

Dear family and friends of our departed sister, Carole,

Many of us know Carole as the smiling lady in the motorized wheelchair who was always at Sunday Bible class and sat up front at the 11 a.m. Sunday worship service. She sometimes served as a greeter for worship. She also attended many of our morning *Wednesdays in the Word* Bible classes. She enjoyed serving at Bible class by beeping her horn to get the people's attention for the start of the class. Worship of our Savior-God and the study of his Word were very important to Carole. She usually recorded the sermons and Bible studies so that she could listen to them again and get more out of them. There were even times when she drove her Jazzy motorized wheelchair from her home to church and back when she didn't have a ride. For several years, Trinity had a special van to transport Carole to and from worship and Bible class.

Others of you may know Carole from her weekly visits to Heartland and to the Hampton Care Facility. Carole would share a smile and a word of encouragement with the residents who very much looked forward to her visits.

Some of you may know Carole as the card and sticker lady. She would often pass around a card for people here at church to sign and then send it or give it for a birthday or an anniversary. She also loved sharing jokes and humorous stories from the internet. Even though she was confined to a wheelchair and was losing her ability to do more things for herself, Carole managed to brighten the day of everyone around her.

Yet, understandably, there were times when she wondered why. Why had God allowed her to be afflicted with MS? Why was she in that wheelchair? Why her? What purpose did her life have? What were God's plans for her? Those questions usually came in private as we waited together for her ride or when I visited her at her home. I always pointed out the wonderful witness she gave of her faith in Jesus and

reminded her of how many people's lives she touched, how many people took notice of her and listened to her because she was in that wheelchair—people who may not have listened to her at all otherwise. And I frequently reminded her of Jeremiah 29:11, **“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”** In fact, it got to be a bit of joke with us. Carole would start out a “why” question, stop and look at me with that twinkle in her eye, and then together we would say, “Jeremiah 29:11.”

Together, Carole and I rejoiced in the wonderful promise and truth of Jeremiah 29:11. It was a promise that gave her the strength to endure her difficulties. It is a promise that strengthens me and I pray it strengthens you as well.

God knows the plans he has for us. His plans for us began even before we were born. When Adam and Eve sinned and ruined the perfect world God had created, we hear in Genesis 3:15 the very first Gospel promise: **“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”** Here God was promising to send a Savior to defeat the devil and to restore our friendship with God. We know how God sent his Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life for us, to die the death we deserved, and to rise from the dead to assure us that our sins are forgiven, that we are right with God, and that we will live with God forever in heaven. That was the best plan ever, and God carried it out.

There were times when Kathy Baeckl, who held Carole's power of attorney, and I would have to talk with Carole about money. The last few years, there just wasn't enough. And yet God promised he had a plan to prosper us. What's up with that? But God has made each one of us prosper—and it doesn't matter one bit how much or how little money you have in your bank account. Carole and you and I are prosperous because we owe no debt of sin. Because of Jesus your sin is all paid for. Through faith in Jesus eternal

life in heaven is Carole's and yours and mine. You can't get richer than that.

God has given each one of us hope. Carole could get up each morning and know that our loving heavenly Father was in control and that nothing was going to happen to her that day that God wouldn't make turn out for her good. That's why she could smile. That's why she could bring joy to residents of nursing homes. You and I have the same hope in the same promise, stated so clearly for us in Romans 8:28, "**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**" That gave Carole and it gives each of us the confidence to face each day with hope and a smile.

God has given each of us a future—a future that is better than anything we can even begin to imagine on this sinful earth. We are promised a future with our Savior-God in heaven where everything is perfect, where happiness is perfect with no sickness, no pain, no sadness. Carole is enjoying that wonderful future now. She has no more need of a wheelchair or helping hands to feed and bathe her. All the effects of sin are gone for Carole and she is at peace and filled with joy at our Savior's side as she awaits the resurrection of her glorified body.

All of us who believe in Jesus Christ as our one and only Savior from sin are the beneficiaries of God's good plans for us. We are saved, we are prosperous, we have hope, and we have a magnificent future. Carole knew Jesus was her Savior. If you don't, we would love to share him with you. Amen.

Message for the  
Christian Funeral Service of  
**Carole Neal**

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, August 30, 2011

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
1010 33<sup>rd</sup> St., Bay City, MI 48708

TEXT: Jeremiah 29:11

**"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." NIV**

HYMNS:

608 *I Fall Asleep in Jesus' Wounds*

379 *Amazing Grace*

605 *Asleep in Jesus! Blessed Sleep*

607 *How Blest Are They*

Officiant: Pastor Richard D. Starr