

In Memory
of
Clay Thomas Whitehead
1938-2008



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of
Clay Thomas Whitehead

Service of Thanksgiving

The Lessons

Abigail Walton Whitehead Craine

Clay Cother Whitehead

Reflections

Margaret Whitehead

Brian P. Lamb

W. Bowman Cutter III

Henry Goldberg

Homily

Rev. Edward O. Miller Jr.

St. John's Episcopal Church

6715 Georgetown Pike

McLean, Virginia 22101

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Notes to researchers: the audio file from which these transcripts were made was at times difficult to interpret. These transcriptions reflect our best efforts to capture the recording.

The First Lesson: Philippians 4:4-9

A reading from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians:

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I will say, rejoice.

Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

Do not worry about anything; but in everything by prayer and supplication with

Thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything that is worthy of praise, think about these things.

Keep on doing the things that you have learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, and the God of peace shall be with you.

The word of the Lord.

Abigail Whitehead Craine, reader

The Second Lesson: I Corinthians 15:51-58

A reading from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians:

Listen, I will tell you a mystery. We will not all die, but we will all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body we must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

When this perishable body puts on imperishability and this mortal body puts on Immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: Death has been swallowed up in victory.

Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?

The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, unmoveable, always excelling in the work Of the Lord, because you know that, in the Lord, your work is not in vain.

The word of the Lord.

Clay Cother Whitehead, reader

Margaret Whitehead

Tom Whitehead was quiet, calm, and somewhat serious when I met him in 1969. Though I had been told that he worked at the White House, he avoided all mention of it. I later learned that he and a skeleton staff were working seven days a week to set up the Office of Telecommunications Policy within the Executive Branch. Several months hence, I found myself with him on the side of a mountain in a foreign country overlooking the sea. It was dusk, and the stars were beginning to appear. He began to tell me what he knew of them, and it became clear that he had read deeply about astronomy, and that he was in love with life and with learning. There was a sweetness about him. I found him electric. I began to learn about his life's journey during the years of his Washington bachelorhood when he was somewhat visible here, and later, our courtship.

Our wedding occurred in 1973 two days after the Watergate hearings began and six months before Agnew's televised anti-media speech – or otherwise, at the incipient unraveling of a presidency. In the year that followed, it became clear that Tom was working in a White House in which not everyone, but a significant and powerful few in the hierarchy, would like to create telecom policy that was in conflict with OTP's ideology of deregulation and free speech. Tom and his remarkable associates – still remarkable today – were working across complex ideological and political terrains within and without the White House, and they fought a worthy battle for their convictions. These early years of political turmoil and the success of OTP, and then Tom's positive experiences as an entrepreneur of large-scale national and international business ventures, asked the question of how he managed. This then, briefly, is his story.

Tom grew up on the plains of southeast Kansas in a small town with a father trained as a teacher. Tom's first job was at a pharmacy where he was a bicycle delivery boy. Saving the twenty-five cents an hour he earned at the pharmacy, he bought a \$90 Ham Radio kit, built its receiver, and learned Morse code. He seized a closet in his home to house his rig and set out to make it functional by strapping a thirty-foot telephone pole and, atop that, a fifteen foot antenna, to his parents' chimney. Later, at OTP, having energized the deregulation of AT&T, its chair said to Tom, "Why you have probably never even been on top of a telephone pole." Tom was amused to reply, "I certainly have."

In addition to ham radio, and also from early on, Tom was an ardent fan of commercial radio. After finishing his homework every night, he listened to stations, among others, including the NBC network in New York, WLAC in Nashville, and XERF AM in El Del Rio, Mexico. He was tuning into a broad range of American programming and life at the same time that he and his father were building houses and tending cattle or, as Tom would say, making steers. He had his driver's license by thirteen so that he could reach the fields where he plowed wheat on his father's Ford tractor. In recent years, he loved to remind our children that this tractor had neither air conditioning, stereo, nor, for that matter, a cab.

