

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I feel I need to give some of you an update on my little hibiscus tree. Yes, the one I almost threw away because the squirrels had attacked it so viciously and because of those attacks it went into shock and lost all its leaves. Last fall I cut off as much of the dead branches as I could – right back to the trunk! By the time I brought it in it was just a naked stick in dirt. It would seem that no matter how brutally this plant has been treated, with love and nourishment, it continues to rebound. This brave little hibiscus is now covered with leaves and many flower buds. Each morning as I survey its slow progress, I marvel at not only its will to live but to thrive and flourish!

This little tree has become a metaphor for my walk with Christ. No matter how much the world would seek to destroy our hope and desire to flower - with Christ in the forefront of our lives, we will thrive.

I shared with our Bible Study class last night that our neighbor, Joe Sullivan, has filed another appeal in an effort to override the last decision that supported Bethany and Family Promise. As I read the news from Mary G. I groaned not again!!!! “Lord, Joe is your wounded child, please heal his wounds,” was my immediate prayer. Mary sent a follow-up email with a response from one of the Family Promise board members: “Joe Sullivan is the gift that keeps on giving! It just brings awareness of our families and how Bethany and FP are providing this ministry!”

When we are hurt or abused – we can choose to go in a corner feel sorry for ourselves and maybe pray for God to change ‘them’ - as I was doing. Or, we can choose to see the abuse or hurt in a positive light – as the board member did. We cannot change others; we can only change ourselves. We have the freedom to choose how we will react when hurt or abused.

I came across this poem by John van de Laar titled: *Invincible Life* that I hope will sustain you as well.

Though it may seem dark, though it may feel cold,  
though death and evil may parade their influence wherever we may look,  
Beneath it all, invincible and undefeated, subversive and undeniable, glows life.  
And wherever people clothe themselves in truth, faith, peace, justice and salvation,  
wherever people live by the words of Christ, life stands in defiance of death.  
And so we praise you, God, and we celebrate your life;  
as we surround ourselves again today with all the qualities and gifts that you give  
to save us from the darkness.

I pray the light of Christ will bathe your hearts and minds as you journey through this life and into the next.

*Pastor Peggy*