**Fear Not . . . Again!
A Good Word for Trish Bishop
December 14, 2009**

 I rarely give a title for a Eulogy. I usually just put at the top of my page – “A Good Word for \_\_\_\_\_\_” – for a eulogy is just that – a good word. But a little over four years ago, I gave a title to another eulogy. That one was for Wilma Morrison – Trish’s mother – and that eulogy was entitled “Fear Not.” It was fitting as Wilma’s voice serves as the only spoken word on a tape that was recorded many years ago for our long-standing tradition of Judean Hills – A Living Tableau. One week from tonight that Southern angel will speak the Truth of the age-old story again - *Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people*. As I sat at Trish’s bedside Wednesday night, that angel’s voice rang loudly in my ears and all I could think was - Fear Not . . . Again!

 When I sat with Trish’s family to plan this service, I threw it out there like I always do: So tell me about Trish. No one spoke, but it was not an awkward silence. No one said a word, but their faces said it all. A husband, a sister, a brother, a father – they all had this far-away gaze with a slight smile on their face. They held faces of contentment and good memories coupled with deep sadness for a life cut too short. The look on their faces implied – where do we start? So I began. I thought I could sum Trish up with one phrase: She was a piece of work. And after hearing them talk, I knew that I had been right all along. Trish Bishop was a piece of work.

 I wish I could have seen the Morrison trio in their Saturday night performances for Wilma and J. D. As young children, Chad and Trish and Amy would give their parents a musical variety show with the hearth as their stage and Trish always served as Mistress of Ceremonies. J. D. reminisced well when he said, “She was a wing-doozer of an MC.” As I’ve looked back over my notes from our time together, I’ve realized that role of MC is pretty fitting for the living of her whole life.

 Trish had a way of making things happen. She’s the one that asked Mike out on their first date. She asked him if he’d like to go to a Bonnie Raitt concert. When he said YES, she had to figure out how to get a hold of some tickets. Ahh, the Mistress of Ceremonies coming out again. And ever the optimist, I’d say. Well, Mike, I’m glad you said YES. I was told that Mike was the confirmed bachelor. When Mike was confronted with this he said, “He wasn’t’ going to get married until he found one he couldn’t live without.” Well then, Mike, thank God for Bonnie Raitt. Eleven years. Not enough.

 At work, Trish was respected by people that reported to her. She functioned as Human Resources Department, Manager, Recruiter and Tour Guide. I have no idea what her title really was – I just know these are the things she did. Again the MC at work. With family, Trish kept Amy in line and mothered her in many ways. What a great big sister. And with all the nieces and nephews, she treated them like they were her own and made them, each one, feel very special. Even when caring for her own mother, Trish was directing the traffic taking on more responsibility so that others in the family could tend to their other obligations. Some people may call it all “control issues.” I think it was that gift that Trish had as a child standing on that hearth for a musical variety show. She kept things running and in order. She wanted to fix everyone’s problems – the consummate caregiver. This “wing-doozer of a MC” will be missed by everyone who knew her.

 But here is what she has left you. It’s the common theme that I have heard from some of you and have experienced myself: laughter. It is honestly one of God’s best gifts to us – a sense of humor. Even in the face of that horrible word “cancer,” she could laugh and make a joke. And she made the doctors and nurses laugh. But it was J.D.’s phrase that I wrote down about Trish’s sense of humor: “she laughed as easy as anyone I’ve ever known.” And I believe that helped her throughout her life and in her death. Even when she was too weak to talk, her face still radiated that sense of wit and her playful way. You could just see the mischief.

 Trish was feisty and tenacious, strong and compassionate. She was protector – that mothering hen that gathers her brood under her wings. In that way, I believe she knew something of the nature of God. She didn’t speak much to her close family of her prognosis or her death. First of all, I think she was too busy being optimistic that she could beat this thing to talk about anything else. But secondly, she was too busy apologizing. She could see the pain that her illness caused those that knew her best and loved her most. And she hated it more for all of you than she hated it for herself. I believe she had been there and done that with her own mother and she truly understood what this road was like for all of you. In that way, the road she has just travelled was easier than the road you now all know. The journey of grief is long and hard. So to those who held her hand and to those who laughed with her all the way – *well done, good and faithful servants –* hold each other’s hands now. And do keep laughing – for surely there are stories that will be told that will make you laugh until you cry.

 We gather in this particular place – a place that was home for Trish for her whole life. From childhood Sunday School to youth musicals to choir to Tableau, Park Road Baptist Church was in Trish’s blood. And while this place can bring so much comfort, it is also a reminder of all the things that were – and that can bring emotions that overwhelm. Trish and I talked about that a lot. Too painful to come. Too painful to stay away. This church was started by many folks, and we all know that the church is really run by lay members and not the staff. But two prominent staff family names stand out in the birthing of this church: Milford and Morrison. And so it is with profound sadness that one month ago many of us gathered here to celebrate the life of a Milford daughter and today we celebrate the life of a Morrison daughter – both too young - both still too full of life. I think it is important to acknowledge that and name that and celebrate that and grieve that. This community of faith has spent 59 years nurturing faith and teaching the Way of Jesus. Thanks be to God for that.

 So here’s the last thing Trish said to me. Actually she didn’t say it to me, she said it with me. It was Wednesday night after church and choir practice, after I had gotten word that Trish was not going to live much longer. I sat by her bed and kept watch because sometimes that’s all there is to do. When I got ready to leave I had a prayer with Trish and as soon as I said Amen, Trish and I were eye to eye and I said, “Trish, I heard a woman say one time . . .” and I paused, and as if we had rehearsed it together 1000 times, we began to recite together – *Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.* The strong Mistress of Ceremonies to the end – only this time in a hospital bed instead of on a hearth – an adult, but still a Child of God, Trish Bishop still knew her lines and the variety show of life still goes on – for her and for us – both now and forevermore. *Fear not . . . again.* May it be so.