

Beacon of Light

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"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12



Pastor's Corner

"A Christmas Witness of Favor"

"In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.'" (Luke 1:39-42)

It's seldom that we give Elizabeth our full attention in our re-telling of the Christmas story. When we do, it's often only as the mother of John the Baptist; or relative of Mary, the mother of Jesus; or wife of Zechariah, the prophet. But Elizabeth is much more than any of these traditional labels used to define her. She is, herself, a descendant of Aaron, the first high priest of the Israelites and Moses' brother. **(Luke 1:5b)** But more importantly, in the biblical narrative of the Christmas story, Elizabeth is the first "human" to give witness to the miracle of God now being nurtured in Mary's womb.

Elizabeth has been prepared for this role as witness bearer by her own experience of God's generous gift of favor. The child Elizabeth is carrying in this sixth month of her pregnancy, is evidence itself of the miraculous activity of God, promised to Elizabeth and her husband Zechariah in their advanced age by the same angel, Gabriel, who was sent to deliver word to Mary about her virgin pregnancy.

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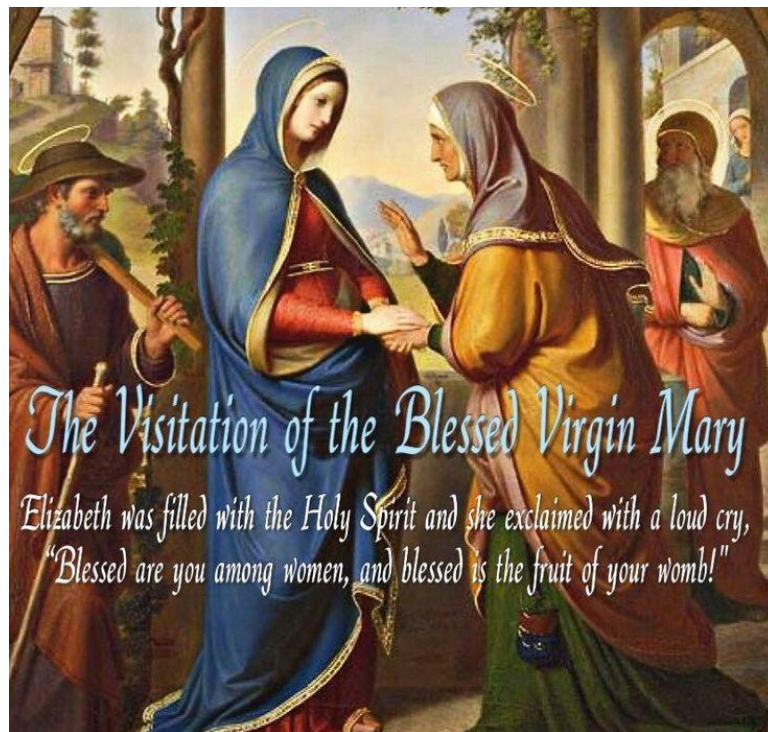
Pastor's Corner *(continued from page 1)*

Elizabeth, therefore, has preceded Mary in her experience of God's favor. For this reason, she has already been primed and prepared to bear witness to the favor and glory of God whenever and wherever she encounters it. **"When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.'" (Luke 1:41-42)**

In this holy season of Advent, we are not unlike Elizabeth, the first human to bear witness to the favor and glory of God: conceived by the Holy Spirit, manifested in the flesh, and born of a virgin mother. Like Elizabeth, perhaps we, too, have been appropriately primed and prepared by the evidence of God's favor in our own lives such that we can now recognize and bear witness to it whenever and wherever we encounter it. When we do so, we will have done our part to, once again, open the door for the birth of a Savior among us!

May God's special favor in Christ give you cause for celebration in this holy season of our Lord's birth and beyond!

Shalom & Season's Greetings,
Pastor Mark D. Venson



Inspirational Thoughts and Encouragement

How to Live a Life of Significance



God made you to live
a life of significance.

"Jabez was more honorable than his brothers . . . Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request."

1 Chronicles 4:9-10 (NIV)

Every human is designed for excellence. You may feel ordinary, but God made you to live a life of significance.

The Bible is filled with ordinary people who lived extraordinary lives because they believed God would work in and through them. They believed God made them for a purpose and intended for them to successfully fulfill their mission.

One example is a man named Jabez. God gave him an honorable mention in 1 Chronicles—a Bible book that includes nine chapters of genealogies. Right in the middle of that long list of names, God singles out Jabez—an ordinary guy—in two verses.

The Bible says, *"Jabez was more honorable than his brothers . . . Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request"* (1 Chronicles 4:9-10 NIV).

Those two verses give all the information we have about Jabez—but they reveal that he lived a life that was anything but average.

Jabez stands out because of three secrets to his success. We'll look at the first two today.

He had great ambition. While many people are content with being average, Jabez wanted God to do something significant through him. He didn't want to live half-heartedly; he wanted a full and meaningful life.

Jabez was ambitious, but, just as importantly, he was motivated by the right things. How do we know Jabez's motives were genuine and not selfish? Because we read, *"And God granted his request."* God will never honor an unworthy request.

Many people just drift through life. They have no goals, no master plan, and no overall purpose. As a result, they never go anywhere. If you want to live above average, dream big! You're not meant to go through life wondering, "What am I doing? Where am I going?" God wants you to have a great ambition—fueled by the desire to serve him.

He had a growing faith. Jabez had a deep trust and belief in God. There's no mention of him having any special ability or talent. The Bible doesn't say he was wealthy or educated. He was just a common man with an uncommon faith.

There is something in life that is more important than ability and talent. It's faith. I know a lot of super talented people who are sitting on the sidelines while people who have faith are making the touchdowns. Faith is believing God will work through you.

How do you break out of mediocrity? Like Jabez, you get a great ambition and a growing faith—and depend on God to do the impossible. Missionary William Carey once said, "Attempt great things for God and then expect great things from God."

Tomorrow we'll look at the third secret that made Jabez really stand out: his genuine prayer life.

Talk It Over

- What great dream or goal do you want to ask God to make a reality?
- Why do your motives behind reaching a goal or dream matter so much?
- Do you rely more on your abilities and talents to reach your goals—or on God? What step can you take today to show greater dependence on God?

