

Holding It All Together

by Amy McCollom



An Unlikely Duo

One was handsome, lean, fast, and clever. The other was sweet, goofy, temperamental, and had a strong attachment to her favorite things. An unlikely duo that became the best of friends by chance and circumstance. Sounds like the making of a romance novel, eh?

It could be. But actually I was describing the playful relationship I have enjoyed watching bloom between our dog and one of our cats. You see, our dog Paisley is a unique little dog. For starters, she is a hairless dog. She is an American Hairless Terrier, and is perfect for people who are allergic to dogs (like me, for instance.) The only trouble with having a hairless dog is that what you save in grooming fees, you end up spending on clothing for the dog. Even in the summertime she has to wear clothes or risk getting sunburned or chilly from the air conditioning. Too bad I can't teach her to do her own laundry like I did with the teenagers.

Paisley has been sort of an only child, and hasn't had other dog-friends growing up, so she is very awkward around other dogs. She has an innate herding instinct that takes over and makes

her appear bossy during playtime with other doggos, and this doesn't always set right with the other dogs. So, like me, she is socially awkward and comes on too strong sometimes. I get that.

But then Grim came into our lives by chance and unwittingly nudged his way into our home and our hearts. Grim is a six-month old shiny black cat with gold eyes and the bravery of a panther. He runs like a cheetah through the dining room, gets his speed up, then launches himself into the air, grasping onto the top of the lacy drapes in our living room. He is getting bigger and bigger and the creaking metal of the curtain rod bending under his weight as he hangs there is getting louder and louder, but still he repeats this feat over and over again throughout the day. Spritzing him with water doesn't deter him; he loves water. Every time I turn on the kitchen sink I hear his heavy feet pounding the floor behind me as he runs and leaps onto the counter and into the sink to bat at the running stream. I would say he is crazy, but I really know he is just ALL CAT. I'm just glad he stopped trying to climb our legs like they were trees;

that was painful! He can be very loving at times, and is a cuddle buddy too, so there's that.

But this duo, Paisley and Grim, have discovered that each other are just tough enough and fun enough to enjoy each other's antics without getting hurt or offended. So nightly now, the two of them wrestle, toss toys in the air, play chase, frolic on the floor, and even lie down next to one another. I am happy that Paisley finally has a friend, and I'm also happy that Grim has someone to help him with all that energy he needs to release. It just works.

People are the same way, you know. Two unlikely people, one awkward maybe, lonely, unsocial; someone else maybe athletic, exciting, willing to take chances. I look back at John and I, and see that exact scenario. I was the dreamer, the flower-child poet, the animal lover, the philosopher. John was the

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April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White is urging the motoring public to focus on the road while driving and to avoid driving distracted. April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Jesse White Urges Motoring Public to Avoid Distracted Driving

Secretary of State Police conducting patrols as April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

"With the increased use of technological devices, distracted driving has become a serious problem on the roads throughout our state and the nation," said White. "No driver should be texting while driving."

In an effort to further discourage distracted driving, White has instructed the Secretary of State Police to conduct targeted patrols statewide to crack down on distracted drivers.

"The goal is not to write tickets, but to save lives," said White. "We are reminding the public of the dangers of distracted driving, and police will be issuing tickets

to motorists who are driving distracted."

Illinois law prohibits the hand-held use of cellphones and electronic devices in vehicles, unless reporting an emergency or while the vehicle is parked. Texting while driving is considered one of the most deadly forms of distracted driving. The penalty for texting while driving results in a moving violation that will be reflected on the motorist's driving record, in addition to fines and court costs.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), distracted driving accounted for

15% of crashes and claimed the lives of 3,142 motorists in the United States in 2019. The NHTSA has reported that sending or reading a text takes a motorist's eyes off the road for an average of five seconds. That means when travelling at 55 mph, a motorist is essentially driving blindly for the length of a football field.

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Pastor Stahl's Weekly Message of Faith

Hello, Everyone!

I hope everyone had a joyous and Blessed Easter Sunday! That is the heart of our faith, that our Lord Loved us so much He Went all the way to the cross to die for us. Remember, He Could have refused, but recall His Words in the garden: "Father, if it is Your Will, Remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My Will, but Yours, be done." (Luke 22:42) So He Willingly laid aside His Life for you and me. And then God Glorified His Son with the Resurrection on Sunday morning! That is the cornerstone of our faith, that God Loved us enough to go through all that. He Died so we wouldn't have to.

Often, we have a hard time comprehending the Love of God. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist denomination, was a priest in the Church of England. He had been religious all of his life; his father Samuel was a minister as well, so John grew up in a Christian home. But he never felt that God Loved him. He had worked hard in seminary, following in the footsteps of his father, but his faith was a struggle and very demanding. Like Martin Luther, he felt the Christian faith was a dour and serious calling, that he had to

work hard each day to have God Love him.

One night, Wesley went to a Bible study meeting on Aldersgate Street in London. The minister was reading the preface to Martin Luther's study on the Book of Romans. Wesley later wrote in his diary: "As he (Luther) was describing the change that God Works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my own heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given to me that Christ had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the Law of sin and death." (May 24, 1738) Wesley had a new found and heart warming faith to take with him wherever he went. His preaching took on a new tone, preaching about the Mercy and Love of God. He would tell his story to anyone who would listen. His goal wasn't to start a new denomination, but to call England and later America back to the Word of God, the Holy Bible.

That is our Faith. Let that be our legacy. Let that be our mission.

Happy Easter to everyone!
Pastor Jeff Stahl
Countryside and Ogden United Methodist Churches

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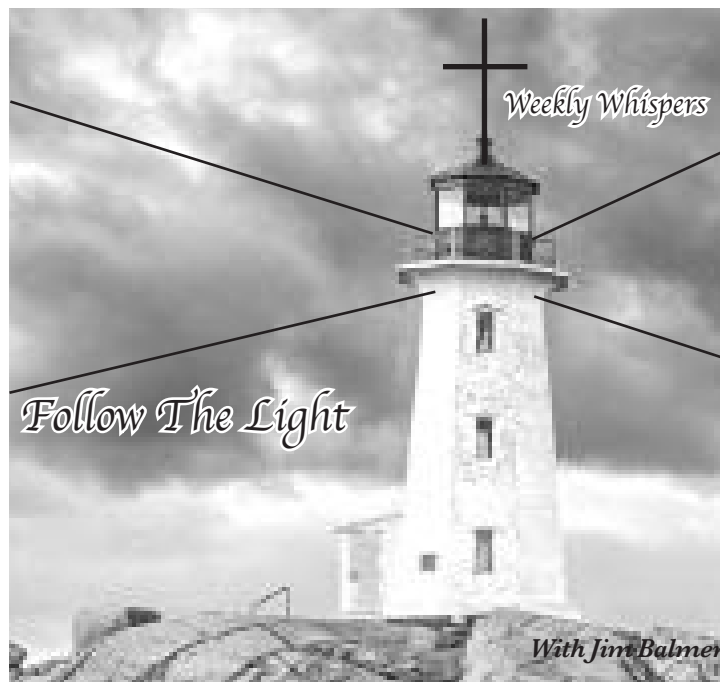
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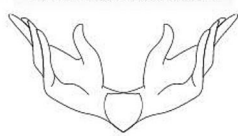
Acts 5:12-15
New International Version
The Apostles Heal Many
12 The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade.

13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.

14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.

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