known to send e-mails in the wee hours and then go back to bed or play Free Cell, my one computer game. I can get about 75% right most nights.

No matter how bad my night is, I have learned that if I don't gripe about it and get up in a positive mood, I can still function well. I can always nap in my chair when needed. This is one of the positives of being a great age.

Then I make my bed. It must be neat and tidy. On my shower days Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I stay in my dressing gown waiting for my ladies to help me get into my shower. The other four days I wash and dress and then get my breakfast.

I am lazy about meals. I don't sit at my dining room table. I sit in my armchair and have my meals on a tray table and watch TV.

I am not very happy with the TV programs. There's too much violence, the morals of the sitcoms get to me, and I don't like reality shows. I like TVO documentaries and I watch news from different Canadian channels, not the USA. So, when there is no TV I am on the computer or my iPad.

The three days I have my shower I also have an appointment with my chiropractor whose office is about five minutes along the road from where I live. Having the treatment so regularly has kept me mobile for years. I wasn't

happy when the government took the service off home care. It is thanks to my doctor's generosity that I can go as often as I do. I feel I could have been in a wheelchair now instead of walking with the walker. Since I started using the walker my spine has strengthened and straightened a bit.

Sometimes I walk over to the church, about a ten-minute walk. I am busy at my church, so I always have something I need to talk about. I am on the pastoral care committee. Our committee is responsible for the happiness and wellbeing of all the members from the babies to the folk in nursing homes, or those sick or unable to get out to services. I love my job. I don't have time to feel sorry for me; so many are worse off than I am.

I have been in the same church for sixty-five years in June, so everyone knows me there. I am a mother, granny, and great-granny to the congregation. I am so well loved it has made me so thankful for all I have. Most of my friends I have made at the church.

I often have people coming for tea. "I make very good tea." On Mondays, a friend comes, and we sit and put the world right between us. The rest of the day I keep busy with emails, phone calls, and household chores. I cook my own meals, something I am not keen on, but it must be done. I make sure I eat well. I have a small appetite and it is hard to swallow sometimes because my mouth gets so dry, but I do ok.

I also make sure I go for a walk every day. I have lived here for forty-five years so I am well known, and I always meet someone to chat with.

Tuesdays are my red-letter days when my daughter and my son in law drive in from Pickering and spend the day with me. I talk over things I need advice with, they take me shopping, I get to hear all about the family and their doings, and we have dinner together which of course is awesome. To be waited on and served makes me feel so good. I want them to live their life to the full, so when things come up and they don't get in, I am fully ok with it. I miss them but know I must allow them a good life. They have earned it.

Wednesday is a full day. A friend comes for lunch. Many years ago, when she was in-between jobs, she drove me to visit our shut-in church members. We had a very good time together. When she got back working, on Wednesdays she went to work for the afternoon and evening quite close to

where I live so she came to lunch. Now a good few years later she is retired, and we still have lunch together but now we have a little more time so go out on an adventure lunch. Like last week, we had McDonald's take-out (for me a Happy Meal) and drove out to Bluffer's park and sat by the edge of the lake. It was too cold to sit out, so we ate in the car. Then, with my trusty walker, we went walking. The wind was cold, but the sun was hot. The seagulls were screaming, the Canada geese were flying past in formation, and there were ducks galore. It was grand.



Bessie on her iPad
Photo by Justin Greaves, Metroland

Later in the afternoon, another friend drops by for tea and a chat. She is very busy with a full-time job, running a home with four teenagers, and a very busy husband and she finds it a bit overwhelming sometimes. To have a break on a Wednesday for tea and time to relax is good for her and I love it.

On the third Wednesday of the month, I attend the church council meeting. I really enjoy helping make decisions and can bring my own considerable experience to the process. I have been on the church council for about sixty years. I am by far the oldest person and oldest member of the council. I am thankful they consider I can still function well enough to vote me back each year.

Thursday, until this year, was always choir night. I sang with the choir for years. I'm not the greatest singer, but I was always in tune, and I could read music well. Then it happened, through this dry throat business that attacks us in our old age, I lost my singing notes and I do a lot of coughing after talking or singing for a while. Both are upsetting as I am a real chatterbox when I get a chance. One of the best joys in my life has been singing and I had to stop because it was so annoying hearing how I sounded to myself. I could have stayed on and enjoyed the wonderful fellowship of our choir and they really wanted me too, but the frustration I was having was bad. So, I now have a free Thursday evening.

Two Fridays a month I have lunch dates. My friends are both girls with very interesting careers. I always learn a lot from both and feel special that they give up their busy time for me. I am so grateful for all these young friends of mine who think I am a person they can visit.