THE SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFE IS GIVING GOD:

- 1. The first part of your day*
- 2. The first priority to every decision*
- 3. The first place in your heart*

KIDZ CORNER



Taking a Walk

Taking a walk is so much fun.
We don't hurry;
we don't run.
We watch for birds; we watch
for bees.
We look for all the falling leaves.
By Mary Jackson Ellis



CALENDAR OF FUN

PAST

Annual Hullabaloo Harvest Party: We hope everyone enjoyed themselves at the virtual **Hullabaloo Harvest Party** that was held on Friday, October 29th!!! We enjoyed several games including Kahoot and Bible Trivia. We also did a Scavenger Hunt and danced the night away!!

FUTURE

Children's Sabbath Day Christmas Program: The official Children's Sabbath Day is celebrated in October; however, we were not able to celebrate the special day in October. With that, we decided to celebrate Children's Sabbath along with our annual **Christmas Program** in December. The virtual Program is planned using Zoom for Sunday, December 19th at 3:30 PM.

Virtual Sunday School Bursts into Fall!!!

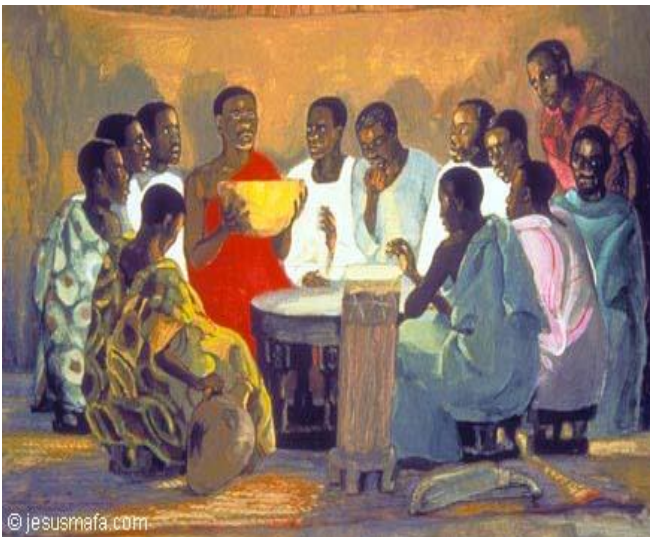
During the months of October, November, and December, the Children's Sunday School focused on the life of times of Jesus and his 12 disciples. We learned the names of all the disciples and read several bible stories highlighting the lessons and adventures of the disciples.

First 12 Disciples

Simon-Peter	John	Matthew	Simon
Andrew	Phillip	Thomas	Judas Isacriot
James	Bartholomew	James	Thaddeus



We learned about the Great Commission located in Matthew 28:19-20 where Jesus instructed his disciples how they are to live and spread the "Good News"!!



Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20
Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus walks on top of the water



Faith in Action and obeying God

Matthew 14:28

Lord if it is you, “Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water.”

Come, Jesus said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But then he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, Lord save me.

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.

Jesus calms the Storm

Matthew 8:23

- Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat.
- But Jesus was sleeping.
- The disciples went and woke him, saying Lord save us!! We are going to drown!
- He replied, “You of little faith why are you so afraid?”
- The he got up and rebuked the winds and the wave, and it was completely calm.



Jesus Taught Us How to Pray!!!

The Disciples asked
Jesus. . . .



Luke 1:11

“And it came to pass,
that, as he was **praying**
in a certain place,
when he finished, one
of his disciples said
unto him,
Lord, teach us to pray”



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done.
On Earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory
for ever.
Amen



At the end of **every** virtual Sunday School class, we always pray for our church, families, friends, the country, and the world.

Submitted by Sis. Terri Ware, Bro. Aaron Ware, and Sis. Taylor Ware



Letter from Rev. Evelyn Manson

Rev. Venson says, "WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER"

This is so true of our Ebenezer Family. Touching base is what we do. I would like to take this opportunity to share our togetherness.

We take the telephone for granted. What a special tool for reaching out to each other. I would like to take this opportunity to share how you share with me. What a blessing you are to me and my family. Throughout the Pandemic, so many have reached out to me personally.

Sis. Carolyn Winbush awakens me some mornings as early as 3:00 am with a prayer. And it comes just at the time when I'm tossing and turning. What a way to start the day. My daughter and I both share this special blessing.

Sis. Ina shares a prayer from one that she receives. I look forward to this daily and wonder why it hasn't arrived after a certain amount of time during the day. Of course, she is good at texting; but I'm always glad to hear her voice. I share with her as I do my off springs. "I need to hear your voice."

Sis. Shirley White is my therapist!! I have to clear my meeting date, and how much is my bill. Usually I am excused, "this time." So refreshing is the sharing of the White household and especially **Bella**. Her school life, church involvement and other activities (brings out the teacher in me). But mostly living alone just talking and sharing gives me a lift. Thanks Shirley.

Juanita Williams and I just have a glorious time sharing how our daughters are the parents and we the children. Juanita expresses, "I don't say nothing. I just keep my mouth shut."

Speaking of bossing, when my daughter walks in, the first thing she does is open the refrigerator. She opened it last week and to her surprise she saw a carton of Egglands Best. "At last, you are beginning to buy some decent eggs. I'm concerned about your health." I chuckled to myself then shared with her that I called **Sis. Tisdale** while she was shopping at Giant. I shared with Sis. Tisdale, I needed some eggs. She bought and brought to me Egglands Best (a large carton). I always bought what was on sale. When I questioned her, she said "This is what I would have bought for myself." Reminding me that we shouldn't give any less to another than we would to and for ourselves. I told Sis. Tisdale this is your responsibility each month.

Sis. Ann Seymour informed me that eating an egg and a piece of toast would be good for my diet and help to keep my stomach settled. Thus, I keep eggs in my refrigerator. Thanks Ann.

Sis. Bernadette Miller makes herself available for doctor visits. Yes! She has that military stance. "Hello Rev. Manson. Just want to confirm your appointment time and pick up time. See you then." Graciously caring as I get in and out of her vehicle.

Sis . Pearl Stemley informs me regularly of her medical condition and her doctor's appointments. But mostly she speaks of her husband and his comfort and joy of eating. {Truly eating is comforting!} At least I think so.

Sis. Naomi Jones "Okay Ms. Manson What's Up?" We travel the journey of Thursday Night Prayer Meeting. Mostly she shares her health and how much her family supports her. Sure to have a meal ready for husband Cleveland when he reaches home in the afternoon. (Keeping it all real)!!

