

Committal Service for
Annie Pearl Gardner

As we gather to remember the physical life of Annie Pearl Gardner and also commit her eternal care to the grace and love of God, we come amidst many memories and feelings.

This is a time when feelings of emptiness and sadness come naturally. But if you look inside yourselves you will also discover a joy for having been part of this woman's life; a member of her family. In this context there are also feelings of love, respect, relief, friendship, gratitude and many other emotions and experiences we carry into this time and place as well.

I hope each of you will take time today, to share with each other what you hold inside you. Tell the stories you remember about Pearl; release the gifts she has given you; offer to others what Pearl has offered to you --which are, among other things, a deep and abiding faith in God, a gift for joyful living and ways to bring life more fully to those around her.

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Life Sketch

□öI would like to take this time to share a bit about Pearl's life in order that we might:

...be reminded of the one whose life we celebrate in this time,
...carry her memory forward with us,
...and hold more completely in our hearts an image of this one we have called friend and family.

Pearl was born on March 17, 1904 (on St. Patrick's Day) to Jesse and Mary Elizabeth Peace Giles – at Sunset, Washington.

The Giles family moved to Outlook, Washington where Pearl attended high school.

It was at a later date, while visiting family in Marble Valley, Washington, that she met John Andrew Gardner. Two years later she and John were married on June 27, 1923.□M

Out of the love Pearl and John shared together, they celebrated the creation of a large family: seven children – three girls and four boys.

Anyone who knew Pearl at all knew that her family came first, always! And there was more than enough love to go around.

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Following her family, Pearl's love spilled out into her gardens of vegetables and flower beds. For Pearl, the gardens she tended not only provided food for the survival of her family and friends, they also offered beauty that enabled everyone to thrive with joy. Pearl's life was somehow more complete when she was in the garden, perhaps because she knew her gifts would provide sustenance and joy to so many.

Out of her gardens came great feasts for family and friends alike, whoever happened to stop by. No matter when or what time of day, she could and would prepare outstanding meals. In fact, her diaries showed in one year a total of 180 meals prepared for her friends. Everyone knew they could count on Pearl's generosity, the bounty of her gardens, and her gifts as a cook.

Some of you who are family members remember how, given one hour, Pearl could whip up a meal that "stuffed" all who were hungry. With no microwave, no "instant" anything, always from scratch, Pearl would gather her bounty and with the use of her gifts for hospitality and homemaking – everyone would push back from the table satisfied and feeling the love only Pearl's table could offer.

In fact, Pearl's skills of cooking were honed when she was younger – as a cook in the logging camps for large crews of very hungry men.

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In Pearl's early years, as Eileen puts it, at age 62, Pearl went to work for Boeing Aircraft in Renton, Washington. Her main job was to build the window extrusions for the planes. It was precision work, requiring great skill, and she took pride in her accomplishments. In fact, the folks at Boeing would have loved for her to become a "lead" as they called it – but the soil of the earth was calling to Pearl; she wanted to retire and come to Creston to build gardens.

With the time she now had available after retirement, Pearl and John bought "the best garden" spot in Creston they could find and "had at it". Flowers and Spuds, raspberries and cucumbers, and on and on.

Everyone knew where to get the pickling cukes – from the "Cucumber Queen", and you'd better have yours ordered and purchased before school started because the Home Ec. teachers were the first to arrive in September. It was so important for Pearl to have all the pickling supplies available so the young girls could learn the art of pickling.

Raspberries were as important as the pickles for Pearl also. Some times Pearl would pick up to 12 flats per day.

Just to try and keep up to her; I'm told folks got tired just thinking about it.

From her skills in the kitchen to her meticulous hand-weeding of the garden with no chemicals whatsoever, Pearl's life was a whirl of activity always seeking to care for those around her, and always with a sense of joy. With much satisfaction, Pearl use to claim that her bent fingers were not from arthritis, but they were shaped by the hoe handle.

Everything in Pearl's life was guided by her spiritual convictions. And she lived by them daily: From one of her favorite Bible verses in Matthew 21:22 she believed in the promise that if she just asked, her Lord would supply. So did she trust in the words of another of her favorite scriptures in the seventh chapter of Matthew (vs. 12) obediently "doing to others as she would want them to do unto her". With a deep sense of faith, hope and love, belief in Jesus who is Pearl's Lord, she always sought to use her various gift*s to meet the needs of others as God called her to. (Acts 16:31 & 1Corinthians 13:13)

Pearl always had a sense that she needed to do a little extra, so that nobody would go hungry, whether she was feeding a person's soul or their body.

Beyond the garden and dinner table, Pearl sought to nourish the lives of others through her participation in the community and the church. As a member of the Creston church, she served as a deacon and a member of the Christian Women's Fellowship.

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Even when she was no longer able to get to church, it was so important to have the Elders come by on Sunday to share communion with her and to pray.

If you new Pearl, you knew that prayer undergirded everything she was about. If there was a decision to be made, Pearl had a prayer to be prayed first, always asking□; for God's guidance and care.

As a community member Pearl was also active at the Senior Center in Wilbur and with the Civic Club in Creston. During Community Days in Creston, Pearl found her self, during four years, riding up on the Civic Floats through the downtown parade.

