

Peace - Dan Akerblom and Geana Anderson

(As Dan lights the candle)

Geana: Today we light the candle of peace which reminds us of the loving peacefulness that comes from God.

Our scripture comes from Isaiah 40, verses 1-5

1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

3 A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD ; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

5 And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Dan: Geana and I have both been through traumatic brain injuries. Geana's came about from an accident and mine came about with a stroke. But a trauma can be a new beginning. But when I was in a comma I could hear people talking but I couldn't respond so I became angry. When I recovered, and tried to go back to my construction job I would read a tape measure, but I read it backwards. I was slower. I had to think things through. So, I was suffering loss; loss of a career, loss of my brain usage, and even loss of my wife and children. I wanted to be the "old me." But what I realized was that I needed to become a new person. My brain wasn't bad; it was just different. So, I moved to Banner Elk to find a peaceful surrounding. I have a plot of land where I can walk in the woods, which to me is like praying. And I find myself returning over and over again to that verse in Ephesians: ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

The least I can do is show gratitude.

Geana and I are different. We know that. And we have come to love this church that don't expect us to be anything else. My stroke was 17 years ago and today, I love ministering to people who suffer from trauma. I love to walk in the woods, or visit someone who might be helped by my story. I look to Christmas as a reminder of the peace. For I truly know that I am at peace with my new self and I am grateful to God for the peace that comes through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Geana: Let us pray

Dear God, thank you for the new life you have given to Dan and me, and to everyone in this congregation. We have all suffered loss and you were with us and helped to heal

us. As Christmas approaches, remind us of the peace that we can all enjoy because you sent a baby, lying in a manger, the prince of peace; A the one who shows us how to carry on into a new life.