Brother Larry Wilson shares regularly his medical condition and doctor's appointments. Reminding and thanking me for all of our need for added prayers. I tell him don't pray for me. I think He just really calls to get a laugh which is healing in itself. (Jesus had a sense of wit while He was on this earth). How I enjoy hearing from you Brother Wilson.

Sis Tina Brown just calls. Whenever she is not too busy. I smile at the sound of her voice. She has so much to share. So much of her life is focused on God and all of His children. I love it when she praises me. I just get so ready to receive her call. Thanks, Tina, for making my day.

I receive many calls from my Ebenezer family. Many calls just to ask, "How are you doing. Been thinking about you. " Some are daily.

Sis. Helen Plater - "Just hanging in there Evelyn!"

Sis. Anne Peterson - "Still holding on!"

Many, many Other Ebenezer Family touch base.

Thank you for your calls, cards, and prayers.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

Submitted by Rev. Manson



Ebenezer United Methodist Women Held Its First Virtual "Hallelujah" Tea



On October 24, the United Methodist Women at Ebenezer UMC Lanham held their first-ever virtual "Hallelujah" tea. With sixty participants, including our pastor, Reverend Mark Venson, a good time was had by all. This event was the brainchild of Falvia Coleman, Stephanie Hazell, Avis Jenkins, Linda Jones, Victoria Jones, Eddimae Tisdale (Chairperson), and Edith Wright, who never wavered for a minute that it would be successful, especially with the hand of our God on it.

Our sister, Stephanie served as Mistress of Ceremonies, and kept the event going smoothly. The event was a celebration of tea and we learned so

much about this beverage: its history, cultivation, myriad varieties and even how it played a major role in a war between China and England.

Fun was also interjected. A video was shown on how your choice of a teapot (cast iron, ceramic, porcelain, etc.) was a reflection of your personality.

Attendees played two rounds of bingo, with squares that had tea-related items rather than numbers. A total of 19 raffle, bingo and door prizes were awarded. Each attendee was presented with a "goody" bag filled with tea bags, tea drops, pastries, cookies, including a custom-made cookie with the United Methodist Women logo. Tea accoutrements (sugar, lemon juice, creamer, honey, spoon) were also part of the package. Small gifts were also included.



A special moment was dedicated to our life-time members who are no longer active in the unit: Anne Peterson, Sally Parks, and Edna Pittmon. Each was given an opportunity to address attendees.

So enjoyable was this "Hallelujah" tea that we look forward to another at some future date.



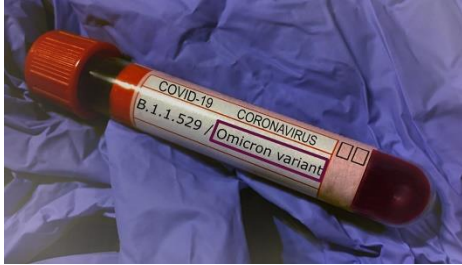
Submitted by Sis. Bernadette Bailey



Keeping You Informed

3 Things to Know About the Omicron Variant

The latest coronavirus strain is causing alarm. Here's how to protect yourself
by Rachel Nania, *AARP*, December 1, 2021



In a matter of days, a new coronavirus variant has gone from unknown to one of concern, putting the world on high alert and snarling global travel in the process.

Omicron, as it's called, has been linked to a rise in COVID-19 cases in South Africa, and has since popped up in the United States and 20 other countries, including England, France and Japan.

Scientists are racing to learn more about the new strain, including how quickly it spreads and whether it can cause more severe disease.

Here's what we know so far about omicron — plus tips for keeping yourself safe as it spreads.

A multitude of mutations makes it stand out

Viruses change and evolve as they circulate, so variations of the original version are expected. "You might think of it as a new cousin in the family," says William Schaffner, M.D., a professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

Omicron, however, has what top infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci, M.D., calls "a very unusual constellation of changes" compared to previous coronavirus strains.

Delta — the variant that rose to dominance over the summer and is now responsible for more than 99 percent of new COVID-19 cases in the U.S. — has about 10 mutations on the all-important spike protein part of the virus, says Egon Ozer, M.D., an assistant professor at Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine and director of the Center for Pathogen Genomics and Microbial Evolution in the Havey Institute for Global Health.

Omicron, on the other hand, has more than 30 mutations on the spike protein alone, and around 50 in total. "This is not delta," Fauci emphasized in a recent news briefing. "It's something different."

Omicron could be more dangerous than previous variants

It's too early to say what all these mutations mean, but studies underway should provide some answers in a few weeks.

Coronavirus Variants of Concern

The World Health Organization (WHO) named omicron a “variant of concern” on Nov. 26 — a classification reserved for variants that have been associated with increased transmissibility, more severe disease or reduced effectiveness of available diagnostics (treatments, vaccines, tests, etc.). It joins four others on WHO’s list:

- Alpha, designated Dec. 18, 2020
- Beta, designated Dec. 18, 2020
- Gamma, designated Jan. 11, 2021
- Delta, designated May 11, 2021
- Omicron, designated Nov. 26, 2021

Source: World Health Organization

One concern experts have is that the variant could be more contagious. Fauci said that some of omicron’s mutations have been associated with increased transmissibility (meaning it may spread more easily). That could explain why South Africa experienced a sudden surge in new cases of COVID-19 after a recent lull, Ozer says.

“They quickly realized that a large number of these new cases were not due to the delta variant, as had been the case earlier in the year, but were more due to a new variant that had not been seen before,” he says. What’s more, people who already had COVID-19 seem to be getting reinfected with omicron more easily, the World Health Organization notes.

Another worry is that all of the changes on omicron’s spike protein could make it more resistant to current COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, since these therapies target that unique feature. Experts are also trying to understand whether omicron causes more severe symptoms than other forms of the virus — a particular concern for people already at high risk for complications from COVID.

Masks, vaccines and boosters are key

Public health experts say omicron's arrival in the U.S. doesn't change the best measures of protection — the ones they have been encouraging all along.

“I don't think that this changes the fundamentals of what we know works for protecting against transmission of the virus. I don't think that this is necessarily going to make masks less effective; it's not going to make social distancing less effective. These are the things that are tried and true,” Ozer says.

With winter here, it’s also important to avoid poorly ventilated spaces and crowded indoor settings, both of which give the virus more of an opportunity to spread.

A booster shot, if you haven’t had one already, will enhance your protection against COVID — even if it turns out that omicron diminishes a degree of vaccine effectiveness. That’s because the vaccines don’t just zero in on one part of the spike protein, they target multiple parts of it, “and so loss of effectiveness against one part of this spike protein may not affect antibodies that have been developed

against other parts," Ozer says. And what a booster shot does is give those antibodies some extra oomph.

