

...Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles.... — Isaiah 40:31 (NRSV)



Wings

A FAITHLETTER FOR UNITED METHODISTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THOSE WHO CARE ABOUT THEM
 Fall 2011 — Vol. 22 Issue 2 No. 86



FROM WHERE I SIT: A MOTHER'S DAYS

By Jo D'Archangelis

In March of 1984, I separated from my then-husband and left the small, dusty town of Mira Loma, Calif., to move in with my parents, Lee and Margery Chapman, who had recently bought a house in Fallbrook.

My wheelchair-accessible van came with me, and my father and mother soon began chauffeuring me around to doctors' appointments and the like. But it was my mother who always drove me to church, and about a month after my coming here, she and I became members of the Fallbrook United Methodist Church.

As time passed, however, it became increasingly clear that an adult woman with a definite mind of her own could not live comfortably in the same house with parents who were—how shall I put it?—somewhat set in their ways. So eventually I moved into my own apartment in Fallbrook with a live-in care assistant while leaving the van garaged at my parents' home.

Every Sunday morning, Mother saw to it that I got back and forth to church for worship service and for any after-church meetings of the various committees and commissions we were dual

members of over the years. Every Sunday after church, she drove me to her and Dad's house where we had lunch and spent the afternoon watching movie videos (later, DVDs). And every Sunday evening after dinner, she loaded me back into the van, brought me to my apartment, unloaded me, and then returned to her home.

This Sunday cycle continued even after she and Dad moved to Murrieta, about 20 miles north of Fallbrook—which meant that each and every Sunday for eight years my mother drove two 40-mile round-trips on the freeway. To pass the traveling time, she listened to music on the radio or on tapes (later, CDs). Her favorite music was Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and the Bee Gees.

My father passed away in 1992, and, after that, my mother often brought her miniature schnauzer, Corky, along with us on our Sunday excursions. Corky would wait patiently in the van during worship service, and then afterwards Mother would let him out of the van to run around in the open field next to the parking lot.

One Sunday, Corky was taking his

usual morning constitutional in the field when, suddenly, a coyote darted out from a grove of trees nearby, clamped his jaws around Corky's head, and started dragging him away. Mother immediately took off after Corky and the coyote, yelling at the top of her lungs for the coyote to "let him go"! Amazingly, the coyote let him (Corky) go unharmed and ran back into the trees. I suspect that the coyote found Corky's weight more than he had bargained for, but I also suspect he knew better than to mess around with Mother.

In 1997, Mother sold her house in Murrieta and moved back to Fallbrook, a move motivated in part by her desire to be able to drive me around more easily. Several more years went by before increasing age and heart problems finally forced her to give up driving altogether, and from then on we both depended on church friends and family members to chauffeur us around in the van.

My mother died of cardiac arrest in July of this year, just seven weeks short of her 90th birthday. Since then I've been thinking about all the things she "passed on" to me in one way or another over the years. The list would have to include:

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1. A spirit of both stubborn determination and adaptable

resiliency

2. A faith rooted in Methodism (When I was about 10-years-old and just starting to read the Bible, Mother, who had been born and raised a Methodist, pointed out the John 3:16 verse—"For God so loved the world..."—and told me that was what all *Methodists* believed. OK, I know now it is actually what all *Christians* believe, but I still like to think of it as peculiarly Methodist)

3. A good, sometimes snarky sense of humor (This plus the determination, resiliency, and faith listed above helped

her to meet the challenges of an unhappy marriage, chronic health problems, and a child with a severe disability.)

4. A love of animals (In fact, we both became vegetarians 25 years ago because of our love for animals rather than for any health reasons.)

5. A love of movies

6. A love of music (My personal preferences, however, are Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and Eric Clapton.)

7. An acceptance of people who are considered "different," if not downright stigmatized, by society (For my mother this acceptance extended, of course, to people with disabilities, but it also included other groups. For example, she

never could understand all of the negative hoopla about gays and lesbians.)

