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Today's Letter of Hope is written by Karen Etherington

### **God is Good**

*"God is good, all the time...and all the time, God is good"*  
from song lyrics by Don Moen

Friends,

I grew up in a two story yellow brick farmhouse with four generations of family members living in it. My parents and siblings, my father's parents and his grandfather. My Great grandfather Reverend Charles Down, was born on a farm in the municipality of South Huron. One of nine children, he was a good student and was ordained as a Methodist minister in 1908. He and his wife Bertha had their first church in Conquest, Saskatchewan. I like to believe that his "call" was strong, because this was during the depression years. I know from my parents that he went without wages when the congregation could not pay. He would instead take donations of groceries and coal for the stove, or dinner invitations in lieu of wages. I remember hearing that he would cut insoles out of cardboard to fit into his shoes that had holes in their soles. At some point the family moved to Gobles, Ontario. They had two children, my grandmother and her brother.

By the time I was born, he was retired, widowed and living with us. Ours was a mixed farming operation that kept everyone busy. As a young girl I was lucky to have a great grandfather with time to share. Stories and love of nature that he shared with me, during our walks around the farm, through the bush lot, and by the river lead me to believe, like he did, that "God is good, all the time.

That is why, when our church family was planning to cover church services for a time, I believed that I could take a green cathedral service. I felt that I could honour the memory of my great grandfather. I was in possession of some of his resource books, and his bible, so maybe I could write something. Methodist teachings, I learned, are pretty dry, compared to the lessons and teaching we/I have become accustomed to in the United Church. I have tried to find directions in them and struggled.

What I did learn from him and what I truly believe is that "God is good, all the time...and all the time, God is good". 2020 has been a challenging year for us all. Yet, we are not the first generation to experience hardships. We can endure. Reverend Down taught me to appreciate all that God has done. To really see the beauty of nature all around us. His bible, and his resource books have hand written notes in the margins, passages underlined in red ink and within parentheses. Rather than mess them up, it makes them real to me. When I attend church in person and yes, even on Zoom, I feel the presence of not only my great grandfather, but also

of his daughter, who was my Nan, organist, and someone who also taught me a great many life lessons.

Tracey Whitson-Bahro, one time worship leader in Dashwood, and also at Thames Road- Elimville United Church, was a big fan of the God is good mantra. We repeated the words "God is good, all the time...and all the time God is good" on a regular basis. It's a really good daily reminder, especially now as we navigate this global pandemic, and I think my great grandfather would approve.

Grace to you and peace,

**Karen**

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*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.  
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