With a high enough antibody level, hand in hand with "other elements of the immune response," Fauci said, "there's every reason to believe" the vaccines will continue to be able to keep people from getting severely ill from omicron and other variants.

Plus, let's not forget that the variant that has a hold on the U.S. isn't omicron; it's delta, and it's still causing about 1,000 deaths a day, mostly among unvaccinated individuals. "And these vaccines are very effective against delta," Schaffner says. "So there are two reasons to make sure that we're vaccinated and boosted."

Need help getting a COVID-19 vaccine or booster?

Visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) or call 1-800-232-0233 (TTY: 888-720-7489) for assistance in English, Spanish, and many other languages.

Health officials are in talks with vaccine makers about modifying their formulas to target omicron more specifically. However, it will likely be months before a tailored version is available, considering the time needed for manufacturing, testing and reviewing a new product.

COVID testing is another action that experts are encouraging as the threat of omicron looms. Rapid tests can help to quickly identify cases before they spread. And along with other precautionary measures, they can bring peace of mind to people as they gather over the holidays.

Finally: Get your flu shot. If omicron does turn out to be a more virulent version of the virus, the "last thing we want is a twindemic — an outbreak of COVID and an outbreak of flu at the same time — both hitting our hospitals simultaneously," Schaffner says.

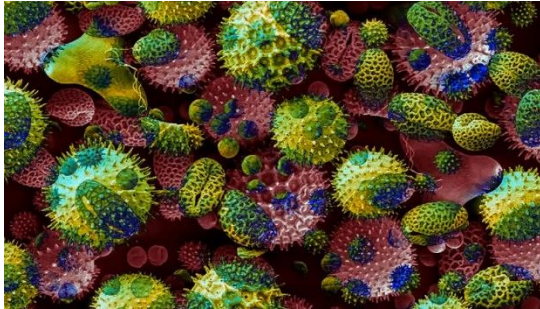
"I would just say it's time to redouble your efforts; we're not out of the woods yet," Ozer says. "I think the emergence of this variant is a sure sign of that, so we just need to keep doing the things that we need to do, which is protecting ourselves and protecting our families [and] those around us."

Rachel Nania writes about health care and health policy for AARP. Previously she was a reporter and editor for WTOP Radio in Washington, D.C. A recipient of a Gracie Award and a regional Edward R. Murrow Award, she also participated in a dementia fellowship with the National Press Foundation.



Alpha to Omicron: Why COVID-19 Variants Have Greek Names

Using letters of the alphabet to label virus mutations simplifies tracking, eases origin stigma
by Dena Bunis, AARP, November 29, 2021



Another new COVID-19 label is now on the tips of our tongues: omicron. It has emerged as the latest twist in the pandemic that the World Health Organization (WHO) has deemed a "variant of concern."

WHO is the global organization that has been tracking the pace of the pandemic and the steady stream of mutations — or variants — that have emerged over the past two

years since the original coronavirus that causes COVID-19 was identified. WHO has also been assessing what the evolution of the virus will mean for transmission and severity of the illness.

In May, WHO announced that it would begin naming variants according to the letters of the Greek alphabet. The idea was to give the variants names that would be easy for those of us who aren't scientists to understand. (Before it was dubbed omicron, scientists referred to the new variant as B.1.1.529.) Another factor that WHO weighed was a desire to eliminate any stigma attached to the country where a variant is first identified.

For example, the first variant, alpha, was initially discovered in the United Kingdom, but WHO officials didn't want to name it the British or U.K. variant.

Enter omicron, which is the 15th letter of the Greek alphabet. According to a WHO tracking page, there are currently seven "variants of interest" or "variants of concern." Not all variants rise to those worrisome levels, but they've still been given Greek letter designations. No variant has yet been deemed a "variant of high consequence," the highest threat level in the variant pecking order.

Two letters of the Greek alphabet were skipped to get to omicron: nu and xi. A WHO spokesman has said that nu would too easily be confused with "new" and that xi was skipped because it is a common family name. Xi Jinping also happens to be the name of the president of China.

Assuming WHO doesn't choose to skip over another Greek letter, the next variant is in line to be named pi.

COVID-19 Variants of Interest and Concern

Variants of Concern

- Alpha, B.1.1.7, first seen in the United Kingdom. Designated on Dec. 18, 2020.
- Beta, B.1.351, first seen in South Africa. Designated on Dec. 18, 2020.
- Gamma, P.1, first seen in Brazil. Designated on Jan. 11, 2021.
- Delta, B.1.617.2, first seen in India. Designated on May 11, 2021.
- Omicron, B.1.1.529, seen in multiple countries. Designated on Nov. 26, 2021.

Variants of Interest

- Lambda, C.37, first seen in Peru. Designated on June 4, 2020.
- Mu, B.1.621, first seen in Colombia. Designated on Aug. 30, 2021.

Source: WHO

Dena Bunis covers Medicare, health care, health policy and Congress. She also writes the "Medicare Made Easy" column for the AARP Bulletin. An award-winning journalist, Bunis spent decades working for metropolitan daily newspapers, including as Washington bureau chief for the Orange County Register and as a health policy and workplace writer for Newsday.

**How To Protect Yourself From Email Phishing Scams**

Korin Miller, *YahooLife*, October 12, 2021

Scammers launch thousands of phishing scams every day. Scammers can use your email to target you directly. And, unfortunately, plenty of email phishing scams today are more sophisticated than the older varieties that would directly ask for your banking information.

Scammers launch thousands of phishing scams every day, and they're often successful at stealing personal information from targets, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). In fact, the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center found that Americans lost a whopping \$57 million to phishing schemes in 2019 alone.

"Because of advances in graphics, the use of automation for phishing attacks and the fact that ransomware from phishing has become very profitable for cybercriminals, email phishing scams are almost a daily encounter for most users," tech and cybersecurity expert Chuck Brooks, president of Brooks Consulting International, tells Yahoo Life.

You don't have to be flying blind out there: Software like Malwarebytes Premium can help protect you from online scams and phishing schemes that are trying to steal your sensitive information. Malwarebytes Premium can also warn you if you happen to click through a phishing scheme and visit a suspicious site, as well as help block sophisticated cyberthreats that other programs can miss.

But what do email phishing scams look like, exactly? Here's what you need to know.