Prior to college, Tom applied for the National Merit Scholarship, and in doing so, realized that he could gain entry to colleges beyond Kansas. Numerous universities made generous offers of scholarships, including Cal Tech, but the smallest – one for a mere semester – was from M.I.T. Tom, who thought himself a budding physicist was uncertain about how to go about making his choice. Momentarily, he considered writing Einstein for advice. But as the moment of decision drew near, Tom mainly talked to his father who felt that he had an enormous responsibility to Tom for every reason. He felt this in part because Tom had earlier earned the highest I.Q. scores in the state of Kansas. (By the way, this I learned only days ago.) Surprisingly, Tom finally asserted, "Dad, I want to go to M.I.T." And without flinching, his father mortgaged the farm, and off Tom went. Finally at M.I.T., he obtained not two graduate degrees, but what we would now consider three graduate degrees. He was enjoying himself so thoroughly in his pursuits that his mentor had to remind him that it was time for him to leave the ivory tower.

Years later, after he had left the White House, Tom chose to be an entrepreneur to support our family. We were blessed with two wonderful children. He made us all feel greatly loved, and in spite of his career, there was no question that we came first. I can assure you that he treasured every minute of reading to the children, conversing at family dinners, helping with homework, baking thousands and thousands of cookies, brining every turkey for holidays, holding every holiday reading, and supporting us in every way possible through thick and thin. Most recently, "thin" meant supporting Abigail, Clay, and me through two dissertations and a Master's degree. This included using his Consortium library card, gained as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at George Mason, to sneak up to my carrel at G.W. with flowers.

The quiet moments with him were always rich with the events of the day, but also with keen reflections and analyses, and always humor dry enough to crack. I often thought from time to time that businessmen were not necessarily famous for enjoying themselves at home, and I felt very fortunate to be married to one who did. And indeed, I marveled at the joy he took in it, and from each of us.

As for his career, there are two things that Tom has said of himself. He said, "I love the act of creating things," and also, "I love the movement, the action." I would add that he was neither afraid to try anything, nor to re-enter the fray after a failure. And as anyone who at Easter has sat in a pew near ours and experienced his enthusiastic, off-key rendition of *The Hallelujah Chorus* will tell you, he was thoroughly unembarrassed by what he could *not* do.

I will ever cherish my memories of him as one who wanted to do so much, one whose life, rather than asking the question, Why me, asked, Why not me? In the recent past, I will most cherish his lack of fear of death, his faith that he would go to God, and his ability to thoroughly enjoy himself while he was dying. This was not a surprise. For more than three decades, he had associated his own death with these expressive, American folk lyrics:

Come, come, angel band.
Come and around me stand,
Oh, bear me away on thy snow-white wings
To my immortal home.

We loved him so.

Brian P. Lamb

Margaret asked me to talk about the first couple years that I knew Tom Whitehead, and those years were beginning in 1971. And so, what I did after we had known for a long time that Tom was in trouble, was to keep thinking about what is it about this person that I liked so much after all these years. So, I did what Tom would have wanted me to do. He did not like symmetrical things. He always used to say to me, "I cannot understand why television programs are thirty minutes long. Why couldn't they be thirty-six minutes long?" And so, I made nine points, and I am going to try to go through these very quickly.

The first point, by the way, is that Tom had a very successful life. I don't know anybody that has had a more successful life, and a lot of it is because of this family. I watched them at the end, and it was unbelievable—the love.

Number one on my list is: he was a joy to know. I don't know why I am telling you this story, but I have laughed about it for thirty-five years. We traveled together, and he was making a speech at the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon, and we were both in our early thirties. And I was kind of what they call the guy who is right next to Barack Obama, the body man. In addition to doing public relations at OTP, I would sometimes smooth the way for Tom. We showed up at this Warm Springs Indian Reservation at about 11:00 at night, totally in-the-bags tired. And I walked up to the front desk, and I said, "I am here with Dr. Tom Whitehead." And I gave the clerk my name, and said, "We have two rooms." And the guy said, "Just a minute," and he went over and looked in the computer, and he came back, and he said, "Oh, sir, I am so sorry. We only have one room." Well, I do not know about you, but at that age, we were not the slightest bit interested in sleeping in the same room together. So Tom looked at me, and said – he never did this – he said, "Do something!" So, I said to the clerk, "Well, do something." And he said, "Sir, well, I will tell you what we can do for you. We have one room here in the lodge, and then we have another room in a tee-pee down in the village." So I've always kind of thought of myself as the guy that stayed the night in the tee-pee down in the village.