Mother's memorial service was held on August 14 at the Fallbrook UMC. Dr. Dennis Ginoza, one of our former pastors, now retired, wrote down some special remembrances he had of Mother over the 17 years he had known her. He was, unfortunately, not able to attend the service himself, but his words were read by our current pastor, Dr. Bradley Resare, and they included the following:

"Margery drove her van like she would a bus: she whipped around the corners (I saw her), and she owned the road, I might say. Margery was Jo's right hand, her core support, and companion friend; actually, they were the same to each other."

We should all, disabled and non-disabled alike, be so blessed as to have people in our lives like my mother who, when we can't do it on our own, make sure we get to where we need to go, even if it means whipping around a few corners.

This Fall 2011 issue of *Wings* is dedicated to the memory of Margery Christine Chapman 1921-2011



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Jo D'Archangelis, Editor



A non-official quarterly newsletter for United Methodists with disabling conditions and all others interested in the issues of disability, accessibility, and the church

FOUNDER/EDITOR COMPUTER LAYOUT/GRAPHIC DESIGN

Jo D'Archangelis

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WRESTLING GOD OVER PAIN: AN INTERVIEW WITH JONI EARECKSON TADA (PART II) By Robin Russell

(The following is part two of an interview with Joni Eareckson Tada, founder of Joni and Friends, a California-based ministry for persons with disabilities. In her book, *A Place of Healing* [David C. Cook, September 2010], Tada recounts her struggles with chronic pain. Diagnosed with breast cancer last year, she spoke with [UM Reporter] managing editor Robin Russell on July 30, 2010, the 43rd anniversary of the diving accident that left her a paraplegic. — Editor)

You've received from time to time some rather misguided "advice" from Christians on faith and healing. How has that contributed to your pain—and how do you handle it?

I've gotten a lot of e-mails and letters from well-meaning, well-intentioned people who say that I ought to be healed, that I don't have enough faith or that, "There must be sin in your life."

Not long ago somebody asked me, "Joni, I'd like to pray for your healing. How may I do that?" She was expecting me to say, "Well, have God get me up out of this wheelchair." But instead I said, "May I tell you what I really need to be healed from? I need to be healed from self-centeredness. I need to be healed from this itchiness to get things my way, this propensity of mine to want to take credit for things. Ask God to heal me of my pride, or my impatience with certain people, my laziness in reading God's word. These are things I would love to be healed from, to be set free from."

Jesus delighted in healing people physically, but what he said in Matthew 18 was incredible: "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off. If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out, throw it away. It's better to for you to go through life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell."

Basically what Jesus is saying is the priority of spiritual healing trumps physical healing. He's healing all these people left and right, but then he says if you don't get your act together with

God, it's better that you go through life blind rather than live with self-centered pride and impatience.

You've become so well-known that you say you sometimes feel like a target, that if you falter in how you cope with your disabilities it will somehow damage God's name. Do you ever grow weary of being an inspiration to others?

All of our lives are always on display. Every day, what we say, what we do, how we respond to circumstances, the way we treat people—people are observing the way we act. And we are being a witness whether we like it or not, whether it's for good or bad. And many people are observing how seriously we really do take God.

Sometimes I'm tempted to think, "God, I deserve five hours of bitterness this week. I deserve time off from obeying you. Could I just have a little time off here?" But none of us deserves time off or coddling a self-centered way of looking at things. Even at the most critical junctures—when the medical reports are bad, when our husbands are abusive, or when our kids don't care, when the medical bills pile up—we're called to respond in a way that honors God at every turn. I'm just re-

mindful of it a lot more frequently than others.

I understand that [July 30] is the 43rd anniversary of your diving accident that left you a quadriplegic. Do you somehow mark that date?

Usually I mark it by eating my mother's crab cakes—her recipe. We had Maryland crab cakes last night. That was kind of our way of earmarking this as a date to commemorate. Little did I realize that God would use this wheelchair to start a worldwide ministry, which would reach so many people with the gospel.

Even today, as I am speaking with our Wheels for the World teams and taking wheelchairs around the world, holding our family retreats, ministering to thousands of disabled kids and adults and family members this summer—that's wonderful! I consider it a special treat from God on this day to be able to recount these things and celebrate with you what God has done and is doing.

And I pray that breast cancer is not my ticket to heaven. I pray that like Hezekiah, I'll have 15 more years at least of productive ministry that I can serve him in the kingdom.

