

# “DOERS OF THE WORD”

## Gifts of Women Sunday

June 27, 2010

**Speakers: Sandy Olson, Peggy Phillips, Virginia Jacobs**

Today, as we celebrate Gifts of Women Sunday, I have the privilege of telling you about Marjorie Platt, mother of two daughters, grandmother of two, and great-grandmother of two. Like many of us, Marge enjoys gardening and this year is no different, although she does admit that she no longer tills her own vegetable garden. She has someone else do that for her. Since she celebrated her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday just last Sunday, I think we can forgive her for this slacking off. Marge is one of the quiet ones, of which we here at Greenwood have so many. She has always followed Jesus' advice from the Sermon on the Mount in which He tells us that we “are the light of the world,” that we don't necessarily hide our “good works”, but that we let others see them and “give glory to our Father who is in heaven.” At the same time, Jesus admonishes us not to show off or boast what we do and what we give, but that we must do these things quietly and even “in secret.” Marge is a wonderful example of a woman who has always followed these admonitions as she does what she can to further God's kingdom.

Marge's favorite verse is John 3:16. She doesn't know why exactly, but it still “gets” to her every time she hears or reads it. In addition to its meaning, thinking about this verse brings many images and thoughts to her mind including when, as a child growing up in Pawtuxet, she memorized this verse in Sunday school. Sunday School played a big part in bringing Marge to Greenwood Community Church also. She and her husband, Lloyd, moved to Greenwood Avenue, just a couple of blocks from here, after Lloyd's father died and his mother insisted that she needed Lloyd with her. So, they sold their home in Cranston and Lloyd, Marge, and their young daughter Linda moved in with Marge's mother-in-law—now, that was a very brave move on Marge's part, don't you think? After their second daughter, Nancy, arrived, Marge and Lloyd decided the Platt house just wasn't big enough; so they built around the corner on Alvin Street where Marge still lives and gardens today in the company of her cat Maggie.

Marge remembers that once they had settled into their home in Greenwood, a neighbor offered to take Linda to Sunday school. Some of you remember those World War II days of gas rationing. That moved the mothers in Greenwood to form their own Sunday school in the first place—the Sunday school that became this church. When Linda Platt attended Sunday school, her class met in the old, infamous Legion Hall down on Post Road. Later, when daughter Nancy started Sunday school, our lower level had been completed; so Nancy attended the class that her mother taught in the lower back hall where the “blue table” now sits, while Linda's class met in the kitchen.

In 1962, Marge began to work for the Warwick School Department as the Language Lab technician at Warwick Veterans Memorial High School. Ten years later she moved to the same position at Toll Gate High School and retired ten years after that in 1982. She recalls those 20 years with great fondness. “I loved every minute of it,” she told me. Throughout this time, this Doer-of-the-Word involved herself in the life of Greenwood Church. She served as Circle V's Circle Leader when that group met at the Medical Center and brought their meeting and their cheer to patients there. She also served as PW's Community Outreach chair, but only for 11 years! Marge has also served us as a deacon and in addition to completing the many duties that our deacons have, she was secretary of that group for one-and-a-half terms. Today, Marge is responsible for collecting the Campbell's UPC labels and Box Tops for Education that you contribute and sends them off to the Plateau Home School in Tennessee. She's held this job for 15 years.

One of the things I remember from my own childhood about Marge and Lloyd Platt is going to square dancing lessons that they taught. For 15 years they worked together most every night with the Friendly Mixers Square Dancing Club: Lloyd called the squares while Marge taught round dancing between sets, and each of them helped the other throughout the evenings. I remember having wonderful times at those dances. Even though, according to Marge, the Platt daughters could take or leave square dancing, their parents' influence on others is still remembered today. Marge enjoys telling a story Joann Rudolph shared with her: When Joann attended her high school 40<sup>th</sup> class reunion at Warwick Veterans Memorial High School, she and a group of her former classmates reminisced about their school days. They discovered that they had all attended and remembered the fun they had enjoyed at Marge and Lloyd Platt's square dances. Last year on Gifts of Women Sunday, our speakers talked about how we never know the extent of our influence on others—Joann's memories of the Platts and square dancing offer a good example of this.

Marge Platt is one of my favorite people. She is always pleasant, shows her concern for others in her actions, and she lives her beliefs daily as she travels along her journey of faith. Several weeks ago, Rev. Clark talked about gaining weight in the spiritual sense: how we grow and expand our souls when we do the work of God. For a tiny

woman, Marge Platt is one of the weightiest that I know. I am honored to know her and to have her example and influence in my life. Thank you, Marge.