Tom was a good friend – emphasis on friend – for thirty-seven years until the very end.

He was – I can say this because I am not on the same plane – he was very smart. He had a big brain, as Margaret implied. And Bo Cutter will talk more about that in just a minute.

However, Tom was a bit quirky. This is point number four. Henry Goldberg will talk about the quiriness of Tom Whitehead. He was a fascinating character, and I will bet no one in this room would believe that in the middle of serious moments with serious people, he once quoted Thumper's mother. I do not remember what the quote was, but we have also laughed about that forever.

I think it is safe to say that Tom was a revolutionary. And I went back to this exciting moment in my life. I was his flack. I have always been a flack for Tom Whitehead, and this job has gotten easier as the years have gone on. But back in those early days, OTP was not getting any press in this town. And one day, Howard Simons, of *The Washington Post*, famous in Watergate, called me up and said, "You know, we think your place over there ought to get some attention. So, you are going to get a call in the next couple days." I did not know Howard Simons, and I didn't know why he called, but I was relatively excited at that point, and I wasn't sure what we were going to get.

A man named Don Oberdorfer, who was a very well-known reporter for *The Washington Post*, came to visit us, sat down, and talked to Tom. And I just went back and found the column—here are just a couple of paragraphs—that Oberdorfer wrote on November 7th, 1971 and you can compare it with what happened. "Most people in this capital have never heard of him and his burgeoning staff of fifty-five working under presidential auspices. The chances are, though, that this little-known unit will be far more important to the future of communications in this country than Spiro Agnew, or many other well-chronicled figures. The rise of Tom Whitehead and his Office of Telecommunications Policy is an intriguing example of the growth of presidential power." Last sentence, "In this case, the flow of power to the White House has been brought about by a staff-age mastery of technology, his free-swinging style, and the failure of other institutions to keep pace with the times." That was, again, November of 1971, and I can remember how excited I was when that showed up in *The Washington Post*.

Tom was non-ideological. It is very important, looking back, that this particular point be made, and who made it better a couple of days ago in *The Washington Post*, than Henry Geller, a terrific guy who Tom liked a lot, who was the former FCC general counsel, and

subsequently, Jimmy Carter's top telecommunications advisor. Tom Whitehead, Geller said, "Changed the entire landscape of television in the United States, and throughout the world. He stopped the FCC cold, which was still promoting COMSAT as a domestic monopoly. Satellite service became more competitive allowing such companies as RCA and Hughes to achieve greater innovation more cheaply." Tom always, with us, talked about more choice, a multiplicity of voices. He never wanted to shut anybody down. He just wanted more people to have a chance to be heard in this country and I think he achieved this.

Tom was controversial. One of my favorite moments was on a Monday morning when I got up very early to read the paper. I had leaked a story. Tack Nail is here today, and God knows I leaked a number of stories to him over the years. But I leaked this particular story to Jack Carmody, who turned out to be a good friend of Tom's later on. And the story became a headline on Monday morning in *The Post*. It said, "Nixon's Top Radio T.V. Advisor Would Drop the Fairness Doctrine. President Nixon's top advisor on radio and television says the Fairness Doctrine has caused so much chaos and confusion that it should be abolished." Here is what you need to know. Tom got a call that day – or maybe I did – from Chuck Colson, who was furious because that White House – we were always walking down the fine line trying to manipulate between the Nixon White House, and the Congress – did not want the Fairness Doctrine abolished. The White House wanted to use it as a tool to get what they wanted out of the television networks. And in 1987 the Fairness Doctrine, thank goodness, was abolished.