Saturday is always a bittersweet time of the week. It is the weekend, everyone is busy, and I find it hard sometimes to face the day on my own.

After all these years I miss the wonderful years of great companionship that I enjoyed. I am also tied to the house with no wheels and being unable to use buses. I am thankful my pity parties only last a while and then I make a 'cuppa' and find something to do or go for as long a walk as I can manage.

Sunday morning is always great. I go to church. I am always picked up by a friend. We work together on Pastoral Care. As soon as I get to the church my task begins, greeting all who come into our sanctuary. I greet newcomers and welcome them. I greet all our members too. I have been there for so long I know most of them very well, so it is easy to inquire about their health or the health of their family. They are comfortable with me, so I can share their heartaches with them.

This is my greatest blessing. I have a role to play and feel needed. The service, of course, fills my spirit. I am replenished and refreshed. I can go on knowing that the Spirit within me is truly there. After church sometimes, I get invited out and sometimes someone will drop in. During the warm weather, I can be out on my deck in the sunshine.



Bessie with the KRU Events sign in front of her house
Photo by Pat Sherwood Sexton

It isn't always easy. I have made up my mind I will wrestle with my problems alone mostly. I know from being the person looking out for others that most people are dealing with their own issues and I need to help them because in helping them I am healing myself. So, my life becomes a blessing. I truly believe I function this way a big part of my time each week.

I also have awesome times visiting with my family that set some weeks apart. It is not as often as I would like but is enough to keep me thankful. Evenings being invited out with friends, a day out in the country, I love to be taken for a drive, or to have a weekend away, all these are my awesome moments.

Next weekend is going to be completely awesome. My son is flying in on Sunday to stay with me for four days. He will be renting a car and we will visit my daughter and her husband and my granddaughter, her husband, and my great-grandchildren.

I know as I read this again how blessed I have been to be born with an optimistic side to my nature. I have always been able to rise out of depression.

Hands (an excerpt)

The other day I found a picture of a lady sitting in a chair by a window. She had the sun shining on her. She was elderly. She was looking at her hands folded in her lap. She was thinking of all the things her hands had done.

I looked at my own hands, old and worn, like the ones in the picture. I then thought of all the things my hands have done.

I have always been handy – sewing, knitting, gardening, fixing things. I have always liked to hug, to use my hands to comfort, to congratulate and make my children feel good about themselves. I use my hands when talking.

My fondest memories of all are walking hand in hand with my husband. We never stopped doing this when we were out. This is something I will always miss.

Memory Lane

Do you sometimes hear a song, a piece of music or even a poem that stirs memories of things that happened some other time? I do this a lot and am thankful I do. They are a bit like a tender moment in one's busy day to pause and reflect. I had one such moment the other day. This time it was the verse of a hymn.

“And I will raise you up on eagle’s wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of my hand.” (God speaking)

I was immediately transported in my mind out to BC. My son, his family, and I had just reached the top of the mountains in his RV. As I got out and stood to gaze at the view of peak after peak of white-topped mountains, I saw an eagle riding the wind currents. It was magnificent.

Then right upon the heels of that memory came another, also, out in BC. This time we were out on my son's boat in Bellingham Bay with the family. We had anchored overnight. I woke up early and grabbing a blanket I crept up on deck and sat in a chair. It was dawn. A mist was clinging around me as I watched the sun start to penetrate the mist and soon the sky was full of sunlight and the little waves on the ocean sparkled like diamonds. A memory I think of always.

I am a sunshine person. The sun shining through my window in the morning always makes me feel like God is in his heaven and all is right with my world.

On my down days what I sometimes need is to feel I am held in the palm of a hand for comfort and made to feel special.

You are Mine

I will come to you in the silence
I will lift you from all your fear
You will hear My voice
I claim you as My choice
Be still, and know I am near

I am hope for all who are hopeless
I am eyes for all who long to see
In the shadows of the night,
I will be your light
Come and rest in Me

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow Me
I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine

I am strength for all the despairing
Healing for the ones who dwell in shame
All the blind will see, the lame will all run free
And all will know My name

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow Me
I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine

I am the Word that leads all to freedom
I am the peace the world cannot give
I will call your name, embracing all your pain
Stand up, now, walk, and live

Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow Me

I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine

Recorded by David Haas
Songwriters: Peter De Angelis / Robert P. Marcucci
You Are Mine lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group

I am mighty glad that I am me!

To be able to say this at 101+ is, I think to myself, just great! To sit in my chair and review my day is a bit awesome sometimes. I have a very adventurous spirit, so each day is a new challenge. What can I do today? Who am I entertaining today?



I encourage my friends to ring my doorbell. I invite them in and make us some tea. They don't get home baked goodies. I can't stand up long enough to bake any more, but I always have cookies.

