

Fear Not!
A Good Word for Wilma Morrison
August 21, 2005

It was what the family and I discussed at the end of our conversation last night as I sat and learned about Wilma Morrison from their perspective. I thought that was interesting since it was my first introduction to Wilma – at least it’s the first I remember of hearing of Wilma – quite literally – hearing from Wilma. You all know it – most better than I as her voice rings out over the speakers to the hundreds of cars lined up on Hough Road. In the beginning, the cars lined Park Road, but now it’s Hough Road and our backyard neighbors that hear it so clearly on the nights leading up to Christmas: “Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.” The smiles unfurl as this Southern angel speaks the Truth of the age-old story: *Fear not!* I use this as a framework with which to celebrate the life of Wilma Morrison.

Fear Not, for behold she was a woman who loved music. She played mostly by ear. She was the organist here and quite the entertainer, I hear, on Wednesday nights for Family Night Supper. I still hear about how there used to be entertainment. She started that trend and as far as I can tell, there’s been no one that can hold a candle to her abilities in this department. Music played a huge role for the entire family. She met J.D. Morrison here and they made quite a team – raising their children to love music – that which speaks for the soul when words fall short. The children remember that the PRBC campus was their home away from home. Good memories were made here with the music of God singing its way into the hearts of the Morrison family.

Fear Not, for behold she was a woman who was ahead of her time. She was a working woman long before that was popular or politically correct. She was a career

woman of the 50's – a pioneer of sorts. Oh, certainly, she was a devoted mother first and foremost – I'll get to that in a moment, but before children and after they were a little older, Wilma dedicated herself to her work. She was an organizer and a planner with wonderful writing and speaking skills.

Fear Not, for behold she was a woman who loved to laugh and have a good time. I understand she had a great sense of humor – one that I often picked up on in the kinds of emails she would forward to me and a host of others. The poetry that she wrote was often laced with her wit. She even kept the nurses smiling right up until the end. She received wonderful care because she offered wonderful care whether at the hospital or with her family or among her friends.

Fear Not, for behold she had a great mind and a wonderful vocabulary. Wilma was smart. She loved her cross-word puzzles and she loved good grammar and she loved words. And I hear she didn't mind correcting you if you spoke incorrectly.

Fear Not, for behold she was a part of the start of a great church. Charlie, J.D., and Wilma made up the first ministerial team that launched this great church. I could tell you what I've heard, but it comes best from Charlie himself. I read to you from a collection of letters written to Wilma this past spring. One of the letters was from Charlie. A portion of that letter reads:

Dearest Wilma,
I have finally begun writing my "Memoirs" and already you are a major character, a most important person in my life. This is no surprise, but it is a joyful experience of recalling all the good times we shared. It would be much easier and more fun if you were standing beside me as you used to outside the Chapel whispering the names of the worshippers, especially new members and visitors as they came out the door. They thought I was great at calling names and it made friends for me and the church. How did you know them all? And Church Secretary was a misnomer. You were at least Associate Pastor for our first five years until you quit work to rear those beautiful children. You took care of all the records, composed, typed, mimeographed and mailed the Church News, helped me plan

the Order of Worship, kept me aware of all the pastoral needs and often counseled members with problems. Many of the distressed never got beyond your office because they didn't need to. And you absorbed so much hostility on the telephone that lots of spouses were spared. Family Night was another specialty of yours. We always had entertainment, real fun, as long as you were in charge. You made the piano get up and dance.

Charlie said it better than I could. Wilma was instrumental in the starting this church. We all owe her our sincere thanks for her part in birthing this community of faith.

Fear Not, for behold she was a woman who loved to travel. Donald helped her see the world. A companion and friend, he journeyed with her through this wonderful retired season of life – living life to the fullest even in her older age.

Fear Not, for behold she was a woman whose life was dedicated to the well-being of her children and grandchildren. Without a doubt, say her three children, they and later the grandchildren, were the most important thing in her life. She gave her complete devotion to her children. She promised them her complete trust – so she told them to always be honest for she was always going to believe them. She called them to live lives of integrity for it was her striving as well. She offered a positive example. She was open-minded and treated them with respect. She gave her life to them, and I know, they will forever love her for it.

Fear Not, for behold she was a woman of deep faith. She was liberal in the best sense of the word. You could tell that by her forwarded emails as well. Hers was a thinking faith that carried her in this life. She was able to see things ahead of time – not psychic, but deeply intuitive. Her touch – her loving, healing touch – was the balm for many wounds in her family and among her friends. She had a depth of understanding and a richness of soul – a faith that sustained her in life as it did in death. As a charter member of this church, her faith was a part of a foundation that carries us today.

This December, as her voice still rings out in this community, The Judean Hills: A Living Tableau will be dedicated to her memory. As a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I hold to the Blessed Hope that what she says is still as true today as it was over 2000 years ago - "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." Today, Wilma rests in that great and joyful place of the forever presence of God. She was a faithful mother, a faithful friend, and a faithful follower of Jesus. That kind of faith and love does indeed cast out fear and leads us into joyful living. It was the life that Wilma led. May it be ours as well. Amen.