Finally, Tom – and they say this about a lot of people, but Tom was a patriot. And here is what I mean by patriot. When we were winding down – I had left the Office of Telecommunications Policy in April of '74, but Tom was going to ride it out. He knew that Richard Nixon was not going to survive. And in our offices, Tom had made room for Jerry Ford's best friend, Phil Buchen. Jerry Ford wanted Phil Buchen in this town because he did not know what was going to happen, but he wanted somebody to be the eyes and ears for Jerry Ford around town. So Phil Buchen was housed in our offices. Tom went to him many months before Richard Nixon resigned, and he said, "Phil, this man is not going to make it, and when it happens, you're going to be called on for a lot of advice." He said, "I do not want you to tell me yes or no. Don't even respond to me. I am going to form a secret group that will meet and prepare a large document for you to give to Jerry Ford when and if the time comes." And Tom, and the four people that met weekly in the dining room in the basement of

Margaret and Tom's house on 28th Street in Georgetown, put ideas together, put recommendations together. And he handed it to Phil Buchen several days before the President resigned. And Tom said one thing to Phil, and those of you who were in this room will get a kick out of this. He said, "Now, once you've done this, don't pass up the important chance to hand it to Jerry Ford in person. Do not take a chance of handing it to someone else, either, because he'll never see it." So Phil Buchen, on the morning of August 9th, 1974, got in Jerry Ford's limousine, and rode to Jerry Ford's house in Alexandria, and handed him Tom Whitehead's prepared document.

As I said, this was just a start, in those early years, to a hugely successful life that got better and better. Now Bo Cutter.

W. Bowman Cutter III

Tom Whitehead: Reflections

[Despite the many similarities in the eulogies you hear from the three of us, Margaret didn't coordinate this.]

I want to start and end with that really wonderful image of Tom in *The Washington Post* obituary: there is ole Tom swinging on the struts of a satellite dish, looking out to the rest of his life with that smile that means he is about to demolish your argument – and get this – with his suit jacket buttoned. But, Margaret, thanks for running that picture and giving us the picture that captures Tom so perfectly. Except – Tom was never buttoned down.

I want to talk about airplanes, and politics, and hiking, and bluegrass, and Boggle, and dogs, and cars, and telecommunications, and porch sitting, and beer. But I'm mostly talking about Margaret and Tom; and I'm mostly talking to Clay, and Abigail and Margaret.

When you are young and you lose a close friend, you lose the possibilities – all of the “might have beens.” But when you are our age and a close friend, or a husband, or a father, leaves, you lose the real stuff – you lose Tom, the fully realized grown up. And that doesn't say it quite right. The other thing that “no man is an island” means is that we are all defined and shaped significantly by others. But what does that mean? And how does that happen? Well, in my case with Tom, by more than thirty years of unfinished conversation.

I met Tom in the fall of 1972, when he headed the Office of Telecommunications Policy in the Nixon White House. He was thirty-four. I met Brian and Henry at the same meeting. I was there to talk about cable television, but what I remember talking about is Highland County, Virginia. Tom had decided he wanted to live there and typically he had learned all the stats: the population, acreage, and the bear-to-people ratio. I, on the other hand, had actually been there. Somehow we moved from Highland County to bluegrass music to the Shamrock Bar, now long gone, and the Country Gentleman Band. Tom thought their song, “Ahab the Arab,” should be in the bluegrass pantheon.

On that basis alone, we'd have become close friends.

But the world kept turning. And the girl who became my wife, Abigail Donald Tiller Cutter, turned out to have been Margaret Whitehead's college roommate and life-long closest friend. And so, for the next thirty-five years, we were never very far apart. I talked with

Tom when he was helping to plan Jerry Ford's transition to the Presidency; he helped me when I went into the Carter White House. When the Whiteheads moved to California, Abbie went out regularly to see Margaret and with Margaret once shot a rattlesnake with Tom on the phone giving instructions. I stayed with the Whiteheads and heard Tom on the subject of coyotes in the Los Angeles canyons. We talked about Hughes and the revolution that Tom had in mind. We talked about his little know skateboard venture and the revolution he had in mind. We talked about his path-breaking Luxembourg satellite venture and the revolution he had in mind.