(According to Tada in her recent blogs [www.joniandfriends.org/blog/], PET scans remain clear after several weeks. Although she continues to take daily medication to prevent recurrence of the cancer, the hopes of her and her husband and her doctors remain high. — Editor)

Adapted from the United Methodist Portal website (www.umportal.org)—Nov. 12, 2010; originally published Aug. 20, 2010.

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When we walk to the edge of all the light we have and face that step into the darkness of the unknown, we must believe that one of two things will happen: there will be something firm for us to stand on—or we will be taught how to fly.

— Anonymous —

A Wings Encore—originally printed in Fall 2004 issue.



REACHING OUT TO YOUNG ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

By Lynn Swedberg

[In April of this year] the mainstream press including the *New York Times* and *Parade Magazine* raised awareness that record numbers of young adults with significant disabilities are ending their public school years with no safety net in place. Graduating at a time when states face budget and service cuts, many are on waiting list for housing, day programs, or supported employment. United Methodists are reaching out in response, offering alternatives to the all too common scenario of young adults staying home and watching television all day while parents are forced to quit jobs in order to provide care.

Naomi Mitchum, Coordinator of Special Needs Ministries at Chapelwood

UMC in Houston, TX, offers a ministry of advocacy, protesting her state's budget cuts. At the same time she is called to expand her church's programming to include a day program for young adults that will meet once a week and provide productive activities that will benefit other people. She also leads drumming circles and drama groups for teens and adults....[See an interview with Naomi Mitchum on page 5 of this issue of *Wings*.]

At the UM Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, KS, the Sonflower Bakery involves young adults in decorating baked goods that are sold in the church's cafe and used for fellowship events. Some work three shifts a week, others one or two. Volunteers provide

assistance as needed, and participants earn gift cards plus select a goodie to take home after every shift. The church recently added a fourth day of programming. Young adults clean, sort, and repair the 2000 backpacks that church volunteers fill weekly with food for inner city children in Kansas City. The church also offers Sunday School, adult Bible study, fellowship time, handbell choirs,...and other opportunities for involvement in the life of the church.

Mt. Horeb UMC in Lexington, SC offers a monthly day respite program for young adults, and an evening program open for all ages. One of the church's UMW circles has adopted the program as a project and provides the needed volunteers each month. Respite organizers recommend using the *Family Connections Respite Start Up Manual*, an extensive resource....Other church activities include Sunday School, an adapted VBS class, and a basketball league.

The Western North Carolina Annual Conference offers a different approach. UMAR, founded in 1983, provides services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They provide housing in group homes in 12 of the conference's 15 districts, supported employment, and support services for individuals living in their own or guardian's homes. [Soon]...they will open their first independent living home in Cornelius, NC....

Ruby Mossor, Church Cultivation Specialist, works with UM churches throughout the conference to provide awareness and training so that clients are supported by and integrated into faith communities. She stresses the importance of building relationships to address spiritual along with practical needs, such as providing rides to church, purchasing unfunded necessities for residents and homes, and celebrating birthdays.

**Adapted and abridged from
The VOICE of the United
Methodist Disability Connection
(April 2011—Vol. 1, No. 2).
Swedberg is editor of The VOICE.**



A PRAYER FOR COURAGE

By Julie Pimlott

God of ages past, God of ages to come, you see our lives of today.

We praise and thank you for the comfort that comes from realizing you have always been with us.

We praise and thank you for your presence in our future, in our growing, in our stumbling, in our changing.

We seek you today to find strength for the journey.

We confess our need for greater faith to trust in your guiding hand, and we ask your forgiveness for the times to come when our human frailty keeps us from resting in your ways and time.

We seek you today to find courage for the journey.

Holy Spirit, grant us creativity and open hearts to rise to the challenge of serving you in an ever-changing world.

Grant us boldness to step out in faith in ways that reveal your radical, unconditional love.

As we say our prayers, may we be filled even now with your strength and courage. May we shed our fears in the knowledge that it is the power of your grace and love that gives life to our offerings of service to your creation.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our hope and strength, Amen.

