

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Advent 2

TO THE PEOPLE OF TRINITY CHURCH

Dear friends,

Grace to you and peace.

A few days ago, as many will already know, our family began the task of saying thank you. The following is part of the text in the notes we have been writing over several days.

DEBORAH KIM LAVERGNE

December 15, 1955 - November 23, 2003

Grace and peace to you.

On Sunday, November 23, on the Feast of the Reign of Christ, Kim died at home in the company of her family. While Kim was but young in life, we are grateful to all who helped to make of her parting as rich an experience as was the living of her life.

We are grateful to those who brought the healing arts to life even as life was in the wane; to those who journeyed with us over many days and to Lynne, especially.

We are grateful to those who came in the small hours of the night to help us complete our vigil; to our family and friends and to all who mourned with us; to those who traveled from afar; to those who raised prayers or offered blessings; to those who ventured a word of comfort or, when words failed, proffered the solace of a gentle hand. And we are grateful to those who offered kindnesses of every sort or who simply "took care of things."

We are grateful to the people who afforded us food, flowers, transportation and shelter; to those who helped us to remember or helped us to keep from forgetting; to the people at Jutzi's, Kilbride and Riverside for assisting us with the work of death; and to the ELW, leadership and staff of Trinity Church for assisting us with the work of life.

Finally, we are grateful to all who helped to bring celebration to life and life to celebration; to worship ministers —whether of word or deed or song; to worshipers; and to the extraordinary communities of Trinity Church and New Hamburg for their love and support.

For all whose lives touched ours, we are very, very grateful.

A friend of ours, David Granskou, writing in a letter which arrived shortly after Kim's death, quoted (page 174) from the lovely Tuesdays with Morrie —available in the church library— as follows: “Death ends a life, not a relationship.” Indeed.

Kim and I had a great relationship. It began in 1974, more or less. We'd met at church, earlier, but in the summer of '74, we worked together on the M/V Princess of Acadia out of the Port of Saint John. School kept us apart, over the next few years: Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Waterloo. Eventually, though, we arrived in the same place and we were married in June of 1979. And we did, indeed, have a great relationship. Not perfect, but loving. Not untroubled, but deeply caring. Not without its challenges, but infinitely rich and rewarding.

I miss Kim very much, as do Ruth and John.

Back when things were turning dark, Trinity's Mutual Ministry Team and Council foresaw that I might need to take a leave from my parish work. As time and circumstance would have it, that leave was to begin on November 23. Kim died that morning.

I am very tired. I think I've been running on empty for some time. I also think that doing Christmas would be impossible. It may well be, too, that things will only start to really sink in as Christmas unfolds and as once-familiar scenes are recast or redrawn.

So I plan to take a couple of months away from my parish work. I think that that would be best. For one thing, I need to recharge. And to do that, I must first get past all of the business that attends death. As well, sometime in January, I must pick up a thread that I let drop in recent months, a thread which will surely now unravel differently: I need to begin, afresh, to contemplate my vocation and place in the church.

At the same time, I have a couple of kids who, though not kids any longer, need more than ever to be loved by me and embraced by me as best I can.

This morning, John and I went to worship for the first time since Kim died. I sat with the Buehlows. John ushered. It all seemed very strange. I don't sit well in the pew —whether cushioned or hard-top! Clearly, though, life goes on: names were being snapped up off the Christmas hamper board; the mitten tree was in bloom; the choirs were singing beautifully together; Nadine and the Sunday School were misbehaving wonderfully; and the Priscillas were planning their Christmas strategies. Our parish is in good hands. That much is clear. So I shall sit out, for a time, and take my bearings.

Outside, the night is bright, with a large moon. It will be full by this time tomorrow. New Hamburg's Santa Claus parade is wending its way past our front door. We can see it and hear it from here. John and I have each pressed our nose to the glass to watch. It's warm in here. Above our front porch our Advent star —a Moravian star— burns brightly.

Advent and Christmas blessings to you. And grace to you. And peace.

André Lavergne,
pastor in the Trinity community, on leave.