

"A LITTLE LADY – A LARGE LEGACY"



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ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

This is the story of how Faith Lutheran Church came to have an Endowment Fund.

It was an evening in the latter days of October 1991, that I sat by the bedside of a dear friend and life-long member of Faith Lutheran Church, Gladys Solem. She was dying and she knew it. Six months earlier she had been informed that she has cancer and that it was terminal. She accepted that just as she has accepted other information in life – calmly! She was ninety years old and so saw this as the Lord's way of telling her to get her affairs in order. Her husband had died twenty years earlier. They had no children. Shortly after the doctor's verdict she called one day and asked if I would be her administrator. She had shown me a number of kindnesses so I felt that would be the least I could do even though I was totally ignorant in such matters. I accepted the challenge.

We had our first meeting and the first question I asked was, "Do you have a will?" Her answer was: "Yes, but it is very old, and the lawyer who made it is dead!" After some search, the will was found, but we decided that a fresh will was in order. On an appointed

Stories Alive!

day we met with lawyer Greg Tennis whom she instructed that all of her assets were to be given to Faith Lutheran Church, Forest Lake Minnesota.

With her will made out, her five acre farmstead was put up for sale. For some weeks there were no takers but after a reduction in price a buyer came who wanted quick possession on a contract for deed. Toody and I, with the help of a couple of other Faith members set to work disposing of sixty years of accumulation of stuff. Gladys had been an avid reader and ardent student of the Bible. She had no problem parting with the household goods, nor her garden machines but her books, that was hard. We had Gladys sit in her favorite chair while I brought books and papers for her to look at. I would hold up the books one by one and say, "What about this?" and she would answer, "Give that to so and so," or "Give that to the church library," or "Send that to my niece in Oregon. She has gone away from the Lord. Maybe she will read some of it and come back to Him again!" and with some she would say, "I want to keep that. I may want to read that again." She knew her days were very limited but she hoped to be refreshed again as she had been when she read it the first time. And so the house and out buildings were being emptied and cleaned.



The people who were buying the property wanted possession on Friday. Gladys slept in her old bed on Tuesday night for the last time. She had an appointment with her doctor on Wednesday morning. The house had to be empty by Wednesday night so that the whole house could be cleaned on Thurs-

day. A church member came and picked up Gladys at nine-thirty for her ten o'clock appointment with her doctor. Gladys, now very weak from the cancer picked up her purse, without a backward look, and hobbled to the waiting car. Her heart and mind had been prepared. She was ready to leave all earthly things behind and go to be with her Lord and Savior.

Now Gladys was homeless. She had always dreamed of living out her closing years in Whispering Pines where she has many friends. After a weeks stay at a friend's home, Gladys was able to enter Whispering Pines but now she was too weak to walk on her own and spent her last three weeks bedridden under constant care. Toodie spent many hours with her. I would go often to talk, as much as she was able, and to read Scripture and pray with her.

One evening of the latter days of October, I sat by her bed and read from Isaiah 41:10-14. It read, "Fear not for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God. I will help you. Your Redeemer is the Holy one of Israel." In a very weak voice she said, "I love that word Redeemer. He redeemed me. He bought me back." Then she continued, "That's a word from the Messiah, isn't it? I know that my Redeemer lives, and because He lives, I too, I too, shall live!"

Those were the last words I read from her lips. She went into a coma and passed away the next day. Blessed be her memory.

What is the point of this story? Gladys lives on! Her estate that she willed to Faith Lutheran Church has resulted in the formation of the Endowment Fund which now in 1997 totals \$140,000.00. Each year 75% of the interest earned is given, after thorough examination by the Fund Committee, to in-

dividuals and organizations that further the spiritual, mental and physical health and well-being of our Church, our community and God's children out in the world.

Tiny Gladys is gone, but she lives on in the hearts and lives of the many who have, and will be, blessed by her legacy. "Well done thou good and faithful servant." Faith Church, through it's Endowment Fund, will be blessing future generations because of the gift that Gladys helped establish.

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The Smallest Wonders

The Endowment Committee asked Pastor Knudson to write this story that he shared with us at a recent meeting. We must not forget our history and the lives that have and will shape our future.

This gift has been added to by many individuals since the fund was established. Many more "Tiny Lady - Large Legacy" stories will be told to future generations because of thoughtful gifts of love.