The great part of entertaining is a bit of everyone I meet rubs off on me. A bit of me

rubs off on the person I am greeting as well. So, we all grow a bit better than we were before met.

The one thing I do rain or shine, is go to my church to be reminded that 'God is!' I then have confidence the next week will be a 'good week.'

Hope Is the Name of The Game

This past month has been full of drama and all of us are wondering what is going to happen. We, as always, fear the worst. It takes me back in time to being nineteen in 1935. Every one of us was getting very worried about a German house painter. His name was Adolph Hitler. He was uttering threats and promising to make Germany great again. I was worried what would happen if there was a war.

Life went on. I met my husband and we made our plans saying all the time “What if there is a war? “ Being young and optimistic we kept hoping it wouldn’t happen. We had a year and then war was declared on Germany. We all had six dreadful years.

Life goes on. We picked up the pieces and our life become what it always is, full of highs and lows. I have learned we have to enjoy the highs to the full, struggle to be victorious over our lows, and try to have the ordinary made into the extraordinary!

One thing I learned in 1935 was to take one day at a time. I couldn’t change what was happening. I had to trust the government I helped elect. Like all the young people around my age, we had been having meetings and declaring we wouldn’t fight. We had no choice we were all in it. It was harder than we ever imagined.

I am sorry for what is happening now, but I know from my own experience that we must go on living – one day at a time- to the best of our ability! Fearing the worst colours our every day. It makes us depressed and not making our days count.

Hope drives out fear! We might have to take some not very good times. Let’s not dwell on what might happen! History shows us we get on top again. One thing we can do is live in peace and harmony in our homes and in our daily lives.

Seeing Stars

Janet lived in an apartment in the city. She knew there were stars in the sky at night but never saw them because the sky was always lit up with street lights and lights from apartment building windows.

She didn't think much about it until one evening when she was standing with her parents on their balcony looking out. Her Mother said to her Dad, "You know Bill, I love this view, but I miss the stars. I lived in the country growing up and saw a sky full of stars every night."

Bill looked at her and said, "Why don't we spend a weekend in the country, stay at a motel and go out and watch the stars at night?"

That is what went into the parents motel by a lovely outside That night as was dark, they blanket, spread it laid down on their sky.



happened. They all country. Janet's found a nice lake with a grassy place their cabin. soon as it took a on the grass, and backs looking up to the

Janet couldn't believe there could be so many stars. Her Mother pointed out the North Star and the Milky Way that has thousands and thousands of stars in it.

The next night they went out again and this time just lay on their backs and looked and looked. It was so wonderful.

August 31, 2016

This August is so very special to me and I want to share why. 65 years ago, in August 1951, I had been in Canada for about six weeks and was living at 336 Beach Ave. We felt it was time to go to church. On the second Sunday in August we came to KRU. We knew nobody there and people weren't too friendly. It was hard because I had spent the last 30 years of my life at Hither Green Congregational Church in South East London. My children enjoyed the Sunday school time and felt happy, so we continued.

It took a few months until we felt ready to have our membership transferred to KRU and break our ties to Hither Green. Now we really belonged.

Becoming members continued the promise I made in England to serve God to



Kingston Road United Church Interior
Photo by JDB Sound Photography

the best of my ability. It made a great deal of difference. I still battled with homesickness and missing my family, but I was becoming a member of KRU's church family.

I can tell you it was a great place to start my life's new journey. So now I am wishing myself a happy anniversary as well as having had another birthday. I can do nothing but count my blessings.

Our life's journey is full of ups and downs, highs and lows. I think by being with a group of people who come together to seek help on the journey is a great place to be. Lessons are learned. Hymns, prayers, sermons, and bible readings all help us get stronger in our faith. The other truly important component in our search is the

friendships we make over the years, friends we can count on in good times and bad.

Through the services at KRU we grow in spirit. Everything about the service has a message. We put ourselves in the mood by tuning in to the Holy One. Prayers lift us up. Hymns are also praying or praising. For me, when the Bible is read out loud from the pulpit it always takes on a life of its own. I never open the Bible; I just sit and listen to the words read so well by our lay readers. We have a great choir and when they sing their words take on wonderful meaning. I know for me, the musical side of me often takes over and I have an awesome moment. Then, of course, the sermon. Words strung together like a row of pearls become the inspiration I am needing.

I try to never miss a Sunday and I am often asked why. Well, the answer is I come to be reminded that God IS. I need that assurance to take me through my week. Living is not easy. I need all the help I can get. I need to be reminded, "I can do all things through God who strengthens me". St Paul taught me that years ago.

Most of us have a knowledge of the gospel and St Paul's life and his letters to the young churches. For years I have found I need Paul to give me a boost.