And when Margaret and Tom and Abigail and Clay moved back to Virginia, we spent the next twenty years hiking, playing Boggle, arguing politics, planning business ventures, and sitting on our farm porch just talking.

Those twenty-five years of conversations formed a big part of the fabric of my life. Tom's obsession with airplanes and air shows, and his plan to buy a very small jet—which he was sure Margaret would be fine with because it had a parachute. His crystal clear memories of Alfonso, his Saint Bernard, that came out whenever he spent time with our Saint Bernard. As Tom often said, "Nothing beats a little Saint Bernard drool." His concern that he not seem disloyal to his equally beloved dog, Belle, when talking about Alfonso. His 1971 Buick Skylark and its never-ending renovation saga and never-ending costs at White Post, Virginia. His theories, last year, about thriller fiction's deeper meaning. His views on technology, finance, and why economic crashes were good things. His distrust of all big organizations. His delight in small companies. He helped me and our firm enormously by joining the board of a telecommunication technology company and being an absolutely fantastic director as he always had. His finicky views of beer and his theory of beer as the foundation of civilization. His expertise in Boggle and his pattern recognition theory – that is, who had it – Abigail and him and Margaret – sometimes – and who did not – me. In all of this, what we were actually doing doesn't stand out, it's all that talking, all of those theories and debates, that quarter-century-long conversation, all those unfinished sentences.

The warp and woof of our lives is the sum of those long unending conversations that we have with our few real friends.

And the "Tom" that came out of those conversations was the most interesting, creative and thoughtful man I've ever known. To start with, despite what's been said, he wasn't particularly silent. He had a lot to say on any number of topics. He was uniquely

broad and deep. His interests ranged over the whole map and he pursued them to completely unpredictable depths. Who else would choose to know about the design of the cockpit of a B-17? Almost every time I saw him, he had been thinking deeply about some new topic that it had never occurred to me to think about at all. He was quirky – as Brian said, it is hard to remember anything that he had a conventional or predictable view about. He had almost no edge. No underlying sarcasm, no streak of meanness. (In that by itself, he was unique in our world.) And his sense of humor was a completely unique combination and, in fact, not one that you would ever care to see replicated. It was dry and sardonic to the point of cracking. There was a fair amount of technological geek incomprehensibility and Kansas farm.

But, above all, he saw the “connectedness” of things. He was down to earth, fascinated by details, but he also saw linkages and similes and metaphors where others saw only facts. This is why he was a driving force behind three revolutions – a public policy revolution and two commercial revolutions on two continents. Only that unique blend of breadth and size of mind, of fascination with detail, and endless curiosity about the connections he saw and how they worked could have accomplished what Tom did.

That and the fact that there wasn't a lot of “quit” in him. Let me end with a story of curiosity, about how things work, and about not knowing what “quit” means that will pave the way for Henry.

Tom loved Fourth of July in Maine, of course, because of Kim and Henry, but also because of the fireworks. That's for Henry to discuss, but I'm going to talk about fuses. Tom regarded himself as a fuse expert. He was curious about how and why fuses worked. He thought and worried about his firework fuse responsibilities to Henry – responsibilities that he continued to exercise through this Fourth of July – twenty-six days ago, thanks to his will and Margaret's.

I saw Tom last about ten days after July Fourth, when there was clearly not a lot of time left. Tom, Abigail, Clay, Margaret and I just talked. Tom was tired but completely articulate. And what did he choose in large measure to be completely articulate about? His July Fourth fuses, how well they worked, how pleased he was with some innovation he had dreamed up, how proud he was of Clay as his fuse assistant, and what he intended to try next.

So I will leave Tom there, seeing him as I prefer to, swinging on that satellite dish, thinking about how something works and what he is going to try next, and right on the edge of thirty wonderful years of friendship and conversation.

Henry Goldberg

Fireworks

Bowman gave you a little hint of Tom's love for fireworks. I know the whole story and have the scars to prove it.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Tom had a passion for fireworks. Some of you know that, for the past fifteen years, Tom & Margaret spent the Fourth of July with us in Maine. Each Fourth, Tom bought fireworks – in increasing quantities – and planned and executed elaborate fireworks shows – patriotic displays he called them.