**From *Alive Now* (May/June 2009).
Pimlott attends Methodist Theological School
in Ohio and hopes to be a hospital chaplain.**



VERBATIM: AN INTERVIEW WITH NAOMI MITCHUM

By Kate Matelan

Naomi Mitchum, 81, certainly doesn't act her age. This lively Texan may be a church lady, but is not your average parishioner. She has taken her faith and transformed it into a powerhouse of potential that has been modeled by many others.

SURPRISE ME...

As the fulltime volunteer coordinator of special needs programs at Chapelwood United Methodist Church in Houston and a consultant for other churches, I am always on the go! Anyone in our congregation who has a disability is welcomed into our church and all of its activities.

We work closely with our parishioners in support groups, Sunday school classes, American Sign Language services and other programs. There are also groups for the caring parents.

I became involved in this role almost 20 years ago after leading a task force to assess the church's accessibility and inclusion. There have been many improvements intermixed with a struggle for space and funding, but every step has been worth the effort. We have grown from a Wednesday night group of four people to a crowd of 80.

I've taken what I learned through my work and brought that to other churches as well. I'm always getting emails from other congregations asking how they can become more inclusive. So, I created a toolkit that covers information on the church environment, emergency preparedness, mentorship guidelines and a lesson plans, and much more. Spreading access to worship is such a rewarding experience and I am continuing to learn from the spirit of others.

How'd you join the crip club?

Six months after my double mastectomy in 1979, I became ill and was first

diagnosed with lupus. A little less than two decades and several diagnoses later, I was identified as having multiple sclerosis. I've been in the same power chair for the past 12 years now and a new one is due any century now—just have to get through all of the red tape!

So when did you start conquering the world?

When I decided to quit being disgusted about my disease and compliment my body on what it could do. That was when I kick started my current work and became a roaring advocate for disabilities because my mouth worked and my heart was in it.

Any wheeling words of wisdom?

In life, you have to learn how to walk, talk, or wheel fast.

How's the 9-to-5 treating you?

I'm still writing. It's amazing how a hobby can turn into your career. With many of my books, magazine articles,

and teaching manuals already published, I am now working on a book designed for people who have cancer and their caregivers. It'll be a helpful tool for navigating the healing process and doing more than just getting through the disease.

Who inspires you?

I live in gratitude for all the generous people who inspire me and who help me achieve, especially my husband, Bob. He originally started advocacy work to be my hands and feet, but became hooked by the students' genuine spirits.

Best accessible getaway?

Two of my favorite getaways have been to Germany and Denmark. In Copenhagen, accessibility was a breeze and the sights were breathtaking. Yet, I have had my fair share of humor while traveling. I bet there is enough material to write a book just about all of the elevators I have been stuck in.

From "Verbatim," *New Mobility* (May 2011). Reprinted by permission from *New Mobility* (www.newmobility.org).

Matelan may be contacted at kate.matelan@newmobility.org.

COMMUNITY OF FAITH By Roberta Porter

Called by Christ
to community—
to worship, to pray, to learn,
to care,
this
is not a place for us to be
unchanged, safe,
exclusive.
Here
we bring our common
brokenness

and blessing;
healing happens
by God's grace,
and our gifts are given
for service.
Here, in Christ's love and
compassion,
we belong to each other,
here the stranger is welcomed,
and called
friend.

From *Alive Now* (January/February 1999).

Porter lives on the Oregon Coast with her husband, Jim, where she enjoys volunteering in her church and community.



A TALL ORDER TO FILL: AN INTERVIEW WITH JOYCE BROWNLEE By Jo D'Archangelis

Below is an email interview conducted this past September with Joyce Brownlee, co-chair along with her sister, Joann Orendurff, of the Conference Committee on Disability Concerns (CCDC) of the California-Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church. — Editor)

How long have you and your sister Joann worked with the Cal-Pac CCDC, and how long have you been co-chairs?

Joann and I have been members of the CCDC since the group was created in September of 2001 at Fallbrook United Methodist Church and have been co-chairs since January of 2007.

How many Committee members do you have right now?