One of the times I think about Paul is when I am feeling so proud of all of us at KRU. We are the church! Each of us gives a bit of ourselves to this family of ours. Our talents are great. As we heard in the lesson, God gives us all our own talents. Those of us who seek we will find and those who put forth great effort will succeed.

Just take a quick look at our family here. Some write down their own ideas. Some write not only words but music as well. Some can sing to inspire us to great heights, play instruments to move us all to tears. Lay readers of the Bible teach us through their beautiful renditions reminding us what God wants of us week after week. Friendship Time here has become one of the most important parts of our morning and the dedicated group using their talents making such a friendly place are God's gift to all of us.



Bessie has mentored generations at KRU

I have only touched on a few talents as I see them here. Each of you knows your own talents and can be ready to use them in God's service, believing you can be all you want to be with God's help.

We need to always try to stretch our own limitations. Be positive. Be adventurous. Be willing to try. Stay curious about the world around you. I loved to travel and did it for a long time. I even did an amazing trip last year. I was all set to do the same, but this year has made me think it out again. So, I regretfully decided to stay home.

Then I had a great idea. I can still go on small trips. I have set up small adventures with the help of my friends who like adventures too. I am revisiting Toronto like a tourist, remembering places I haven't been to for years. I am loving it! I recommend it to all of you.

I am a restless person. Some would even call me driven. The TV has not made me happy or contented for ages, so when I really need to sit, I have watched documentaries. I have travelled around Britain, Australia, New Zealand, loved rain forests. I travel with my eyes and ears.

Learning how to use a computer opened many, many doors for me. I have learned so much and I am still learning. It will never finish. In this first century of mine, when looking back remembering all the changes I have seen and all the amazing things that have been invented, it taught me I can't not learn new things.

This amazing world God has made. These amazing things through research, God has provided. We need to enjoy them fully and be thankful. Always strive so each one of us helps to make this world a better place because we each do our part, using our energy and our talents so we can hear God saying to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

I thought you might like to read these words

There is such a lot of truly bad things happening all around the world right now! I have been feeling we can do better than this. When you have lived a whole century like I have, it is truly heartbreaking. So, I find myself needing comfort.

I am truly blessed that I have a place of refuge and comfort in my church where I have been a member for 65 years. A couple of weeks ago, we sang these words. They were written by Samuel. A. Wright and set to the wonderful Finlandia music by Jean Sibelius.



*We would be one as now we join in singing
our hymn of love, to pledge ourselves anew
to that high cause of greater understanding
of who we are, and what in us is true.
We would be one in living for each other
to show to all a new community.*

*We would be one in building for tomorrow
a nobler world than we have known today.
We would be one in searching for that meaning
which bends our hearts and points us on our way.
As one, we pledge ourselves to greater service,
with love and justice, strive to make us free.*



I feel it doesn't matter who or what we believe, there has never been a greater time for us to all work together to make this world a safer place for all peoples.

Be Still: A Prayer

Sitting in the quiet the silence is almost overwhelming.
Here we can become more aware of the presence of our God.

Intimate being closer than close.

Deep within we feel the stirrings of the soul.

And we know we are at one.

At one with our God.

At one with the Universe.

And we find a sense of peace a deep inner peace that surprises our
understanding.

It just is.

And we revel at the love and grace.

At the awesomeness.

Holy one, please show us a quiet place where we can find your peace and
experience your deep love for each one of us.

Amen.

Stress

I have realized that as the years go by the types of stress we experience change. Old age brings its own stresses. So many of us are living alone, our partners are gone, our children are grown and living their own lives.

The decisions we make for ourselves are sometimes very hard. We are lonely; we don't have anyone to bounce ideas off. We know our children are entitled to live their own lives as we lived ours. Too, they are often helping



their children with the difficult task of raising their own children. It is too hard balancing their time between children and parents. No wonder they are known as the sandwich generation.

We must be as productive as we can be. It is when we are sitting alone too much that we get stressed. We need to be people persons, we need to mingle and participate with others. We truly need to find companions.

Our families care about us and it is wonderful when they visit, or we go to visit them. There is stress sometimes in that situation as well. We find so many of our ideas aren't the same as our children and grandchildren. We get stressed by arguments that happen. We don't know what is required of us. When we stay over it is hard to sleep in a strange bed. We wake in the night needing to get up and move around and worry we will wake everybody. When we get back home, we are refreshed and at the same time more accepting of our own way of life.

It is good for us to cope with being part of the family. The love and the caring we are given far outweighs any stress it gives us. We must keep a balance. There isn't anyone who doesn't get stressed at some time or another. We all need to count our blessings.

Important Letters from my Alphabet!

