

Devotion, Week 1 of Lent, 2023

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

I was touched by Rose Enow's remarks Sunday about her mother, and the one-year anniversary celebrations they have in Cameroon. I know that she misses not being able to be there in person, but she has a good support group here in Atlanta to help her with remembering and celebrating.

In the Jewish faith, family members and friends also celebrate the death of a loved one a year later. In this tradition, the headstone is installed on the grave with everyone present. Prayers are said and each person leaves a small stone on the top of the stone to indicate that someone who loved this person has been there. Then they celebrate the life of the person in a gathering at the home.

Most of us in American reformed faiths don't do this, but we do name those in our congregations who have died in the last year on All Saints' Sunday. In all three of these traditions, the focus is on celebrating the life of the deceased person, knowing that this loved one is with God. We even call our funeral/memorial services "A Celebration of the Life of" It's hard sometimes to remember that we are celebrating, while we are mourning the loss of someone dear to us. But this is the ultimate goal of our lives as Christians – knowing that we will be with God after death. There will be no more sorrow and pain and sadness – only joy when we cross over to this new existence in heaven.

As we walk with Jesus on this Lenten journey, let us remember that he knew he was walking toward his death, but also walking toward his resurrection.

On March 12 we will celebrate the gifts of women by honoring our grandmothers. I hope all of you, men and women alike, will send me or the church office several sentences about your grandmothers so that we can print the material and share it with the church on that Sunday. Grandmothers hand on powerful traditions. They are often the ones who soothe us and let us as children do a few things that Mom and Dad may not totally approve of – like having candy or playing in the creek and getting muddy. So let us know what your grandmothers meant to you.

May this first week in Lent be one of remembrance and celebration of those who have gone before you.

Jeanne