**A Good Word for Jean Jones
November 3, 2014**

 Jean Jones was, simply put, a lovely lady. At least that’s how I know her. And then Mary McGowan and Geneva Owen confirmed it. And if they said it, it must be true! I have certainly had lovely visits with her – a few times in her home, a couple of times in the hospital or at Sardis Oaks, but it was even better when those visits happened at a basketball game where she was there to cheer on her granddaughter who could always more than hold her own against our sons. Jean Jones was a lovely lady. My last visit with her just week before last, she told me how Edsel Owen used to take up the offering. When he’d get to Al’s pew on the very back, he’d pass the plate by Al twice. Jean still got a kick out of old friendships that never die. Always so put together. Always a bit quiet spoken. Always the gentile Southern lady.

 Until we just learned from Beth that she was spunky and witty and a bit of a jokester. She was Miss Gaffney back in the day – even riding in the parade to represent her town. She would put a stocking over her head and scratch at the door to relive some good Dark Shadows moments. She played tricks on Beth’s boyfriend who would become her son-in-law anyway. And she loved Las Vegas and the slots. Who would have ever guessed that? So this quiet woman, so put together – who loved her routine (don’t mess with that Thursday morning hair appointment!) and puzzles and the simple life of family and a few close friends was a slot playing Grammy. I love it!

 Generosity was the name of their game. Al built a company. Jean built a family. And together they were generous in ways most folks never knew. I enjoyed reading the eulogy for Al that was preached by Charlie Milford. Al was sneaky in his generosity. And often anonymous. He and Jean made a good pair for that. Sneaky generosity is the best kind, I think. Never wanting the limelight or the credit, always finding themselves on a back row, where I understand Al would signal to Charlie when he was getting too long-winded, The Joneses may have been a common name, but Jean and Al were a pair who would make the name synonymous with extravagant generosity. I’ve heard stories of folks going to pay their bill at a restaurant and find that their check had already been paid; providing Christmas for those who would have otherwise had no Christmas; slipping folks money in an envelope for just no reason - living out their faith from a back row of Baptists in a quiet, uncommon way.

She worked to put her husband through school and then she proceeded to take on her real calling in life. Caregiver. And she played her role beautifully. After her sister died suddenly, she helped to care for those children. When her father needed treatment, she made the sometimes daily trek to get him to and from wherever he needed to go. Then it was her mother who needed care. And then her husband. And she was stingy with her role. Stingy in that good kind of way that said that her love and her capacity for tending was deep and wide. She didn’t really need help. And of course, she gave the most wonderful care to her beautiful daughter. You know that kind of stay home mom that was involved in just the right amount, that drove the cheerleaders and came to the games and did what parents are supposed to do. And in the end, turnabout would be fair play. As a younger person, never dreaming of moving right across the street from her mother, Beth would eventually take the reins of the maternal family legacy and become the care provider for the caregiver. Clearly, Beth, she Raised you Right. The way you have tended her is truly beautiful to behold. *Well done, good and faithful servant.* She taught you well and you paid her back many times over. You know how I know? Because she told me so.

 Seven months before Russ and I would become the pastors of Park Road Baptist Church, Al Jones died. In her desire to honor his memory in this place, Jean gave a gift to the church and designated that gift in an appropriate way to honor his memory. What else? Lights. When Russ and I made our first visit as prospective pastors, these chandeliers were being installed. We never saw this sanctuary without this lighting. I can’t even imagine it. Not only are they beautiful, but they do light up the place, don’t they? After we had been here only a few months, we noted that the old sanctuary which was then being used as a fellowship hall was a bit dark. And with the little bit of left over money that Jean had given, we added some cove lighting to what is now Milford Chapel. So though we never knew Al, and Jean was never a regular attender after Al’s death, there is no doubt that Al and Jean Jones left their mark in this place. Light. How appropriate. And not just because lighting was Al’s work, but because of the importance of Light to our faith story. In the very first act of creation God made light and called it good. Everything else would be created in the Light of God’s divine handiwork – including creating a lovely lady known as Jean Jones. So many metaphors are used to describe Jesus, not the least of which is the Light of the world. So it is fitting that Al and Jean will be remembered in this place as givers of Light.

 I can only imagine that heaven has been a bit dim for the last 14 years. And now, in the Blessed Hope of the Forever Presence of God, Jean has added her light to heaven’s dome. And God has said that that is very very good. For the good life of Jean Jones – a lovely lady, a generous lady, a caregiver extraordinaire, we simply say: *Thanks be to God.* May it be so. Amen.