At one time there were 13 Committee members in addition to ourselves, but several of our members had to resign due to work duties or health and transportation problems. We tried to keep in touch with the few members that were left by email or phone. Lately,

the Committee has been largely inactive due to funding constraints. Since 2009, my sister and I have been the only ones to see that disability access was available at Annual Conference. We have had no cooperation from district superintendents or local pastors in nominating potential CCDC members.

The Book of Discipline requires that each CCDC include members with a disability. Do you or Joann have a disability of some kind?

I have fibromyalgia and degenerative disk disease, while Joann has diabetes and a herniated disk.

What are the general functions of each CCDC in the United Methodist Church?

According to the Book of Discipline,

it is the responsibility of each CCDC (1) To raise consciousness and sensitivity among persons with or without identifiable disabilities in congregations, (2) To advocate for and help develop programs within each conference that meets the needs of persons with disabilities, and (3) To develop programs of information, education, advocacy, and training that enable local faith communities to allow full inclusivity and accessibility of persons with disabilities in their activities, programs, and leadership.

In what particular areas do you think the Cal-Pac CCDC has been most successful in the past years?

We have been most successful in implementing disability access to our Annual Conference each year with special needs registration, reserved seating with numbered seat-covers for wheelchair-users and others with mobility issues, shuttle service between the chapel—where the Conference sessions are held—and the commons area and housing, and the provision of additional temporary handicapped parking spaces. Our thanks to the University of Redlands hospitality staff for their support!

In your opinion, are there particular areas in which the Cal-Pac CCDC has not been as successful as you would have liked, and why?

Conferences are supposed to provide training for clergy and laity in disability ministries, including the areas of Sunday school, camps and retreats, and faith development. The 2008 Book of Discipline states that Disability Awareness Sunday shall be observed annually on a date to be determined by each conference. Our biggest challenge has been to get the Conference and the local churches to be aware of these mandates and to carry them out. We get a lot of “lip service” from Conference leaders and staff but no real encouragement and support.

For example, we have bent over

A CALL TO WORSHIP FOR DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY

LEADER: Lord, how awesome it is that we can gather here today and loudly sing praises to your name, and know that we are standing in your presence!

PEOPLE: Lord, I can't stand. I use a wheelchair and there is no place for my chair.

LEADER: It really is great, Lord, that we are able to hear you speak to us through the proclamation of the word this morning!

PEOPLE: I'm sorry, God. I didn't hear what was said.

LEADER: And, Lord, it's so fantastic to be able to read your Word along with the pastor, and to recite the creeds and litanies.

PEOPLE: This morning my vision is dim, God. I cannot read the bulletin.

LEADER: Lord, we really feel blessed that we understand everything that is happening around us in the church in this hour.

PEOPLE: God, why do I learn so much slower than others, and must feel, week after week, that I do not really belong here?

ALL: Open us, O God. Make us accessible to your Spirit, and accessible to all your people.

— Adapted from Rev. Dave Wade —

See **UMCOR/DISC** website for a full listing of worship resources for Disability Awareness Sunday (<http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/work/health/events/disabilityawareness/>).

(A TALL ORDER continued on page 7)

(A TALL ORDER continued from page 6)



backwards to encourage our local pastors to schedule Disability Awareness Sunday services. It's hard when you have pastors who don't even think they have members with disabilities. Not only does the lack of a Disability Awareness Sunday deprive a congregation of an opportunity to possibly hear from a speaker in the disability community or learn about ways to open their congregation to new members, the CCDC loses some of the funding from special offerings it needs to keep its head above water.

Another example: We tried to plan a seminar for laity and pastors with speakers from the military to speak on PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), among other topics, so our local churches would be more aware of and welcoming to those who have been injured physically and mentally in battle. We had to cancel due to lack of interest and support from the VA and from our own Conference.

The Book of Discipline requires that the trustees of each church conduct an accessibility audit of their church campus each year. Our San Diego District Superintendent had requested that all district churches do an audit of their campus. We have printed up and made available audit notebooks at Annual Conference. We are available to assist churches with this audit and to provide training. To our knowledge, no church has followed through with the request. Here again we have experienced lack of support and interest.

The Cal-Pac Conference is undergoing some major organizational restructuring of its programs and ministries right now. What effect are these changes having on the CCDC?