A. C. A. ADVENTURE. CURIOSITY. ATTITUDE.

The older I get the more important they become. I am having to slow down! I have no choice! My old body is rebelling, so what do I have to do? Keep being curious about life and what is going on around me. I am lucky I have learned to Google and find out things!

I have always loved going places and doing things, starting from when I was a Girl Guide at 11 years old. I bet you never slept in an Oast House in rural England because a heavy rain washed your tents away. That, for me, was an adventure! I have looked for adventures ever since.

My children learned to camp and travel when they were small. My husband was a camper too. We didn't have a lot of money when we came to Canada in 1951, but we sure explored! That really is where Attitude came in. We decided there was no way we could see the country like we really wanted to, we could never save enough money, yet we saw more of Canada and the USA than we ever thought we would.

But that was then! What about now when I am so old? You soon start to realize your mind would like to keep going but your body screeches "Don't do it to me". I am still working with my three letters though. I am sitting in my armchair watching all the wonderful short films shown on TVO and the Adventure series. I have travelled all around New Zealand, Canada, and the USA, learning the history of the places we visit.

I try to find out about anything that catches my imagination, and every week my friend who retired a couple of years ago is happy to take this old lady on an adventure. They are smaller adventures that fit my energy level. I must admit I push that level as far as I can! Do I get tired? Yep. Is it worth it? Yep.

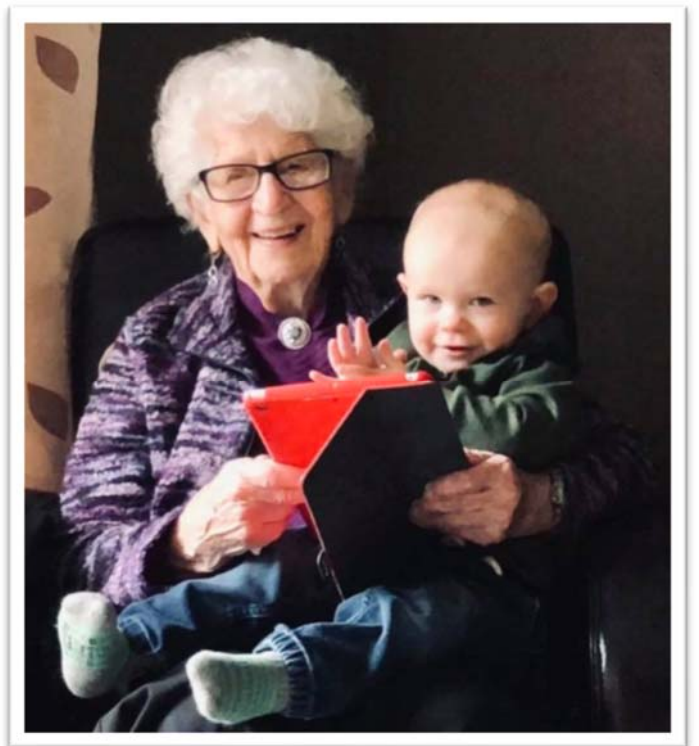
Happy are we Grandparents

I've been thinking how very blessed we are when we become grandparents. It is a special bond that is forged with our grandchildren. We can love them and care for them, but it is their parents that have the responsibility for them. Somehow, we can create our own space in their lives and help all we can when needed.

Some of the best times of my life were with my grandchildren. If you are lucky like me, you will have great-grandchildren. This too is special if you remember these little ones have grandparents whose turn it is to do what you had been doing.

I found it is a little different but being there and being interested, very often they gravitate in my direction. Once again, I get a whole new experience.

Sitting thinking about this lovely aspect of my life, I also realized I am the Matriarch of my family. There is a little bit of me in them all. How is that for eternity? Hallelujah!!!



Bessie's great-grandson Sawyer visiting from
Dawson Creek.
Photo by Leslie Field-Rolick

GPS Technology

I can only go out on road trips if invited. I am too old to drive and in fact have never driven. I am thankful both my family members and much younger friends like to take me on adventures. I love to go anywhere and everywhere they will drive me.

One of my friends has a GPS and one of our favourite times is deciding on a destination and instructing the GPS to take us on a trip using all side roads. We want no highways, just good roads for cars, so we can explore the country.

It was such fun listening to this disembodied voice telling us just where to go next and re-routing us when we went past a turn we should have taken. The voice becomes like an old friend. In fact, we named her.

We found waterfalls and small lakes we didn't know existed. There were small towns that gave us the feeling we had stepped back in time. We had afternoon teas in tiny country tea shops. We were never lost. We were always sure of our way.