What do email phishing scams look like?

They're not as easy to spot as you'd think. These emails often look like they're from a company you know or trust, the FTC says. Meaning, they can look like they're coming from your bank, credit card company, a social networking site you use or your favorite streaming service.

These emails tend to try to trick you into clicking on a link or opening an attachment by telling you a story. Some examples:

- They say they've noticed suspicious activity or log-in attempts on your account
- They claim there's a problem with your account or your payment information

- They say you need to submit certain personal information
- They include a fake invoice
- They ask you to click on a link to make a payment
- They say you're eligible to register for a government refund
- They offer a coupon for free goods.

"While scammers often—intentionally—make spelling mistakes and grammatical errors in their phishing communications, they do not always do so," Joseph Steinberg, cybersecurity and emerging technologies advisor, tells Yahoo Life.

How to protect yourself against email phishing scams

The best way to protect yourself against email phishing scams is to avoid falling victim to them in the first place. "Simply never take sensitive action based on emails sent to you," Steinberg says. "If you receive a call, email or text from your credit card issuer or bank about potential fraud on your account, for example, do not address the issue based on that communication. Instead, call the credit card issuer at the official telephone number printed on the back of the relevant card."

In general, Steinberg says you should never provide sensitive information to someone who called, emailed or texted you, claiming to be from a company or brand you trust. "That party may not be who he or she claims to be," he says. "Always contact back via a known, official channel."

Brooks adds: "The bottom line is do not click on links you do not recognize and always check the address of the email sender. Be vigilant."



What Is Malware—And How Can You Protect Yourself From It

Korin Miller, September 8, 2021

There are certain cyber security terms that get thrown around a lot, and while most people have heard of them, they may be a little fuzzy about their exact meaning. Malware is one of them.

Just know this upfront: Even though you may not exactly get what malware is, it's definitely not something you want on your computer. In fact, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) calls malware one of the biggest threats to the security of your computer, tablet, phone, and other devices. Basically, malware is something you want to take seriously.

Luckily, software like Malwarebytes Premium Multi-Device can help ward off and detect malware on your computer. But, again, it's a good idea to at least know what you're trying to protect yourself against before you get all your defenses in line. So, what is malware? Here's what you need to know.

What is malware, exactly?

"Malware is an all-encompassing term that includes many forms of intentionally malicious software," Joseph Steinberg, cyber security and emerging technologies advisor, tells Yahoo Life. The term "malware" is actually a combo of the words "malicious" and "software," he explains.

Malware "is composed of a variety of delivery elements that can be used to infect [devices], including viruses, worms, trojans, ransomware, spyware, adware and other mechanisms," tech and cybersecurity expert Chuck Brooks, president of Brooks Consulting International, tells Yahoo Life.

Malware is also becoming more popular with time, Brooks points out. "Lately, malware has become a weapon of choice because it has become more profitable as hackers can encrypt and exfiltrate data and extort payments from their victims via cryptocurrencies," he says.

Why is malware so bad?

For starters, most people don't realize when they have malware. The FTC points out that it often gets secretly installed on your device. And, once it's there, criminals can use malware to do a few different, unsavory things, such as:

- Steal your sensitive information (like your bank account password)
- Send you unwanted or inappropriate ads
- Demand you pay them to unscramble data that's been encrypted by ransomware
- Make your computer vulnerable to even more malware

"People should learn the basics about them, because malware poses a serious threat to each and every user of computers and smartphones," Steinberg says.

Signs you may have malware

The FTC shares a few helpful tips that suggest you may have malware on your computer:

- It suddenly slows down, crashes or repeatedly shows error messages
- It won't shut down or restart
- It won't let you remove software
- You're getting a lot of pop-ups, inappropriate ads or ads that interfere with the content you're trying to view
- It shows ads in places you usually wouldn't see it, like government websites
- It shows new and unexpected toolbars or icons in your browser or on your desktop
- It uses a new default search engine
- It displays new tabs or websites you didn't open
- Your computer's internet home page keeps changing

- Your computer is sending emails you didn't write
- Your computer runs out of battery life faster than it should

How to protect your computer from malware

Antivirus and intrusion-detection software is key, Brooks says. Steinberg agrees. "Be sure to use security software on all of your computing devices," he says. Software like Malwarebytes Premium Multi-Device offers multi-layered, advanced security to help give you constant protection against a range of significant existing and emerging threats including malware, viruses, spyware, online scams and ransomware before they reach you.

Other advice on protecting your computer from malware, courtesy of cyber security experts:

- Don't click on links in email and text messaging unless you're expecting them
- Install firewalls
- Secure your internet routers
- Use virtual private networks (VPNs), which allow you to create a private network from a public internet connection
- If you have sensitive data, consider encrypting and backing it up
- Store your data in the cloud, where security can be managed by a provider

Of course, the best way to protect your computer from malware is to fend it off before it reaches you. Getting good antiviral software now will go a long way towards keeping you—and your data—safe now and in the future.



6 Everyday Habits That Increase Diabetes Risk **From skipping breakfast to skimping on sleep, here's what experts say really matters day-to-day**

by Kimberly Goad

While it's true that your age or a family history of diabetes can affect your chances of developing the disease, your lifestyle plays a critical role, too. In fact, you may be surprised by how much a small number of daily habits can significantly raise your risk. Keep reading to see which matter most — and how to stay out of the danger zone.

1. Skipping breakfast

There's been a lot of back-and-forth over the value of breakfast to your health. But a large review of studies published in 2019 in *The Journal of Nutrition* pretty much concluded that those who skip breakfast are at greater risk of getting diabetes than those who sit down for their oatmeal or eggs. It appears the magic isn't the meal itself but in how those who eat breakfast were able to maintain a lower body mass index (BMI).

That's likely because skipping breakfast sets you up to overeat the rest of the day, says Melinda Maryniuk, a registered dietitian and owner of Diabetes and Nutrition Consultants in Boston. "Even if you don't feel hunger pangs, you think you're entitled to more — snacks, a bigger serving — because breakfast wasn't eaten."

Not a fan of traditional breakfast foods? Keep in mind that "there are no rules about what foods need to be eaten at breakfast — choose things that are easy and you enjoy," Maryniuk says. Melted cheese in a tortilla with avocado? Sure, that can be breakfast. A high-protein smoothie made with yogurt or cottage cheese and berries? That can be breakfast, too. Just make sure you include protein and fat (egg, cheese, tofu, nut butter), as well as a fiber-rich carb like whole fruit or whole-grain toast, she adds. And coffee lovers, drink up: A large review of studies looking at more than 1 million participants suggests that every additional cup of coffee consumed in a day was associated with a 9 percent lower risk for diabetes.