Family, church, and faith are central in the life of **Virginia Jacobs**. Ginny comes from a wonderfully Christian-based family headed by great role model parents. They volunteered in the Hillsgrove United Methodist Church, here in Warwick, where her dad served on numerous church committees and taught Sunday school while her mom volunteered in the nursery with Ginny helping. Family life was not easy for the Hachadorians for much of the time, however. When she was six, Ginny's sister developed a life-threatening cancer that lasted for much of her and Ginny's growing-up years. Extensive hospital stays and large medical bills took their toll. Ginny's dad worked two jobs to keep up with those expenses as well as to make it possible for her mom to stay home and care for their children.

Despite all their difficult struggles though, Ginny's childhood memories are positive ones. Her parents' actions taught her much. The family prayed often and never started a meal without a family prayer. When her friends came over for dinner and they all held hands in prayer, Ginny remembers wondering what her friends thought as they didn't pray in their own homes. Perhaps her childhood friends remember those scenes and perhaps those scenes influenced their own lives. As for Ginny, her parents' strong faith taught her that faith includes service and giving back in gratitude for all they had been given. They were Doers-of-the-Word, and those images have stayed with Ginny as she continues to grow as a Doer-of-the-Word herself.

In 1976, after family friends Fran and Jim Bonn brought Ginny's mom, Florence, to a service here, Florence was so impressed with the way Greenwood's church family showed their faith in action that she decided to bring her own family here. As a teen Ginny became very involved with the youth group here and still remains friends with some of those former youth group members, including my own daughter Cathy. For several years, Ginny and Cathy represented Greenwood's youth at Presbytery and even Synod meetings. Those memories continue to influence Ginny's life today.

About six years ago Ginny lost her manager's position at TGI Friday's, a job she had held for 23 years. Although she intensely disliked that job, it provided the money that supported her and her three children. When it disappeared, Ginny began a journey that has led her to the place she enjoys being today, a place in which Ginny says, "Everything fits together." While still employed at Friday's, Ginny had also been a part-time substitute teacher in the Coventry schools. She loved this job and the time it gave her to work with kids as well as to use her college background in music, a passion that had taken a back seat for the years she juggled working days, nights, and weekends. When the Friday's job disappeared, Ginny depended more on subbing and this past year was hired to fill a position as a K through grade 5 music teacher in Coventry. Now, for the first time since high school, Ginny didn't have to work nights and weekends and she's loved it.

Although she couldn't involve herself in the life of the church as much as she wanted to when she was juggling three children, three jobs, and home responsibilities, Ginny still managed to get her children to Sunday school; and, she participated in Presbyterian Women activities where she served a term as World Service Chair; and she took part in church work days. I have to say that Ginny Jacobs has to be one of the best jugglers I know. Like all Doers-of-the-Word, Ginny's commitment to giving back gives her more and more. The more she involves herself in the life of this church, the richer she finds she is—like Marge Platt, Ginny Jacobs is another of Paul's weight gainers.

Ginny's commitment to her children keeps giving her more and more as well. Several years ago she began to teach a water aerobics class once a week at the Y because it gave her a free membership and the opportunity for her daughter, Jillian, to attend that class, which they both still do. In turn, Jill's commitment to her mom comes to my mind when I think of the last church work day where I saw Ginny scrubbing stair risers while Jill happily chatted away with her.

Ginny's oldest child, 20 year old son, Jesse, attends URI and plays the clarinet in their band, just like Mom. He also sings in our choir—along with his mom. Her middle child, 18 year old son, Jaimison, just graduated from high school, was just hired at TGI Friday's, and hopes to attend CCRI in the Fall. Jaime and Ginny have just completed Hospice-companion-for-the-dying training together and will soon begin volunteering with this group. Ginny Jacobs has been, and continues to be, as strong a role model for her children as her parents were for her.

One of Ginny's favorite Scriptures comes from the Sermon on the Mount: "Let your light so shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Ginny remembers that the minister at Hillsgrove always used that sentence as his benediction. She remembers this verse—in much the same way as Marge Platt remembers John 3:16. The words, as well as their meaning, are important to her. These two women reflect their faith through their actions and we are fortunate to have them with us.