In many ways the fireworks extravaganzas reflected some deep-seated elements of Tom's character.

First, there was the downright criminality – Tom had an outlaw streak. Fireworks are illegal in Maine, transporting them is illegal, probably buying them is illegal; yet, every year Tom bought them, arranged for their transport, and fired them off – all flouting the law. He was no respecter of laws that made no sense – whether the D.C. government's ban on kite flying or broadcasting's so-called Fairness Doctrine. His usual course was to change these laws, all for the better.

Second, there was the destructive quality of fireworks that appealed to him – and destructive they were. There was the time that they were stored on the porch of my wife Kim's studio and somehow the studio caught fire and then burned to the ground. I'm not saying that the fireworks were the cause of the fire – the insurance company is still investigating – all I'm saying is that Tom *enjoyed* the fire and, when it reached the fireworks, it was the best show we ever had – one that he longed to recreate. He also delighted in destroying outmoded telecom regulatory structures and unleashed any number of disruptive and destructive new technologies on them – satellites being the principal one. The new structure was always an improvement – even Kim's new studio is better than the one that was destroyed.

Third, was the danger. Not that fireworks are inherently dangerous – Margaret – but he went out of his way to make them so. Fuses burning too slowly? Let's douse them with gasoline. I finally talked him down to Sterno and he was disappointed with the result and with me. An errant rocket sets off the box of spare rockets to create an explosion that people

are still in awe of years later? Let's find a way to do it on a *sort of* controlled basis next year. That crazy courage in the face of danger also characterized Tom's business ventures – like taking on the media and banking establishment in Europe to risk all on the Astra venture that eventually created a controlled explosion of choice and value for Europe, and then for the world at large.

Lastly, there was the joy – the pure childlike joy of being in the midst of fire and noise in the darkness at night, and the chaos of 32,000 firecrackers exploding in under two minutes – Tom's favorite – and the danger and the criminality and his stubborn resolve despite the cautious tut-tutting of the womenfolk. Tom felt that joy in fireworks and in his life; and, in the end, last Fourth of July, he brought it all back to Maine for the last time for all of us to share. The joy he took in his family and his love for them and for us his friends. And we matched it for him.

I wanted to end my remarks with a fireworks display here, but St. John's would not let me set fireworks off in here – go figure – but, instead, the next time you're in one of those ground-shaking, sky-stabbing, Kansas-type lightning and thunder storms, please think of Tom Whitehead and all that he meant to us.

Reverend Edward O. Miller Jr.

Yesterday afternoon at five o'clock, at about the time that Tom's ashes came to us, the warning sounds went off on our fire alarm, so maybe we should have thought something was up.

Oh, God, in whom we live and move and have our being . . . that is the opening phrase in a wonderful prayer that fits this moment precisely because it binds together life and God. We've heard in four eloquent testimonies about how Tom lived and moved and had his being from four people who knew and loved him. Our printed program this morning creates a somewhat artificial distinction by listing Reflections followed, as a separate category, by a homily – these words. It would suggest that now that we've heard how he lived and moved and had his being, we can move on to the spiritual. And that would, in turn, suggest that we turn now to thinking spiritually as if it were separate from thinking about life.

But as the prayer begins, we live and move and have our being in God. I speak this morning as both friend and priest, which puts me at the intersection we all find ourselves at at this very moment, the crosscurrents of life and faith. We are not the first people to find ourselves in this place, nor will we be the last, and that is why Paul wrote and handed down to us, as he did to the Corinthians, in the words we heard a few minutes ago. The Corinthians were preoccupied with elite gossip as Tom might have put it; that is, the more sophisticated they grew, the more spiritual they became by separating the spirit from the rest of life, and condemning the notion of the resurrection, or the connection between spirit and flesh. Paul was admonishing them through this discourse on the resurrection to see life as a whole and to see that the spirit and the body are one, and more especially, they are one in and with God, the God in whom we live and move and have our being.