2. Sitting for longer than 30 minutes at a stretch

You already know that regular exercise is key to warding off a diabetes diagnosis. That's because a half hour of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise (like brisk walking or swimming) most days of the week keeps your weight in check and improves insulin sensitivity.

What you may not know is that sitting for prolonged periods — at the computer, on the couch, behind the wheel — carries risks of its own, and that exercise doesn't offset these hazards.

In a large review of studies published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, those who reported spending the most time sitting were more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer than those who spent the least amount of time sitting. That's why the American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends everyone — even people who don't have diabetes — get up every 30 minutes and do some form of light activity.

"Many studies now show that interrupting sitting with frequent movement improves how well your metabolism works and increases insulin sensitivity," says Sheri Colberg, professor emerita of exercise science at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and author of *The 7 Step Diabetes Fitness Plan*. "Most people with prediabetes or type 2 diabetes have some degree of insulin resistance; moving frequently may lower it."

To break the sedentary habit, start by noting how much time you spend sitting. Then look for ways to reduce that amount: Set the alarm on your phone to stand up and move for a few minutes every half hour; do stretches during commercials while watching television; pace the house during phone calls.

3. Drinking more than a glass of wine or two daily

Nothing wrong with having a glass, maybe two, of wine. Research suggests doing so may even help prevent diabetes. But go beyond the one-to-two drink mark and things suddenly change. "Within limits, alcohol is linked with a number of health benefits including reduced inflammation, decreased clots and decreased insulin

resistance, which is linked to type 2 diabetes,” explains Maryniuk, who notes these gains are seen most in women and in non-Asian populations.

To reap only the rewards of a daily tippie, follow the recommendation of the ADA and other health organizations and limit consumption to no more than one drink per day (for women) and a maximum of two per day (for men). While the links between drinking a moderate amount of alcohol and reducing your risk for diabetes are not definitive, “we do know that too many calories can lead to weight gain, and carrying excess weight is a risk factor for type 2 diabetes,” Maryniuk says. “It’s easy for the plan to have ‘one drink a day for my health’ to turn into two drinks — plus cheese, crackers, chips, and dip. Before you know it, the possible health benefits have been wiped away with the additional calories and likely weight gain.”

4. Skimping on shut-eye

It isn’t the occasional bout of insomnia that wreaks havoc here. It’s the night-after-night, chronic sleep deprivation that raises your risk for diabetes. How so?

“With ongoing sleep loss, your hormone levels can get thrown out of balance,” Maryniuk say. As a result, “the body may release more stress hormones, such as cortisol, which push up blood sugar. In addition, less insulin is released after meals leading to higher blood glucose levels. These two factors over time increase blood glucose — and raise the risk of getting diabetes.”

That’s not all: Research shows that poor sleep (in terms of both quantity and quality) also increases your appetite and reduces your level of satiety, causing you to crave carbs and sweets in particular. Besides affecting insulin and blood sugar levels, which can lead to weight gain.

5. Smoking

Add this to the long list of incentives to give up cigarettes for good: Smokers are 30 to 40 percent more likely to develop diabetes than nonsmokers, and heavy smokers have an even greater risk, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Experts can’t establish a direct cause-and-effect link, given how other risk factors — like stress, diet, levels of physical activity, and distribution of body fat — are hard to separate out. But a review of studies published in a 2019 issue of *Diabetology & Metabolic Syndrome* suggests that cigarette smoking was the sole culprit in at least 25 million cases of diabetes worldwide.

Struggling to kick the habit? Talk to your doctor about what method makes sense for you. A 2020 report from the U.S. Surgeon General suggests that a combination of behavioral support, smoking cessation meds (like Chantix and Zyban) and nicotine replacement therapy (such as patches, lozenges, nasal spray and gum) may double your chances of quitting.

6. Eating processed foods

Highly processed foods — such as many cereals, deli meats and microwaveable dinners — have long been linked to an increased risk for things like cancer, depression and cardiovascular disease. Now, a study in *JAMA Internal Medicine* suggests that diabetes should be added to the list. Each 10 percent increase in the amount of ultraprocessed foods in participants’ diets was associated

with a 15 percent higher risk of developing diabetes. At least part of the reason has to do with weight gain. Researchers found that those who consumed more processed foods tended to eat more calories overall, have lower quality diets and be more likely to be obese and inactive.

“Typically, more highly processed foods don’t provide the fullness that whole foods provide,” explains Kara Mitchell, a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator at the Duke Health and Fitness Center in Durham, North Carolina. “More highly processed foods tend to correlate with higher calorie intake. Too many calories lead to excess weight; excess weight leads to increased risk of insulin resistance.”

An easy way to spot an ultra-processed food: Check the list of ingredients. If you see a long list of unpronounceable ingredients, that’s a tip-off.



Choosing the Right Long-Term Care Facility

Research location, staffing, cleanliness protocols and much more

by Lee Woodruff, *AARP*, September 14, 2021

My sisters and I were fortunate when it came to my parents’ last chapter. Before my father’s Alzheimer’s became obvious to all but my mother, they moved from the West Coast and selected a senior living facility, with step-up care, to be near their three daughters. The facility had a memory care unit, which allowed my parents to seamlessly stay in the same place, even as my father began slipping away.

While our situation was idyllic, life doesn’t work that neatly for all families. There are many more stories of frustration and despair, stories of older parents unwilling to leave their home, and grown children scrambling to figure out the appropriate next caregiving steps while working and parenting their own children. One friend recently told me that her 91-year-old parents finally sold their home. But they were unable to part with most of their possessions, so they moved into a condo because they wanted to “think about what made sense next.” That friend is ready to tear out her hair.

Looking at options

So many factors go into the decision around choosing the right living situation for older parents. And when multiple siblings are involved, it can complicate matters. For those who have ruled out home health care or living with family members, there are a bewildering number of factors in choosing a senior facility.

And while there are no one-size fits all solutions, there are important questions to ask that can help shortcut the decision-making process for all involved. Some are as basic as the size of the facility and number of beds, the cost structure and the proximity to a hospital and family. Others are more subtle, requiring observations. Such as: How much light does the facility or the room get? Do the residents seem happy and engaged?

