BIRTHDAY OFFERING SPEECH

FOR

TAMMIE ANDERSON

Hello everyone. “People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.” A couple of weeks ago as I began to prepare for tonight, thoughts raced through my head as I asked myself, “What is the message I want to share? What will really mean something to this group?” As is usually the case when I “think too much”-and I am sure you can **ALL** relate, I began to question who I am, what I do, how I contribute value to this community and beyond, who am I to place myself here…. you know ladies…. I think we’re all alike in that respect!! And then I came across those powerful words from the psychologist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, and I had my answer. Although Kubler-Ross focused her life’s work on researching near death situations, her work and words shine a light on what it really means to be **ALIVE**. Those voices in our heads; those feelings in our guts, are our inner light. As we listen to them, they lead us to light the way for others.

Back in February, when Millie asked me to speak to all of you, and I said, “Yes,” those voices inside conspired to make me doubt my commitment and my self-confidence. “Why me?? I have nothing to give…what is it about **MY** life that gives me the experience to share with these wonderful, giving, accomplished women?” And then I found that quote, realized that self-doubt was a part of who I am, but it doesn’t have to be a big part, I thanked those voices for sharing, and realized that I had discovered the light within me that wants to shine so that all of **OUR** light can be reflected.

To all of the members of Presbyterian Women here tonight, as I stand before all of you, I am dazzled by the brilliance of your collective light. You shine every day, more than you know, and your families, friends, and community feel it. You may not always get the acknowledgement for all that you do, but believe me, your dedication and devotion as nurturers makes a tremendous difference in the lives of so many. You give of yourselves and work tirelessly to bring out the best in others. All of you that are “lunch buddies” are sharing your light with children that really need and welcome a positive influence in their lives. To you it may be an hour or two, but to these kids, the impact is unimaginable. We have no idea the conditions some children may be subjected to, but the fact that you care enough to pay attention to them, share with them, and give them an opportunity to see that the world can be bright and tasty, is really priceless. Your gestures can literally save lives. The way in which you dedicate yourselves so that others may realize their uniqueness and how that can be used to glorify the kingdom is really an inspiration and I am proud to stand with all of you. Although at times we may question who we are and what we do, just know this. You are in this room because you know you have a voice and a hand to share. **YOU** have self-selected and have placed yourselves in the service of others. Always keep that thought close to your heart and there will be no need for you to question your purpose.

Each one of you dedicates whatever you can to bringing out the best in others, whether it’s for your family, friends, or those in serious need. You’ve been there for the single mother, jobless with seemingly little hope for finding her light to guide her children. You’ve taken the time to reach out and provide what was really needed. Those acts of kindness are Christ working through you and your light, and I am sure you have witnessed that your gestures can create miracles for others. You are making a difference here in Clover and that will ultimately impact the world and the future. Each gesture is like a stone being cast on a lake. Watch what happens as the impact makes ripples that spread far and wide. This year the Presbyterian Women have a goal to raise $500,000 for the birthday offering, and that will go to the Westminster Neighborhood Ministries in Indianapolis. This organization reaches out to marginalized families and at risk youth in the Near Eastside area of Indianapolis, a community where **30%** of the population lives at or below the poverty line. The families in this area struggle daily with poverty, stress, illiteracy, joblessness and hunger. The programs of Westminster build on three core principles:

* Provide needed services to all members of the family.
* Develop partnerships
* Teach families and children to become more self-sustaining.

They need to be guided to find their inner light as individuals and as a community. The families involved with this organization are not there by choice. Many are born into families with unspeakable challenges. Our birthday offering recipient works with families to find the issues, rehabilitate the circumstances, and provide the support needed to place each person on the road to practice healthy, life affirming habits and self-sustainability, and that will in turn create stable home environments that work to break vicious and dysfunctional cycles.

The 2013 PW Birthday Offering scripture comes from Romans 15: 2,6

“Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor...so that together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In this scripture, we are reminded that we are not alone, and if our neighbors are needy, then so are we. Remember, find your light of compassion so that it can shine and guide your neighbor to see his or her way to become who God created them to be.

To all of my fellow Presbyterian Women, you are an inspiration. We are all deeply aware of the pressures that life places on each one of us, and I know that each one of you have personal challenges. In spite of that you still find the way to give of your time, resources and faith, and the world is a better place for your contributions. To some, it may seem like there’s always something we need that we don’t have, but in truth, with God’s guidance, we are all very blessed. To be able to give to the Westminster Ministries whatever you can spare is an even greater blessing, and your selflessness gives someone in need a light and a life.

Thank you all and God Bless you.