It was clear to me, although at first implicit when I first met him, that Tom valued wrestling with that connection between life and faith and both the certainty and the conviction of it, but also the mystery of it. He and Margaret have been for years regular in church attendance. Unlike some people, they come at different times and sometimes they change locations in the seats they choose. But I could always tell where they were and knew that, in looking at Tom and Margaret, they were both engaged and thinking, considering what was going on thoughtfully, even if Tom said relatively little after the service at the door.

But I will always remember one particular occasion when they came for worship a year ago last – this past Ash Wednesday. Tom and Margaret were here for our early morning seven o'clock service on Ash Wednesday and afterwards we ended up in the parking lot together and realized we had not had breakfast. Talk turned to what we would do about that; fasting even on Ash Wednesday was not in my plan and didn't seem to be in theirs either. So, after discussing the possibility of going to the McLean Family Restaurant, a local place that needs no explanation for local residents and is indescribable for the uninitiated out-of-town people, Margaret quickly suggested breakfast at their house. I was hungry enough that I quickly accepted, but Tom was apprehensive and not at all certain that this was a good idea. He knew better than any of us, though we all know it, that the Whitehead kitchen does not have a drive-through window, and that fast food for takeout is not ever part of Margaret's plan. But Margaret was insistent. So, off we went, and the coffee was brewed to perfection, the toast crisp, the silver and china put on the table, lest the ambience be subpar in any way.

But Tom was ready to move on. Now some of that was due to apprehension. They were due at the airport for yet another medical appointment in New York. And I know he was anxious for many good reasons: making the plane, knowing that it took him longer to get to the plane, dealing with the appointment, wrestling with decisions that they would need to make. But the sequence of the morning has stayed with me as an example, not just about apprehension, but about looking forward to embracing the day's events. And that's how I came to understand and appreciate that indelible connection between Tom's life and faith.

We began that day in prayer, grounded in God, right in this space. We nourished bodies and souls briefly with food and friendship. And then we all moved on with Tom's sense of urgency to embrace what the day would bring. And they all fit together. And Tom displayed that morning his usual sense of calm, gentle determination and trust.

It was clear that morning, even without words of description, that in God Tom lived and moved and had his being. I experienced that more in the background with Tom until relatively recently. Several weeks ago, we arranged to have communion in the hospital – Tom, Margaret, Abigail, Clay, and me. In just over thirty-five years of ordained ministry, I have celebrated communion countless times in hospital rooms. But this was the first time that everyone in the room knew the words by heart, said them together, and never faltered. I have never had that kind of a religious experience before and may never again. The service was ingrained in their lives and was a natural part of the rhythm of the day.

Just a few days before Tom died, we gathered again in another hospital room for prayer. Margaret said that Tom knew the Lord's Prayer in Greek. This time, he was on his own. I looked around blankly, no one else volunteered anything, but we paused for a while, and then with words clearly on his lips but barely audible, and clearly in his mind and on his heart, he said the Lord's Prayer in Greek and never faltered. In those moments, anyone with him could see that Tom, in body, the mystery that Paul proclaimed, that even death has been swallowed up in victory, as Isaiah put it, and Paul appropriated. That's the intersection of life and faith, the revelation that, in God, we live and move and have our being.

When the people of Israel lifted their eyes to the hills, they were casting their gaze, not on a place but on a presence. And they used those words in a psalm we said earlier this morning. Their help was not in the hills themselves, but in God who was far beyond their sight, but present in their hearts. The physical act of lifting up their eyes was, at the same time, a spiritual act of trusting in God. So now we entrust Tom to God, the God in whom he and we live and move and have our being in this life and in the mystery of the life to come, knowing as Tom knew, that in the Lord, our labor is not in vain. Thanks be to God, who gives us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This service, in the midst of grief and sorrow, is a service of thanksgiving. And, so, we continue that theme of thanksgiving by standing to sing our next hymn, "Now Thank We All Our God," with three verses focusing on thanksgiving, prayer, and praise. Hymn 397.