Amenities like transportation services for appointments or the existence of a nurse on staff for things like changing bandages can make the difference in a loved one's well-being and the family's peace of mind. Dining services and healthy food options are as important as the policy on visiting hours. "How does it smell?" was a piece of advice I got from more than one person, suggesting that a pervasive smell of urine might require a deeper look.

One of the most universal pieces of advice was to ask questions about continuing care when you are looking at facilities. Many people regretted not having their loved one in a facility where they could "step up" to more comprehensive care, including nursing home care with hospice. Several people I interviewed shared the pain of both the family and loved one in having to make a transition to a new situation while they were ill or even dying.

Proximity to family vs. familiarity

Location is key. Even if the facility is near just one of the adult children, that allows someone to be on site for issues both big and small. Many sons and daughters talked about how good it felt to run an errand with their parents, or be able to drop things off, do small repairs or attend medical appointments.

Author Melanie Benjamin, 58, from Williamsburg, Virginia, wishes she had pushed her father harder to consider a place near her or her brother.

Instead, she found herself traveling back to Indianapolis frequently as he began to quickly fail. "The world shrinks very quickly, and your parent's friends and community suddenly aren't there anymore," Benjamin says. "In the balance between elderly parents and their friends, it's probably more important to be near family who can arrange care, show up and keep an eye on you."

Another overarching theme was the timing of a move. Many families shared with me that they had waited too long to move their parents, which robbed them of the chance to grow roots in their new living situation, participate in the activities and make lasting friendships. If someone can't participate, everything is going to feel very foreign.

Mary Novaria, 62, of Evergreen, Colorado, is the eldest of three siblings. Her father died years before her mother, who was an Episcopal priest. When her mom began to show signs of dementia, the children moved her to a senior living facility that was 10 minutes from Novaria's house, so that she could be there frequently. When her health spiraled, they needed to move her again to an assisted living facility, and her mother was too ill and withdrawn to form bonds with the residents.

"I wish we'd moved her to a continuing care facility in the first place so that she could have made friends and had multiple options for activities," Novaria says. "Instead, it was like having a child at a brand-new school when everyone already has their cliques."

Check on staffing

There is no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has stretched the health care system and workforce. Staffing at many long-term care facilities is an important issue, and even in the best case, families must be advocates. Benjamin's father fell at night numerous times and she found herself trying to direct his care from long distance. The evening desk staff mostly consisted of a 20-year-old young woman who was not strong enough to lift him. That resulted in calling the ambulance more times than was necessary.

"Ask a lot of questions about staff, especially who is on duty at night," Benjamin offers. "Make sure it's more than a skeleton crew!"

Faith-based options

Faith-based living facilities may have different rules than those not affiliated with a religion. Maureen Clark Newlove, 57, from New Canaan, Connecticut, thought they had figured everything out when her mother chose a Catholic nursing home. The family was comforted by the aspect of having the nuns live in the facility. When her mom began to fail, Maureen and her siblings produced their mother's do-not-resuscitate (DNR) order and living will. She had been firm about her wishes to not have any intervention to prolong her life. But when the siblings wanted to bring in their own hospice service, they were told they had to use the one provided by the facility.

"My mother essentially starved to death over a 15-month period," says Newlove, explaining how she slowly wasted away. "This was not at all the way she wanted to die, and due to their regulations, they would not increase her level of morphine unless she declared she was in pain," Newlove says. "We should have asked the question: What does it look like to die here?"

Navigating the siblings' point of view

Finally, navigating this final chapter with siblings can be fraught with issues. Every child in a family has a different point of view and relationship with his or her parents. Ligeia Polidora, 62, from Sonoma, California, grew up in Wisconsin but has lived on the West Coast most of her life. She returned home to Madison to help her mother move into an assisted living facility and found that there is no "equal" when it comes to dividing tasks with siblings.

"There is usually one sibling that has to step up and take the brunt of the heavy lifting," Polidora says. "You simply can't make decisions by committee, especially when the situation is urgent. Someone has to be the "ultimate decider," and everyone else needs to find a way to make peace with that," she adds. "My suggestion is to just give that person your support, don't try to fight it and ask how you can help or look for ways to do so."

Polidora also suggests that siblings not on the same page should look for ways to play to their strengths. "If someone is good at handling the finances, they can be the designated person for that task. And if someone is nearby and a good medical advocate, that might be a good role for them—so that one person isn't necessarily strained, but not everyone has to work together on things," she says.

While this process is overwhelming, approaching it as you would any big decision can make the difference in you and your loved one's happiness. The federal government has resources online and a handy checklist you can print out and take with you when visiting care facilities.

Key Questions and Issues to Consider

Choosing the right facility for a loved one requires a lot of legwork. These tips were culled from a series of interviews and from the book *Not Dead Yet: Rebooting Your Life After 50*, by Barbara Ballinger and Margaret Crane.

- How does long-term care insurance, Medicare and Medicaid factor into the cost of the facility?
- What are the rules for visitors, and are there resident policies that must be followed?
- How often are beds available? Do you need to put your name on a list now, and what does that entail?
- When choosing your exact unit (if you have a choice), think about where the light falls and at different times of the day and seasons.
- If your loved one likes the outdoors, is there a balcony or garden space on the grounds where they can do the things they love?
- If you are a couple, what are the options if one of you passes away?
- Beyond monthly fees, how do "extras" work and what is the pricing structure?
- Once you have narrowed your choice down to one or two places, be sure to visit the community numerous times and at different times of the day to see staffing and resident engagement.
- Ask questions about medical care, cleanliness standards, ratio of caregivers to patients, if you can still see your own doctors and what plans are in place for handling future pandemics.

Lee Woodruff is a caregiver, speaker and author. She and her husband, Bob, cofounded the Bob Woodruff Foundation, [<https://bobwoodrufffoundation.org>] which assists injured service members and their families.



