

Poetic Invocation

Written and given by Sarah Uphoff

Christ the Redeemer Church, April 11, 2010

Sarah is a new Christian and a new member of CTRC. She is an Assistant Director of Residential Life and Education at Texas State University. While at University of Texas she performed Poetry and Word around the country. Writing and performing poetry remains something she enjoys doing. She said to CTRC last Sunday, when she decided to become a Christian and to serve through CTRC, *“If anyone had told me I'd be a Christian and a member of a church three weeks ago I would have told them to seek treatment. Clearly I was the one who needed healing. I'm glad to have found CTRC and am eternally grateful to hear Him lead and speak to me through my experiences there and in other ways over the last two weeks. You are a tremendous blessing for which I am deeply grateful. Thank you-for everything.”*

She wrote and gave this Poetic Invocation this morning...theme of Service was “God’s Wake Up Calls.”

I can't tell you what prompts His wake up call
How He chooses the ring tone that finally
Catches our attention
Maybe we actually had a 100 missed calls
Or maybe
His Aramaic sounded too foreign
His Hebrew – like gibberish
Or maybe we were just too busy
So we kept it on silent
And that's why we always felt so alone
But He does call
And when he finally finds our language
It seems to hum softly in our background
Our spiritual theme song
That grows louder, crescendos
When we start to doubt
Wander too far away
Or lose faith
Like his own cosmic snooze button
That no longer allows us
To sleep through life
But wakes us up soundly
With his song in our hearts
Brings us together in His love
Allowing Him to rest peacefully
In the symphony of our ring tones.

Signed,
S.uphoff

5:00 am Wake Up Calls

Christ the Redeemer Church
April 11, 2010
2nd Sunday of Easter

John 20:19-31
Rev Gary L. Smith
www.christredeemerchurch.com

One thing I was really looking forward to after spending 31 years in the military was to sleep later here in San Marcos while serving in a civilian church. No more middle of the night emergency calls when someone needed a military chaplain at the hospital. No more 4:30 am alarm clocks in order to get to a 6 am exercise or to a 7 am office.

Night calls are always bad news. Then Pinky became a Christian, joined our church, and messed up my whole life.

He works for the city of Austin and apparently the city of Austin has to do more work before 6 am than the entire Department of Defense for the United States.

Pinky gets up at 4:30 each morning and he likes to call his pastor at that time. Most mornings our phone rings around 6 am. Now he calls at 5 am.

A 5 am Wake Up Call from a singing Pinky will startle you. He wants to talk about God or church or something mundane like that. Pam just picks up the phone in her sleep and hands it to me. She used to say, "It is Pinky." Now she just hands me the phone.

Wake up calls. The disciples had a Wake Up call. Their friend was dead. They gathered to mourn, hide from the crowds, figure out what to do with their fears and disappointments, and to huddle.

You can not kill Love. You can not crucify Grace and expect it to just go away. The Hound of Heaven will not let Love die. Someone created you and that God of Creation and Love and Joy and Hope and Peace and Grace will not go away. You can put it on a cross and call it a Good Friday and then stuff it in a tomb and go on about your business but it will Reappear to you.

When was your Wake Up Call in life? In the last three weeks? Last year? Two years ago? When you were a child? When were you awakened in the middle of the night of your life and startled? Have you ever heard a signing Pinky at 4:30 am in the morning?

I attended a military chaplain's conference one time. Dreaded it. We would be talking for a week about beaurocratic stuff that bored me. How to write a promotion package. How to get funding. How to deal with commanders. How to survive the system.

But the command chaplain (sort of a bishop) shocked us. He brought in a Spiritual Advisor, a Counselor to Pastors, to talk to us for a week about our own spiritual lives. I

still enjoy thinking about that wonderful week.

One thing our spiritual advisor and speaker told us was about his mother. She was 70. She loved to work. She planned to work until she died, she told her kids. Suddenly one day she called her son, our speaker, and told him she was retiring from her job. He assumed she was ill and asked what happened.

She said, "Nothing happened. I am fine. I just decided to do something else in life." He asked why prompted that decision.

She said, "I got a little splinter in my finger and it got infected and I could not type for a week. So I sat there at work at my type writer and looked at the infected finger and thought 'Heck, I am tired of this. I will just quit.'" So I quit. Her whole life changed over a little splinter.

A Wake up Call in life. A divorce. Job loss. Promotion failure. Illness. Speaker. Preacher. Aging. Splinter. A courtroom appearance. Career over. Loss of friend. Life.

I had prayer with Tommy's girlfriend's mother Berta in the hospital Wednesday morning. Gave them all a cross in the room. Her pastor was there. Samuel. Great guy. Good pastors never mind when other pastors are in the room. He embraced me. I was there for Tommy and Brenda and he was there for his parishioner Berta. He admired the cross I gave Berta and Lori.

I drove then to Bert's hospital and had prayer with him prior to his surgery. His surgery nurse came into the pre-op room. She ended up telling us she had been a church secretary for 17 years prior to becoming a nurse. She was in her 50's and a new nurse.

She smiled and said, "I left church work to come into surgical nursing because nursing is less stressful than church work." We all nodded. She loves nursing. I commented that it must have been challenging to go to nursing school at her age.

She said, "Yeah, I don't recommend going through nursing school **and menopause** all at the same time. I was not much fun to be around!" So funny.

Wake up calls in life. When Pam and I were regularly moving around and stress was high during moves, I could not wait to get into our new house and have our first meal. Our first meal was Amity's favorite...chicken broccoli. Once we had our first chicken broccoli casserole, then everything was going to be fine. Familiar food sustains.

Come and have some familiar food this morning. This will remind you that you are going to make it and get through it all. First thing Jesus did after the boys were shocked to see Him standing there on the beach was to say, "Let's eat." And they had some familiar food. It was all a Wake Up Call to them. And to us.

I go to bed earlier now in life just to be able to answer my early morning wake up call from a guy named Pinky. You never know how this church stuff is going to change and impact your life! Amen.