



## ***Pastor's Page***

### **A Supporting Roll**

Janet (not her real name) suffered with post-natal depression following the birth of her second child. Despite medical intervention, including hospitalisation, she got worse and her condition turned to manic depression. However, she was a committed Christian married to a vicar and the church prayed often for her healing. As a result she enjoyed some periods of relatively good mental health but she was never completely free from the illness.

It was with great sadness that I heard just a few months ago that Janet had died suddenly aged 60 following a routine visit to hospital. My heart went out to her husband and daughters and despite not having seen her for 20 years I felt I ought to go to the funeral. When the day came I headed off for the service with a whole mixture of feelings as I anticipated the forthcoming ceremony. Arriving at the church I walked down the path towards the entrance only to be told by one of the funeral directors that I probably wouldn't get inside as it was absolutely packed out (there were about 500 people there.) Determined to share in the ceremony I crept into the vestibule and stood with a number of others to listen to the service from there. Mike, (not his real name) Janet's husband, was brave enough to give the address including a eulogy to his departed wife. He spoke with great honesty, humour and affection as he paid tribute to the woman he loved who had been his life partner for nearly 40 years. As he talked about her strong Christian faith which she never lost even in her darkest days he said "Janet had an amazing prayer life" - she kept a prayer diary and a prayer list with several hundred names on it and she prayed for them all." He then paused and said, "many of you are probably here today because Janet prayed for you!" As he said this I could feel the tears welling up in my eyes as I considered the amazing possibility that this dear lady who suffered so much, spent time praying for me!! There's not much in life that is more humbling, more amazing and more encouraging than that. The fact that someone somewhere takes the time to speak to God on your behalf is quite simply incredible.

As I consider those who have been great prayer partners in my life my late grandma and also a wheelchair user called June who was a mighty 'prayer-warrior' would be near the top of the tree. June was quite a spiritual giant in the church in which I grew up and many people sought her out for spiritual advice and prayer. If June decided to pray for you, you knew it was serious because she meant business as far as intercessional prayer went! Whilst we can all "approach the throne of grace with confidence." (Heb 4:16) June seemed to have a 'hotline to heaven!' I valued both my Gran's and June's prayers so much that when they died within a relatively short space of time of each other I felt spiritually bereft. I'd relied so heavily upon their prayers, I wondered how I would survive without them. It would have been nice to think that they were praying for me in heaven but I could find no scripture to back up this hope. However, I did find a scripture that promises something much better than this. Paul tells us in Romans 8:34 that "Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us!" Now that is truly amazing... Jesus has us on his prayer list!

So let's cherish those who faithfully and regularly pray for us and resolve to do the same for others, knowing that there is One in Heaven who always intercedes for us.

*20<sup>th</sup> July 2008*