I am looking forward to the warmer weather as we plan to go places and do things. I am really very glad that at my great age I am still blessed with a sense of adventure and have a very active curiosity about living in this great country I adopted 65 years ago. I have learned so much about the history and geography of Canada, coast to coast! I still have a bucket list to think about when I am tied to indoors.

The other day a writer* in my little devotions book that I read daily was talking about his use of GPS when his family are going on their road trips. He relies on it like my friend and I do.

When his son asked him how the GPS keeps track of everyone who asks for information, how the device can possibly get them all straight, he responded he couldn't know for certain. But he was certain God hears and responds to every one's prayers whoever and whenever it is.

So, I am taking his idea for myself. In my spiritual journey I ask God for guidance and direction knowing that my prayers will be heard in the midst of all the millions of prayers going God's way all the time.

The times I rely on myself are the times I take wrong turns and must get back on track. I have made it my new year's resolution for 2017 to make use of God's GPS.

*Doug Quinn (Oklahoma) "Guide My Journey", *The Upper Room*



Fear Runs Deep: A Prayer

O God you urge me,
to face my fears with confidence.
In fact, you ask me why I fear at all.
And yet, despite our beliefs, our fears are real.
Find your way to me through the storms of life,
and give me the calm and courage that I need.

Awesome Moments

Today I was reminded once again about awesome moments, those moments that lift your spirits during a very ordinary day. Because of the weather, this week became a very ordinary week for me. The sidewalks were no good for old ladies with walkers, so I had to keep busy at home. I am so lucky because I can be on the computer. It brings me in touch with the world outside my door.

I first sent an email to my niece in England and a few minutes later I received a long newsy reply, which was great! Then a telephone call from my daughter which is always so good! I replied to things on Facebook. Two of my friends dropped in for lunch on different days. All such awesome things. I just didn't sit and look at the weather, I got busy.

But I must tell you about my best awesome moment. It was on Thursday. I have to admit I was getting 'cabin fever' but I couldn't even think about going out! So, I just sat in my armchair watching the snow come gently down. It truly looked so beautiful! I sat just looking out of my window, then I became conscious of how quiet it was. The snow was deafening the noise of the traffic outside my little house. It was such a beautiful moment. I felt so much peace and utterly contented.

When I did get up, I went into my bedroom to look out on my garden and the ravine behind it. It was transformed! The whiteness was so bright! The trees coated with snow were so elegant in their shapes. I stood and thanked God for making me, Me. I am so happy that I have been able to get such joy in the little things that bring me so much pleasure. Blessings on you all. May you too find your awesome moments.

Depression and Me

Depression affects all types of people, rich or poor, young or old, any nationality. It can be due to a chemical imbalance in the brain or because life's difficulties get unbearable or it is our personality type. I am sure there are many more reasons that I know nothing about.

Mine is due to my personality. I can be so excited and happy one minute and down in the dumps the next. I never could understand how I could be so depressed! I would wake up in the morning thinking "It's going to be a rotten day" even before I jumped out of bed it usually was.

As I grew older, I got to understand that it had nothing to do with events, only my life cycle. My doctor explained we all have mood swings. Think of a clock face. Most people's mood changes take place in the space between ten and two, but people like me have mood changes that are between nine and three. You see it is bigger, so I could really consider myself lucky! I have this ability to experience great joy but also great pain.

The painful happenings in my life affect me very, very deeply. It is a constant struggle to lift myself up. I have had to rely on my Christian faith to get me back to normal. Anti-depressant drugs weren't the answer, so I set about working on it with the help of God.

I found as time went on that it was ok to be depressed for a while but not to wallow in self-pity. So, I said to myself "OK you can have a gripe this morning, but you had better do something this afternoon." So, I either go out to visit a friend, go to my computer and put all my thoughts on paper, phone someone, or read a book. It didn't always work at first, but it does now.

I know I am lucky. There are many people who have such grave depression that they can't handle it without doctor's care and sometimes not even then. I keep hoping the scientists trying to understand this horrible illness will soon have some better answers than we have now. It is a living hell and we should never cease our efforts to bring these folks relief.

On Being an Old Lady

Sitting on the deck at the cottage in Baysville thinking back over this very long life of mine, I am filled with amazement at how far I have come and what I have achieved. I still have yearnings to be able to do a few things that were never there for me.

One of them is water skiing. I didn't live near a lake growing up. I see the people doing it now and I wish! But how can an old lady get up on water skis? I used to love camping and when I see the super new tents on TV, I get the urge to go camping again, knowing very well my arthritis would soon kick in. The water looks inviting, dare I go for a swim? No, too much effort is needed. I watched a canoeist paddle serenely past. I never learned when I had the chance and now it's too late. I could never even get into a canoe!

It is a good thing these yearnings don't last too long. I just resolve to keep everything going that I can do, learn new skills I can manage, and keep on going, going, going!