**Margaret Houghton Phillips** was born with the desire to serve and give back. I came to Greenwood Community Church in 1976 and Marge Platt came in 1953; but Peggy has been a part of the Greenwood Community Church family since 1949! She was just six years old when neighbor, and family friend Bob MacNaught,

asked Peggy's folks if they'd like him to take Peggy to the Greenwood Sunday school. Does this sound familiar? That's the same way that Marge Platt's daughter came to be a part of this Christian community. Peggy's first memories of Sunday school, like those of Linda Platt, are of classes held in that Legion hall on Post Road.

Attending Sunday school was the beginning of her lifelong involvement in the life of this church: First, she attended Sunday school right through the twelfth grade; then she joined the youth fellowship when she was in junior high and continued to be an active part of the fellowship right through senior high school; next, she taught in the vacation Bible school when she was in high school and for many years after that, including the years when her and her husband John's two girls attended those sessions. Peggy fondly remembers the curricula the adults developed from the themes they chose each year—themes that centered around different countries or areas in our own country like Appalachia. They all put in a great deal of work during those sessions, but they had a great time doing it, too.

It was during her years of association with Vacation Bible School that Peggy memorized what is her favorite Bible Verse: John 3:16, the same verse Marge Platt loves. In addition to the meaning of its words, Peggy associates many wonderful memories of those summer days with this verse.

.When her children were old enough to attend Sunday school, Peggy became involved with that again, this time as a teacher. Not too long after that, she joined the choir and has been singing with that group ever since. As an aside, I have to mention that singing is one of Peggy's passions as playing the clarinet is mine. When she was in high school, she performed in the variety shows the school put on each year—singing. Perhaps she and I could get together on that sometime this summer. Peggy's growth as a Doer-of-the-Word continued to grow when she joined a Circle in Presbyterian Women, adding Circle Leader and then PW Moderator as the years went by. She continues to be a vital part of PW these days as she gives many, many hours co-chairing the PW Ways and Means Committee.

Back in 1960, Peggy took on her first stint as a deacon, a job she has taken on again and again in six-year terms. If you don't know Peggy personally, you have certainly seen her name many times in the notes that members have sent to the Fishermen's News—notes thanking Peg for her visits and remembrances. She constantly gives back. This Christian woman gives new meaning to the word service.

Outside of church Peggy gives back, too. When her girls were young, Peggy served first as a Brownie leader, then as a Girl Scout leader. During that time as a Girl Scout troop leader, she served on the West Bay Neighborhood, a group set up to organize various scouting activities and to deal with problems troops might have. Betty Stacey served as the West Bay Neighborhood Chair at that time.

For quite a few years Peggy took on the task of taking the elderly mother of a friend grocery shopping, to doctor's appointments, and other places this woman needed to go. Peggy also gives of her time and talents to the Fraternal Order of Police Associates, an organization that is made up of people who give support to police officers in their efforts to help in the community such as in raising funds for the Special Olympics. Peg's special service to this group for many years now is to plan and run the children's Christmas party for the children and grandchildren of police officers and associates. Often the children number about 100—that's a huge number of gifts to buy and wrap!

Oh, I almost forgot. During these years, while she put her faith into action within this church and into helping others outside the church and into raising two daughters with her husband, John, Peg also taught in the Warwick School System in the elementary schools for 30 years, retiring in 1998. Peggy Phillips doesn't sit around wondering what to do with her time. Whenever a need arises, she doesn't wait to be asked to help; she steps up to the plate to serve—every time.

Since they were born and even continuing through today, Peggy's children have been central in all of what she does. Besides modeling her Christian faith and service, Peggy gave much of herself to her daughters. She trekked them to Sunday school, church, and fellowship; she worked with the junior, senior, and college fellowship groups they belonged to; she led their scout troops; and she ran them here, there, and everywhere during the summers that they played softball, a game Peg, herself, loves and played for many years—a game that daughter Cathy still plays.

One strong belief that Peggy learned early on from her parents is the importance of family and their history. Peggy's parents both came to Rhode Island from Nova Scotia in Canada. When they did, they left behind many close relatives. Peggy remembers that every year, her parents took her and her sister to Canada to visit those family members. Peggy has continued that practice with her daughters Cathy and Helen and granddaughter Meagan. It is important to Peggy that her girls know their heritage.

Peg is one of the rocks of Greenwood Church; she is faithful and gives back. She puts her faith and beliefs into action every day. Peggy Phillips wouldn't like me to say this, but for all of us, she is a wonderful example of faith in action.