In July, the CCDC was put under the newly-formed Justice and Compassion Essential Ministries Team (JCEMT) as an "advocacy group." Supposedly, there will be freedom in terms of inviting whomever we want into the group and of deciding what our vision and mission and goals will be (which we actually did

eight years ago).

Insofar as we understand the new structure, any new members will be recruited to do a specific task, and, when that task is completed, they will be replaced. Wouldn't it be easier to have a permanent task force, committee, or group than to do recruiting every few months? I mean, it was hard enough finding interested people to serve in the past. We'll see what happens.

The JCEMT met the weekend of Sept. 9-10. We were told that the Conference needs to develop a new "culture" of accountability, respect, cooperation, and collaboration. Sounds like a tall order to me and could take a long time to bring about.

What are your concerns for the future of

the CCDC in the Cal-Pac Conference? And what do you hope will happen?

It is unclear at this time whether the CCDC will remain in existence as it is, or in some other form, and whether or not we will continue as co-chairs. But we do believe that if the lack of support and cooperation from our Conference, districts, and local churches continues as it has in the past, the Committee will probably cease to exist in any form.

Still, it is our hope and prayer that the CCDC does not suffer an untimely death because the ones who will fall by the wayside will be those for whom we have fought for so long to provide physical, communication, and attitudinal access to all of our churches and church-related facilities.

PETITIONS ON DISABILITY ISSUES TO BE SUBMITTED TO 2012 GENERAL CONFERENCE By Debbie Wade

The Long-Range Committee of the United Methodist Task Force on Disability Ministries has written four petitions to submit to the 2012 General Conference. They express our desire to help make all United Methodist people more aware of those with disabilities and that such persons be welcomed into all levels of our church. Several conferences...received copies of these petitions to be presented to their 2011 Annual Conferences.

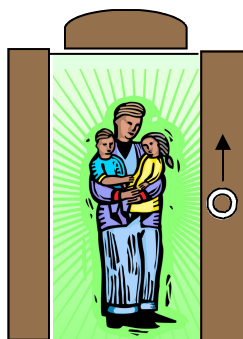
The four petitions concern the following key points:

- *Making the UM Task Force on Disability Ministries a Standing Committee
- *Making changes to the Discipline paragraphs related to Clergy Incapacity Leave, renaming it Clergy Medical Leave and offering more advocacy and accommodations
- *Making Disability Awareness Sunday a Sunday with a special offering
- *Resolving that each Conference, in the quadrennium from 2013-2017, have a theme on disability awareness at one of its Annual Conference Sessions

For more information, please go to the Task Force website (www.umdabilityministries.org) and click on "advocacy." Your advocacy for these pieces of legislation, and for people with disabilities, is greatly appreciated. Please hold these petitions up in your prayers, and remember the Task Force in your prayers, as we pray for you. Together, we can help to ensure that our United Methodist Churches truly have "Open Hearts, Open Minds and Open Doors"!

Adapted from *The VOICE of the United Methodist Disability Connection* (April 2011—Vol. 1, No. 2).

Debbie Wade is Chair of the Long-Range Committee of the United Methodist Task Force on Disability Ministries.



A FATHER'S ARMS

By Margaret Franklin Zadow

You saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you traveled until you reached this place. — Deuteronomy 1:31 (NRSV)

When I was five years old, an epidemic of polio swept our nation. However, my parents didn't realize at first that the virus had struck me. Then I became paralyzed. Finally the doctor told my parents to take me to a large city to see a specialist.

My father carried me in his arms and held me in the elevator. He said people stared, probably wondering why he carried such a big girl. He carried me many times during my childhood—times when I cried, when I hurt, and when he just wanted to hold me.

Many children aren't as fortunate as I; they don't have earthly fathers to hold

and carry them. But all of us have a heavenly Father who comforts us when we cry, holds us when we hurt, and listens when we just need to talk.

My earthly father died a few years

ago, but God has been here from the beginning and will be here to the end. Our heavenly Father watches over us in love, giving us strength in times of trouble, and carrying us when we need to be carried.



**From *The Upper Room*
(January/February 2001).**



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