



April – May 2012

The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree;  
he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.  
Those that are planted  
in the house of the LORD  
shall flourish in the courts of our God.  
They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;  
they shall be fat and flourishing;

Psalm 92:12-14



**Flourishing life** – that is the dynamic picture God beautifully paints for us each spring, as green shoots appear on bare limbs, orange-blossoms almost overwhelm us with their pungently sweet aroma, weeds leap from the earth, flowers burst forth in every imaginable shape and hue, butterflies, birds and bees flit among the new growth – all nature relishing in creation’s glory.

We have a **tree in our yard** that has had a tenuous existence at best. You might say it is **“flourish-challenged.”** From the time it was first planted, **it never really looked healthy**, but Bill continued to do all he knew to help it along. Our understanding was that it was a tangerine tree, but as the eight “some-things” ripened that first year, we realized **they definitely were not tangerines**. Though the fruit were varying shades of orange, they definitely **in no way resembled tangerines**, or anything else. They **varied in size, and look. Each one was indeed unique**. Some were smooth-skinned, and some huge, bumpy and thick-skinned, and difficult to peel. The **flavor was yet another thing**. The fruit tasted in no way like any citrus we were familiar with, however, Deb kind of liked it. So, **we decided to see what the next year would bring**. That year we had about 30 of the “some-things” whatever they were, and they did not taste any better, nor look any better than in the previous year, but **we decided to give it another chance**. That next year, the tree was loaded with fruit, and they looked more uniform, but they never had a chance to ripen because the **tree was hit by a horrible hail storm**. The **leaves were shredded** from the tree, and most of the **fruit lay split-open on the ground**. Even those still on the tree were split or badly bruised. **It looked like the end for the tree**, but **we decided to see if it could possibly survive**. Then the **deep freeze hit**, and since the tree didn’t even have leaves, **we felt it definitely would not make it**. Most of the limbs looked completely dead, but to our utter amazement, **it made it back, and produced a bumper crop of “some-things.”** We had our landscape man pick them, but what happened next boggled our minds completely, as the **tree dropped all of its leaves**. Citrus trees are not supposed to do that, but this tree hadn’t read the book. The **tree remained completely bare**, looking worse than any Charlie Brown Christmas tree, through January, February and into March. **We thought we should just replace it**, but in mid March we **noticed the miracle of renewal** as little green shoots and leaves began showing up. **It has continued its effort to re-foliage**, and we are pretty sure there will be no crop this year, but **what a daily parable it is to us of the struggle in life to bloom where we are planted, produce whatever fruit we can, even in the midst of life’s worst storms and relish in the power of life and renewal**.

It is a graphic reminder that once we receive Christ as our Savior, He does indeed graft us into His own vine, giving us roots of new life, clothing us in leaves of His own righteousness, and infusing us with the sap of His own vibrant power through His Spirit. It also reminds us that each of us is unique in His sight, and He never gives up on us. Sometimes, the fruit that springs forth from our lives may not match the fruit of anyone else’s tree. In fact, others might not even know about or recognize our fruit. Perhaps, there will be times when we are so beaten down by the storms of life, by the frigid treatment that unfeeling-others may bring, by illness, loneliness and weariness, that it would seem we just cannot continue on. It is at times like that when we need to fully envision Christ’s desire for us as revealed in:

### Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

It is our wonderful privilege to be “tree tenders” here at Glencroft Retirement Community. Yes, many are weary, losing the outward trappings of life, and sagging in spirit. They need the wonderful “fertilizer” of God’s Word, and the watering of the Holy Spirit, along

with the prayers, encouragement and tender care of the “vine-dressers.” Just as in the case of our little “something tree,” sometimes we can only come along side, watch and see what our glorious Lord will do. In this life, we may not see renewal physically, but just as the saying goes about Good Friday – **“Friday is here, but Sunday is coming!” – Alleluia! How we praise God for our eternal promised renewal!**

Since our last letter, our lives have been filled with many diverse opportunities to see the hand of God at work. Our Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s special programs, all written by Deb, went well, and were well-received.

We have had the delight of having special visitors in our home – Carol and Ken, long-time friends and supporters from Lake George, New York, and Ben Jennings, prayer missionary with Campus Crusade for Christ. We were also able to visit shortly with John and Sue Graham, friends from Oregon, who came through town in March. We also took a couple of mini- R & R trips to Tucson and Parker Dam. As our Lord taught us by His own example, we need to come aside from the ministry sometimes to heal and recoup our strength for the daily battle.

In February, Deb was in the ER with an exceptionally high fever and a headache. After, umpteen tests, they sent her home with no diagnoses. At least we knew what wasn’t wrong with her. It took her about two weeks to feel nearly herself again. In the middle of her recovery, Bill was hit by vomiting that would not stop, and was hospitalized for 2 days, but also with no real diagnoses. He is still recuperating.

Somehow, in the midst of everything, Deb was able to get the Good Friday Service written. We are so thankful for our people who are so willing to still take part in the services to bring honor to their Lord. About 3 years ago, we would have 20-25 participants in each program, but now we only have about 12 faithful ones, who keep on keeping on.

The decline continues in our church attendance. This past year we “graduated to glory” 17 members of our church, as well as 6 regular attenders, and 11 past attenders. 12 of our members and attenders moved off campus. At present, we have 12 members restricted from attendance by health and over 36 regular attenders restricted by health. All of these, who are laid aside by health and age, represent our daily ministry. You can see why we sometimes do feel “weary in well-doing.” Making phone calls, visits, and writing encouragement cards are a big part of our ministry, and there just aren’t enough hours to meet everyone’s need. **That is why we need you to pray very specifically that we use our days as He desires. May our priorities truly be His priorities. May each appointment be a “divine appointment.”**

We are thankful for God’s continual work in our family’s lives. **Joy**, who was in Washington and Oregon for about a year, is back in Phoenix. She is still recovering from a bad case of “Mono,” and is presently staying with us. It is so good to have her near.

**Melody and Scott** have 3 high-school graduates and one eight-year old. With Chris in his own apartment, and the two girls, Cammie & Katie, either in college, studying, or working, Melody, Scott, and Ryan spend a lot of time together. We enjoy being with them whenever possible.

**Leroy and his family** are all doing well. We cannot fathom that Synthia, who turns 15 in July will be going to high school. Destiny will be in eighth grade, Hunter in sixth, and Austin in fifth. Their full-time Nanny-Mom Jolene, who has served Lee’s family for more than six years, is a blessing in every possible way, and we thank God many times a day for sending her to us. We had the joy of celebrating her Irish heritage with a little party this March 16<sup>th</sup>, and lots of “green things.”

**On April 29<sup>th</sup>, the Glencroft Community Church will be ordaining Debbie.** It will not change what she does in ministry, but will be a nice recognition by the church of her subordinate ministry with Bill on the campus.

We are indeed thankful for each of you, who have loved us so faithfully through our many years of life and ministry. Your support, encouragement, and belief that God could use us has kept us going. We do not say thank-you often enough, so, **“Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you.”**

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**A Caring Ministry of** <http://www.facebook.com/handivangelism>  
**Handi\*Vangelism Ministries International (H\*VMI)** <http://www.twitter.com/HVMI>  
**P. O. Box 122, Akron, PA 17501-0122**  
**Phone: (717) 859-4777 \*\* Fax: (717) 721-7662**

**Our Home information:**  
2919 W. Heatherbrae Drive, Phoenix, Arizona 85017-4118  
e-mail: [billdebcarson@gmail.com](mailto:billdebcarson@gmail.com)  
Cell Phones: Deb’s: 480-635-2265 and Bill’s: 602-577-7614