Pearl also shared with others through her musical gifts on the piano. Joyfully, she could sit down and start playing and let the whole world go by. And the joy was infectious. Folks loved to ask Pearl to play something on the piano for them. And she did. Especially at her own "St. Patrick" day birthday party.

From what I do know of Pearl, it seems clear she discovered early on, a gift she worked tirelessly to share with those around her...

...that life lived in the midst of community,
and life shared fully with others
and the world around□d her,
was what it meant to be fully alive;
what it meant to be faithful to God;
what it took to find joy and peace in this world.

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Certainly, Pearl's life was a great example of Christian faith, as well as experience of abundance and celebration.

In this time following Pearl's death on May 28th, we remember those who preceded her in death:

her husband – John in 1978,
a son – John Jr. in 1982,
a daughter-in-law – Judith Marie, wife of son James
2 infant daughters – Audrey and Gertrude,
and a brother and three sisters.

And we remember those of you whom Pearl is survived by:
three sons –

Warren Gardner & wife – Laura Vivian,
Dale Gardner & wife – Jackie,
and James Gardner;

one daughter – Eileen Pfeiffer;

One daughter-in-law – Leah Gardner,
widow of deceased son John Jr.;

18 grandchildren,

36 great-grandchildren,

15 great-great-grandchildren,
and numerous nieces and nephews.

Look around at each other;
know by what you see that Pearl's life continues on in the life of each other
and the memories of things precious to us.

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Look to the lessons learned from this one whom we remember as caring, a very
hard worker, kind and patient, always joyful about an opportunity to help
another person, always trusting in God's loving guidance and always seeking to
live in ways acceptable to God – this one, Annie Pearl Gardner, who offered us
helpful images for how to live our own lives with meaning and purpose.

In even greater hope, though, we can know for Pearl that her life does not
merely rest in our memories reminded by things around us.

From holy scripture we are reminded of God's grace that cares, nurtures, and
empowers Pearl and all who are moved beyond physical life by death.

And so now, as we prepare to release to God -- the care for this one who has
touched many lives in many ways, both seen and unseen, let us look to such
scripture for comfort and guidance, but also an assurance that will empower our
lives into the future.

Listen now for the Word of God:

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Scripture

First from the wisdom of Ecclesiastes(3:1-8,11-14)

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a
time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what
is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time
to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to
dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time
to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to
lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to weep, and a time to
sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to
hate; a time for war, and a time for peace....

...I know there is nothing better for us than to be happy and enjoy
ourselves as long as we live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and
drink and take pleasure in all our toil.

I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor
anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe
before him.

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And from the Psalms (23).

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
 he makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters;
 he restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
 for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley
 of the shadow of death,
 I fear no evil;
for thou art with me;
 thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
 in the presence of my enemies;
thou anointest my head with the oil of blessing,
 my cup overflows.
Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me
 all the days of my life;

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And finally,
from Paul's letter to the Romans (8: 35, 37-39)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress,
or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...
 ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who
loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor
principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height,
nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from
the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Trust for Pearl, and for us all, in the One who said,
 "I am the resurrection and the life."
Be confident this is not the end, but a new beginning.

In this moment then, amidst the love of family and friends, amidst all sadness and joy, in the light of our eternal hope in the one God who gives all the gifts of life, we commit this one whom we love unto the gracious care of God.

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Prayer

Shall we pray:

O God, our protector, we come to this moment and this place, confident in the warmth of your love and the quiet strength of your presence.

We come here to honor Pearl Gardner.

Hold closely in your arms all who love and miss her. Overwhelm each of the members of her family with the peace and hope of your Spirit; a securing sense of relief and release.

May they understand the intended gifts of love through all who care. And may we all be instruments of your peace; a witness to the gift of resurrection you bestow upon us all.

In this time and place then, O God - who - watches - over - us - all, we bid farewell to the remains of Pearl's physical being, and we also now commit her eternal living Spirit to your graceful and ever-lasting care.

And in this time, as we begin to look forward in hope, we trust you will do for Pearl far more than we could ever hope or imagine, keeping her eternal living spirit secure until we all join her in your presence and share together in the grace that is your gift of eternity to us all.

Now, as we commit this one, Annie Pearl Gardner, to your care, O God, we also await your leading for our lives in this world. Grant us the vision and hope to move into the days ahead with courage. Amen.

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Benediction

In the grace of God, you who are family of Pearl Gardner are heirs to her legacy. You who are her friends have received her witness to life. In the same grace of God through which Pearl lived, it is now your turn and my turn; to take the torch of life and faith she carried, and move ahead into the future.

Do not squander the wisdom you have learned from Pearl. Do not keep to yourself the love she shared with you. But see these gifts as gifts from God and in the legacy of Pearl Gardner, in the joy of her eternal life, let us share what we have been given that the world might be a better place; a place of healing and of hope. Amen.

-Annie Pearl Gardner
passed away in Davenport, WA. on May 28, 1999-

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In Memory of

Annie Pearl Gardner

March 17, 1904

through

May 28, 1999