Neighbours of the Beach, September 2018
“At 103, We’re Keeping Up with Bessie Stallworthy” by Christine Fulton
Photos by Gary Bieler, Definition Photography

My Own Private Cathedral

I wait until the sun has left my back garden and my deck is in the shade. The rush hour traffic has quieted down. I put the cushions on my chair and turn it to face the garden. I make myself a cup of tea and take out my light blanket for my feet, they are always cold!

Settled in, I notice on my right the sky has turned various shades of reds and purple. It is glorious. Then to my left, the moon is rising just between the trees.

I sit with my teacup cradled in my hand and gaze out into the garden, now darkening, with the ravine beyond my fence seeming even darker. I gaze at the enormous trees, knowing they must be more than a hundred years old. Oak and maple form a semi-circle around.

This is my cathedral! My own very special place!

Overhead the nighthawks are circling, swooping down, busy getting their evening meal, while the other birds are settling down among the trees for the night, making their own sighing noises that are such a soothing sound. They seem to be saying 'all is right in my world'.

The light gradually fades, a light breeze has sprung up, and the moon is shining now.

Oh, the peace! I am calm in my soul; all the cares of the day are fading away.

I stay peacefully enjoying until my old body starts to ache. I am stiff. It is time to go inside, knowing this wonderful place is always there.

There is no one luckier than I! I wish for you all, your own special place that can be reached whenever you need it.

Sober Second Thoughts

Since my big birthday last year, I was really on a high! My birthday year was all I could have asked for and then at the beginning of this year doors opened for me taking me in new directions. I coined a new phrase: 'Life begins at 100'. So many good things were happening.



"Happy 100th Birthday BESSIE!"
at Woodbine Racetrack

I then realized my mind was embracing everything. I loved it.

Then my body started to remind me,

"Hey slow down, I am very old!" I got tired, I ached and had to start to think about all this. That is what I mean about sober second thoughts. I know there are many things I can't do anymore and have known that for years. The time has come to second guess myself in ways that weren't there before. Shopping and walking around the Mall for hours? No way! My knees give out. When standing too long in one place, like standing singing in church, my back gives out. I can sing sitting down. The list goes on.

There are bigger things as well. I reluctantly decided I couldn't fly to Dawson Creek, BC for my granddaughter's wedding. I was all set to go and then my sober second thoughts kicked in. I would be exhausted! My family would have to deal with me. Am I disappointed? You bet. Do I think I made the right decision? I think so. I have concluded that if I want to stay here in my little bungalow looking on to the ravine and enjoying my lovely garden, I must listen to my sober second thoughts.

I am enjoying life even if the landscape is closing in. I watch all the travel docs on TV, remembering many of the places I have been and enjoying all the new places that I see.

Life is still so worthwhile. I am still counting my blessings.

Choices

You are a creature of your choices.
If you say you have no choice, it simply means
that you have already chosen not to act.
Experiment with your life.
Have the courage to choose wisely and bravely.
You need the drive to fulfil the choices you make.

Live in today!
Don't spoil the present by living in the past.
It is over and done with.
It has made you what you are now.
The future is yours to change as you will.
Live life to the full, all its joys and sorrows.
Experience and learn from them.
Always moving on.

Today is important! Live it with passion!
You will never get it back. Make each day count!
Get up each morning determined the day will be
a good one.
With a right attitude it most certainly will be.
Difficulties, you take in your stride!

One more thought! Saying a prayer first thing
isn't a bad way to start your day and snatch a
prayer or two when difficulties arise.

Canada Day

I am here at the end of Canada Day with mixed emotions. I used to get in the mood of celebration when seeing our flag appear in front of people's homes and thinking about how we were going to celebrate our day. Now my reality is, mine were the only flags I saw on homes in my street. There doesn't seem much is happening in our neighbourhood anyway, except the fireworks, which are too far away for me to trek to with a walker.



I always feel the day is important. My family and I arrived in Halifax Harbour from England on June 27th, 1951. Today, as I was alone, I settled down to watch the scene from Ottawa. I wasn't disappointed with the arrival of the Governor General, the soldiers resplendent in their dress uniforms, and the bands; our Prime Minister and his family, so warm and friendly. I love all of this. The crowds that are so enthusiastic, everyone laughing and exchanging pleasantries with each other. I was truly in the mood!

The speeches were so inclusive of all. I felt a Canada united. I am a little too old for the very young music these days. I love the beat but would have liked a bit of diversity and some musical memories. After all, we are celebrating one hundred and forty-nine years of music too. I truly enjoyed the two-hour programme by the CBC. Now it is all over except for the fireworks, so I am a little disappointed. How do you feel about this? Is this all it should be?

