



Resource  
Center <sup>on</sup>  
Aging

# ACT III

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*Mission: To provide collaborative faith-based services that meet the health and wellness needs of the whole person.*

Spring 2007

## Gifts from Grace

By Becci Bookner

**O**n September 24, 1913, a little girl was born. Her parents named her Grace...a blessing, in itself, to be given that name. But the bigger blessing is how that little girl created such a life for herself that she is indeed as the song goes...Amazing Grace. Now, almost a century later, the Grace of this story continues to live life and each day she teaches lessons about living to those lucky enough to be a part of her world.

During these ninety two years, Grace was no stranger to difficulty and disappointment. Her husband died unexpectedly at age fifty one, leaving her with five children and a background which did not include work experience outside the home. Twice cancer made an untimely visit. She had every opportunity to become unhappy, bitter and unfulfilled. But not Grace!

Was it the name her parents chose that charted the life course of her special ability to remain happy and genuine? Webster

defines "grace" as...seemingly effortless beauty, charming or pleasing quality, divine love and protection given to mankind by God and a short prayer said at mealtime. Wow! Grace is all of those things and more. Even "the short prayer at mealtime" is one of the dearest gifts she shares with those at her table.

By her example, Grace has lots to say about what we women have been doing and promoting since the advent of the "liberated woman" in the sixties and seven-

*"May God bless many daughters with the privilege of sharing real time together with a mom from that special generation whose life is a gift that gives meaning to the word compassion, mercy, courtesy and kindness, good taste, and elegance."*

ties. Those of us who think we are so unique, so modern, so educated, so professional, so much stronger in mind and body than the women of our parents' generation may be surprised to discover some of the "gifts from Grace." Being independent at age ninety two is strength in the purest sense. With arthritis and a

host of other health challenges, Grace still measures her success by a morning routine of makeup, earrings and choosing an outfit that reflects her graciousness and joy at being blessed by God with another day of life on this earth. Even today her home is decorated for each season and the dining room table is always set for company. At 92, she can put outfits together and buy items on sale that really work for her.

My life has been blessed to know Grace for many years. Yet, it is only during the last ten years that I have come to really know her. We once were just mother and daughter but now we are best friends in the most wonderful way. We have spent more time going to the grocery store, out to breakfast, out to get our nails done, taking day trips and spending quiet time working in her flower gardens than we did in all the first fifty years of my life.

In each of the most precious and memorable times of the last few years, I come away with a deeper appreciation for just how tough this woman is and has been all her life. She has a fierce determination to remain engaged in life even as her world gets a bit smaller. She may not drive her car, but with a driver, that car

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allows her to stay connected to her family, her community and her church. Just being parked in the driveway is her statement that she is still in charge! She loves to cook, shop, and talk on the phone. At night because she lives alone, she can sing hymns out of her church songbook, read her Bible and go to bed whenever she is good and ready. Just give her a baseball game on television, a fire in the fireplace and call her happy!

There has been much made of and written about the "greatest generation." They reference the proud military heroes who paid for our freedom with their lives. It is truly deserved and we honor them. Grace is also a part of that "greatest generation." The spirit of hope and the strength of character were not just endowed on the military. It is a gift from God that was poured out on men and women of our country during a special time in our history. May God bless many daughters with the privilege of sharing real time together with a mom from that special generation whose life is a gift that gives meaning to the word compassion, mercy, courtesy and kindness, good taste, and elegance.

Building a business to provide personal care for older family members was a gift unwrapped while caring for my aunts as they aged. But it is the time with Grace, my mother, that is the real gift...the gift of sharing a special time in living, opportunity to experience the beauty and grace-ousness of aging, the gracefulness of walking with slower steps, the joy of living each moment of your life with child-like enthusiasm and imagination for what ever may be just around the corner.

Thanks, mom! I love you!

*Becci Bookner is President of Family Staffing Solutions, Inc. and the author of a soon to be published book entitled, Patterns of the Heart. "Gifts From Grace" is one of the chapters in this wonderful work that she describes as "a collection of gentle thoughts on aging". In the month of May, when we celebrate Mother's Day, we felt this was especially appropriate to appear in this issue of ACT II.*

## James Vandiver & Rhonda Lowry offer Summer Celebration Session

**A**s part of Lipscomb University's Summer Celebration in July, James Vandiver and Rhonda Lowry will lead a two-day session at Longview on the subject of spiritual formation of senior adults. The class will be held from 2:00-4:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 5, and Friday, July 6, 2007.

James Vandiver is part of the ministry staff at Harpeth Hills Church of Christ. He helped launch the Resource Center on Aging there with the understanding that he would design a center that takes a holistic approach to addressing the gifts and needs of the aging including hosting open conversations about spiritual formation of senior adults.

Rhonda and Randy Lowry came to Nashville in 2005 when Randy Lowry accepted the position of president of Lipscomb University. Rhonda and Randy are the parents of three children. Along with being a mother, Rhonda has worked as a sixth-grade teacher and as the director of development of the law school at Willamette University. For years, Rhonda's heart has been drawn to personal ministry also. She visited the sick, especially children, and was involved in prayer, spiritual development, and other church ministries in addition to her usual work in the church: teaching classes, coordinating programs, and leading women's seminars. Then in 1991, Rhonda made a crucial decision: she decided to attend Fuller Theological Seminar in pursuit of a Master of Divinity degree. She knew it would be long and difficult because she refused to give up her many helping roles in the family, church and community. She completed her M.Div. degree and has become a widely sought-after speaker and has taught at both Fuller and Pepperdine.

