

God's Eternal Light

Rev. Gordon Webster, Chaplain Rochester Presbyterian Home

During this week I prepare for celebration of Life Services for four of our residents. Recently each returned to God's glory: Nancy Hollingsworth, Katherine Wagner, Ted Paine, and Anita Sherman. Each one blessed by God!

Death and grieving is front and center in ministry and in my life. Last night a dear friend, Van Travis, Jr. passed over while wife Clara, daughter Karen, and son Travis – Chip – accompanied him with their loving presence. The vigil has been months. Van's mother, Beulah Travis lived to 100 years of age – and continues to be one of the saints! (She graces pages 26-28 of Presbyterians: A Spiritual Journey by Dirk Wierenga [2000, Geneva Press] –a copy of the book is in our Presbytery's Resource Center). We were colleagues at First Presbyterian Church in Syracuse, 1975-1983.

Ministry to the Aging is rising in priority for us. Recently Rev. Katie Jasa was seeking resources on death and grieving for our brothers and sisters at Gates Presbyterian Church. With the closing of two churches – Lakeside and East Rochester – in our Presbytery, the Committee on Ministry noticed that member of those congregations were grieving at the “deaths” of their worship centers. So Rev. Anne Waasdorp and I are exploring how stages of grief are real in the losses of churches as well as of loved ones!

What new resources do we need as pastors? What understanding do we need to gain as church leaders? Even as the Resurrection gives new light to the Cross and crucifixion, so perhaps can new forms of ministry to loved ones close to those final life moments shine new light on our own humanity lived in God's eternal light!