I can do all things through God who strengthens me. NOT!

It is funny really. That had been my mantra for years. I have dared to do many, many things I might not have tackled without believing that.

I have met a road block: my physical self! I am scaling back every year unfortunately. I think I can and give it my best try and I can't!

So, I am learning not to volunteer and say "count me out" which is hard when it is something I would enjoy doing. Now I must sit and think "could I do this?" and more often the answer comes, "no it won't work for you to even try".

The hard part of all this has to do with my pride, that I even have to ask for help. To admit I can't do something is a never-ending struggle because I feel I got to this great age by never giving in.

I look back and realize it has been good for me to be this way. I have done many things I am proud of, many things that have helped other folks. I am still going to do all I possibly can and refrain from taking on too much!

I have been trying to do something I took on and just can't see it well enough to do it and haven't been sleeping! I made the decision a couple of nights ago not to finish it and have had two good nights sleep. This doesn't mean I am stopping doing! I would be bored to tears, so I have to have a new mantra.

How does this sound? *"GOD PLEASE GIVE ME THE SENSE TO KNOW WHAT I CAN OR CANNOT DO!"* I will adopt it until I find a better one.

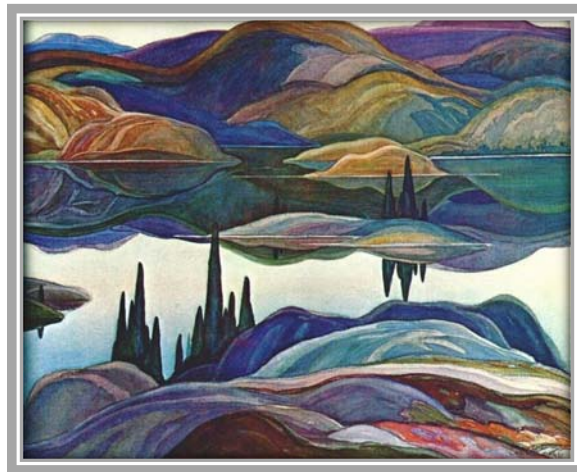
The Cottage Revisited

I opened the car door and stepped out,
my thoughts chaotic, as I looked about.
Cottage, pines and river seem just the same,
just as I remembered from the last time I came.
What a timeless place, doesn't change a bit!

Being here is so peaceful, I'll relax and slow down,
I find it not nearly as stressful as living in town.
Sitting out on the deck, looking over the bay,
with nothing that needs doing, for the rest of the day.
That I should be so lucky to be able to come!

This time our excitement was feeding the ducks,
the mother alerted Marg, with her loud quacks.
There was mother and babies all waiting for food,
Marg scattered handfuls of corn, they think it tastes good.
Diving to the bottom to get it with their tails in the air.

We had some really sunny days when we all sat on the dock,
on rainy days we got busy, knitting, sewing, reading books.
I sat at the table admiring the view, it was never the same,
but to me it was perfect either in the sunshine or in the rain.



Franklin Carmichael, Mirror Lake, 1929.
Watercolour over graphite on paper.

Something to Blog About

I had a grand morning. My very good friend took me to the AGO. We have an adventure every Wednesday morning. This week we did something I haven't done in many, many years. I really like art displays and over my many years of living, I have learned a lot about art appreciation and what artists have tried to convey in their masterpieces.

The Canadian Group of Seven have been favourites of mine for about fifty years. I have been to the art gallery in Kleinberg many times to see their amazing collection. At the moment they are on loan, I think, to the AGO. It was so good to see them again.

The new gallery is grand! Impressive in size and so well laid out. I had never been there. I am so glad to get in places easily these days because I have been using a walker for a good few years.

We had walked from parking the car through the noise and bustle and traffic of Toronto and walked up the ramp to the imposing entrance. The doors opened at my touch and I walked inside. It took my breath away. It is magnificent! After the noise and confusion outside, inside was peace and tranquillity and a feeling of serenity. I stood for a moment just breathing it in. I must admit I love the help old ladies with walkers get. I always say, "Thank you" and always get a smile and "it was a pleasure" in return. No wonder I enjoy being me.

Then we started walking through the various rooms. I sat on my walker silently viewing these beautiful paintings trying to decide what I found in the piece. Then going up close to see the meticulous brush strokes is something else. We had lunch there and then walked through a few more rooms. I couldn't believe how fast the time had gone. I didn't think that at my great age I would last that long and decided I wasn't even tired! We are now reserving more of the day to go on more adventures like this.

I have realized for me (my 101st birthday, next week) that I can't do long trips any more, so my holidays will be a day out adventures when I can go. There is no end to the things I am interested in. So, life should be fun.