BIRTHDAYS

October	
Maria Eric-Williams	1
Pershail Young	2
Peggy Dearing	2
Rev. Evelyn Manson	4
Ellen Watkins	13
Marilyn Davis	17
Ellalene Barnaby	18
Jasmine Barber	18
Earleen Johnson	20
Cylestine A. Laury	22
Boyd Poole	23
Thomas Brown	25
Asha Douglas	28
Helen Jackson	30

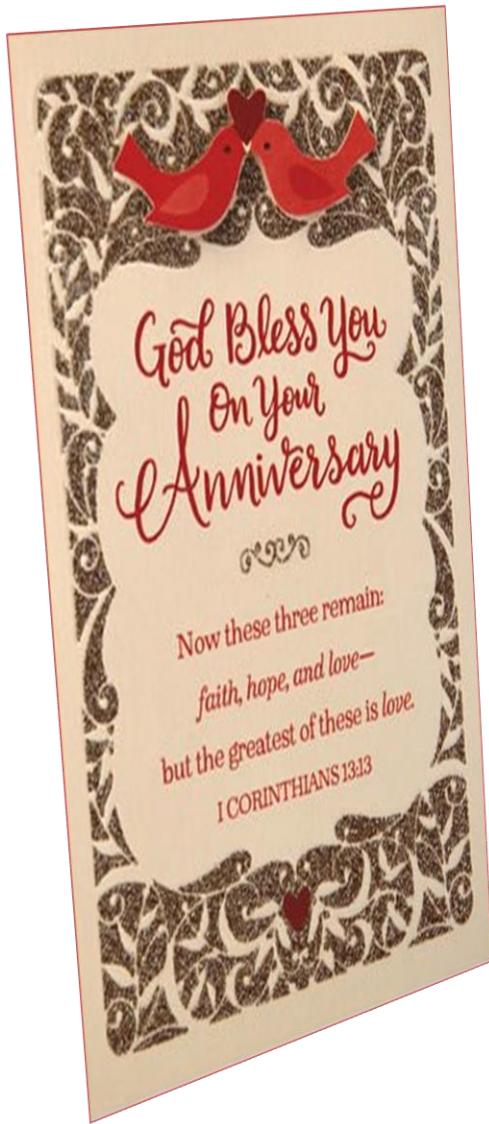
November	
Cynthia Clark	3
Charles Blackburn	4
Steven Gbelee	5
Kaleb Gray	6
Ina Fells	8
Anne Peterson	13
Emma Murdock	13
Larry Wilson	13
Tusani Jackson	13
Manson Riley	14
Ebenezer A. Davis	14
Janay McIntosh	22
Joshua Stokes	24
Phil Clark	26
Angelo Brown	30



December	
David King	3
Olive Graves	9
Chinagirl Gbelee	10
Teta Neal	11
Ethel Barnard	13
Andrew Kamara	15
Pearl Stemley	21
Shirley White	21
Barbara Boone	23
Maxine Scott	29
Cleveland Jones	30
Franklin McIntosh	31



ANNIVERSARIES



William & Winnifred Butler
October 22, 1966 [55 years]

James & Pearl Stemley
October 26, 1950 [71 years]

Aaron & Terri Ware
November 2, 1985 [36 years]

Phil & Cynthia Clark
December 3, 1977 [44 years]

Kennard & Kristy Dixon
December 14, 1996 [25 years]

Franklin & Barbara McIntosh
December 24, 1988 [33 years]

Curtis & Jobie Bell
December 28, 1955 [66 years]

From the Newsletter Coordinator

Around the Corner

by Charles Hanson Towne

Around the corner I have a friend,
In this great city that has no end;
Yet days go by, and weeks rush on,
And before I know it, a year is gone,
And I never see my old friend's face,
For Life is a swift and terrible race.
He knows I like him just as well
As in the days when I rang his bell
And he rang mine. We were younger then,
And now we are busy, tired men:
Tired with playing a foolish game,
Tired with trying to make a name.
"Tomorrow," I say, "I will call on Jim,
Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
But tomorrow comes--and tomorrow goes,
And the distances between us grows and grows.
Around the corner!--yet miles away . . .
"Here's a telegram, sir . . ."
"Jim died today."
And that's what we get, and deserve in the end:
Around the corner, a vanished friend.



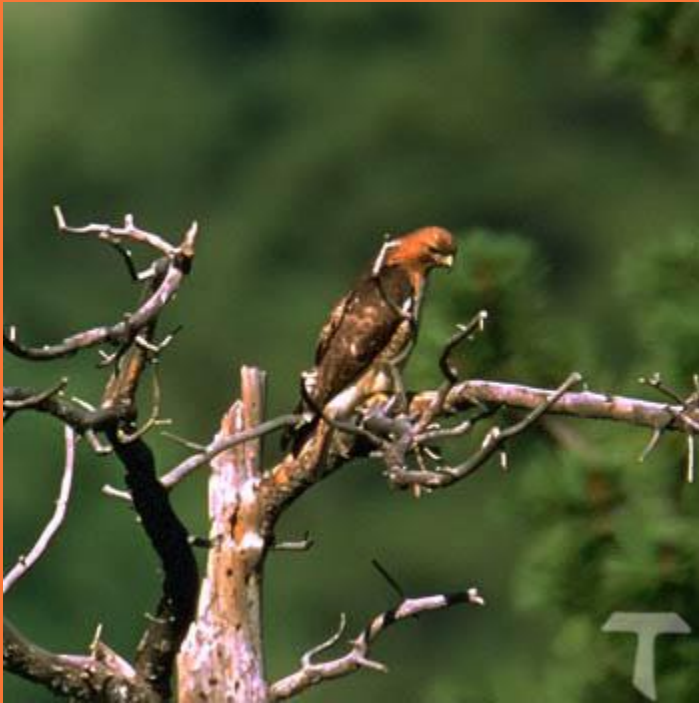
Too often we do not realize the true benefits of friends until they are no longer around. We sometimes become so caught up in our own lives that we let go of friendships or they slip by over the years. We never take the time to give our friendships the time and the effort they deserve. The pandemic, for almost two years, has taught us how fragile and fleeting and how hard life can be at times. "I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends," is one of the top five regrets of the dying, the author wrote. This Holiday Season, let us not stay stuck in old habits and patterns. Let us not live with regrets. Let us value our friends and friendships while we still have the time.

Wishing you a Happy and Safe Holiday Season.

Sis. Ellalene Barnaby



Ebenezer United Methodist Church
4912 Whitefield Chapel Road
Lanham, MD 20706
Phone: 301-577-0770
Email: church896@verizon.net
www.ebenezerunited.org



*" ...though it is the smallest of all
your seeds, yet when it grows, it is
the largest of garden plants and
becomes a tree, so that the birds of
the air come and perch in its
branches. "*

Matthew 13:32

We never stop growing in spirit. We never reach the fullness of our potential. God sees our giftedness and will continually provide us with opportunities to serve others with compassion and humility. Leave your perch and soar.

Source: Morning Whispers