The Summer Celebration class will be titled *All the Way My Savior Leads Me*. It will highlight our spiritual journey with senior adults and as senior adults. The spiritual aspect of our lives is critical to the wellness of the whole person. The spiritual brings a sense of personal dignity and worthiness. It is a reminder of unconditional love as people affirm their relationship with God, the Christian community and the spiritual self.

For complete details, visit [summercelebration.lipscomb.edu](http://summercelebration.lipscomb.edu).

## S.E.N.I.O.R.S. MINISTRY MODEL

Dr. Richard Gentzler describes seven key areas in which churches can be intentional in ministry with older adults. These appear in his book, *The Graying of the Church*. Dr. Gentzler is a member of our Advisory Group.

### S: Spirituality.

Plan and develop Bible study groups; prayer groups; adult religious education classes; life review classes; spiritual retreats; journaling classes; worship participation; rituals to acknowledge life transitions dealing with change, separation, and new commitments; healing services; and seminars on "end-of-life" issues.

### E: Enrichment.

Plan and develop classes and small groups relevant to the specific needs and concerns of older adults in your congregation (e.g., community issues and current affairs; technology; and financial, legal, and medical concerns, etc.); drama and fine arts; field trips; and literacy programs.

### N: Nutrition/Wellness.

Plan and develop a parish nurse program; congregational health ministries; low-impact aerobics and other physical fitness classes; health fairs; and cooking classes.

### I: Intergenerational.

Plan and develop opportunities for coaching, mentoring, and tutoring future generations; "foster" grandparent program; and multigenerational retreats, study classes, and service projects.

### O: Outreach/Evangelism.

Plan and develop ways for older adults to share their faith; create an adult day service ministry; provide respite care and meals; minor repair and home maintenance ministry; home chore service; programs of interest to the whole community; and specialized homebound and nursing home ministries.

### R: Recreation/Social.

Plan and develop social activities for healthy and fun living; conduct golf, fishing, and other sport outings; walking, hiking, and camping/RV activities; gardening and flower arranging, card and board game parties, quilting; and traveling groups.

### S: Service.

Plan and develop opportunities for service including short term mission projects; participation in community projects; respite care ministry; prison ministry; delivering meals to the elderly; visitation ministry; tutoring ministry and community projects.

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*Wednesdays at 7 p.m.  
Led by Dr. Ralph Samples  
August 2-October 25*

## Brentwood Hills Offers GriefShare Program

Beginning August 2 and running through October 25, Brentwood Hills Church of Christ will offer GriefShare, a special nondenominational program and support group for people grieving the loss of someone close.

This program includes a video series featuring leading authors, counselors, speakers and pastors with years of expertise in grief recovery. The videos also include real-life stories of others recovering from losses in their life.

Small group discussions will follow the video presentations. Participants will have the opportunity to interact with others who have experienced a recent loss, learn about their stories and share personal experiences.

The GriefShare program will be led by Dr. Ralph Samples on Wednesday nights at 7:00 p.m. at Brentwood Hills.

Each session is self-contained, so participants can begin or end the program at any point.

To register, call 615-832-2541 ext. 230 or email [judy@brentwoodhills.org](mailto:judy@brentwoodhills.org).

Mark your calendars for **Thursday, September 13, 2007**. Harpeth Hills Resource Center will be collaborating with Centennial Medical Center and Parthenon Pavilion to present a **Senior Workshop**. This is an educational opportunity addressing the mind, body and spirit issues of the senior population. Complete information will be included in the Summer issue of **ACT II**.

## Ethical Wills Deciphered

A book review by Marie Byers

*Ethical Wills: Putting Your Values on Paper*  
by Barry K. Baines, M.D.

Did you ever ask a grandfather or a favorite aunt to talk about times when they were young—games they played—their first job—where they traveled? Do you wish that you had shared with your children your dreams for them before they were grown and had moved away? Are there bad feelings between you and a sibling, a cousin, or a neighbor that you want to set aright? All these scenarios are exactly the things that could set you on the path to creating an ethical will.

An ethical will is not a legal document like a Last Will and Testament or even a Living Will which will determine health care measures made in your behalf. The ethical will has no standard form, or verbiage, or status. While the term ethical will may not be familiar, the concept is as ancient as Jacob's admonitions and blessings to his sons in Genesis 49. "Gather round that I may tell you what will happen to you in days to come. Assemble and hear, O sons of Jacob; listen to Israel your father." In a similar fashion, the tradition of parents at Harpeth Hills extending a blessing to their children at a high school graduation observance is also a form of using an ethical will.

The author of this book states that "Legal wills bequeath *valuables*, while ethical wills bequeath *values*." He further suggests that the time to create an ethical will grows out of life transitions and life-changing events such as marriage, the birth of a child, losing a job, a major illness, divorce, or loss of a spouse. Several specific activities for formulating the ethical will are listed as follows: (1) Starting with an outline and a list of items to choose from - values and beliefs, reflections about life; (2) starting with an outline and specific exercises - recording thoughts on tape and transcribing them into a written document; (3) starting with a blank sheet of paper - similar to keeping a journal or writing in a diary.

In an appendix, the author provides selected models of the ethical will, drawn from people of all ages and economic conditions with whom he had contact during his work in a hospice setting. These examples illustrate a variety of styles - all of them revealing an intensity of message, an emotional outpouring of one soul to another. The reader cannot help but be reflective about one's past life and personal contacts and think of at least one person to whom an ethical will should be written.

This book is now available in our Harpeth Hills Library.

## Advisory Board Members:

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## ACT II Editorial Staff

*Marie Byers*  
Chris Pepples  
Leanne Smith

## Contact Info:

Resource Center on Aging  
Harpeth Hills  
Church of Christ  
1949 Old Hickory Blvd.  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
373-0601 ext. 112  
website under construction