

**The Faith of our Ancestors
By Kathryn Cubalo**

I don't think it is an accident that we have such a close-knit and loving family. There were those who were praying for us long before we were born. Sometimes I wish I could have known these pioneers back then when their faith motivated them to seek new land and to try to better their lives for their children and grandchildren. We know so little of their thoughts and they didn't leave a record for us to read, so I want to write down a few words that might tell something of what they believed. We can't get into their minds, so we must rely on how they lived.

The Olson Family:

Our grandfather, Frederick, was the youngest of the five brothers who came from Norway. We don't know who came first, but our grandfather was the last to arrive. All the brothers sent for or brought their wives or fiancées with them. As far as we know, all were of the Lutheran faith and when they bought farms in Spruce, they became active in the Spruce Lutheran Church. All of my Dad's family members were confirmed there, so my grandparents must have thought it was important. According to some records we have, my Dad's Uncle John had a good singing voice and one of his daughters played the organ. All of the brothers were builders and, apparently, helped each other to get started farming. Since my grandfather died young (my dad was only 8 months old), I can imagine that the rest of the family helped my grandmother with her eight children.

We know a little about my grandmother's faith. She was reported to be very generous and hospitable. She felt it was a sin to turn away anyone who was hungry, and she often fed the Indian families who walked from Hubbard Lake to Spruce. She gave away her precious Christening dress to a poor neighbor whose baby was stillborn and had no clothes for the burial. She acted as a midwife to women in the neighborhood.

One of my memories of her is giving us loaves of bread to take home. Sonny got to carry them so I was a bit jealous. Since Sonny was the first grandson, he had special treatment. Her children, including my Dad, were all kind and thoughtful people and most attended church throughout their lives.

The Piper Family:

The Piper family came from Ontario, Canada to the Harbor Beach area of Michigan. They must have had a strong church background as my Grandpa Piper was a person determined to be a good Christian. He observed the Sunday rule of "none but essential" work and saw to it that the family attended church regularly. They had to go by horse and wagon or sleigh, as he did not have a car until mid-life. (He could never drive very well!) At times he served as the Sunday School superintendent and Grandma taught the small children's class. The church was the center of their social and spiritual lives.

Our parents, John & Isabel Olson:

Although my Dad was raised Lutheran, he became a member of the Presbyterian Church with my Mother. We children (my two brothers, my sister and I) were brought up in the midst of my Mother's family and the Spruce Presbyterian congregation. It was good for us to have the church family. They cared about our welfare and were happy with our successes as we grew up. I remember fondly many of these people who were friends of our parents and grandparents. We were especially fortunate to have the Chamberlains as youth leaders.

I don't remember very much religious conversation at our home, but my Mother sometimes talked about her faith. In today's language, she would be called a liberal believer. One time we wondered about the theory of evolution. She said she believed God created, but she wasn't

concerned about how or when He did it. She was never judgmental about another person's faith. Of her family, she, Aunt Helen and Uncle John were church-goers; Uncle Elmer and Uncle Art did not care for organized religion. Uncle Art said he worshipped through nature. As children, we received a good deal of religious instruction from Aunt Helen who lived with us at times before she married. She often reminded us that "God was watching."

Both our parents were kind and generous people. I remember Mother making mittens and Christmas gifts for neighbor children, and Dad taking up a collection for an injured man. They thought it was important for us to be respectful of others. My Mother didn't want our behavior to displease our grandparents or God. They expected good behavior, but were also fun-loving and not too strict.

Our Mother was a great one for getting the family together. Holidays were celebrated at our Piper grandparents' home (my Dad's mother died when I was six) and as they got older, everyone was invited to our home. In the summer, we gathered at the Piper cottage at Hubbard Lake most Sunday afternoons and especially on the 4th of July. That tradition continues today.

Perhaps we are different than some families in that we think these family occasions are important. We like the cousins to know each other and have good times together. We also think it is important to pray for each other during the sad times. There is a spiritual bond that upholds us, a bond that is God-given. We are wise to celebrate this bond with our extended family.

We give thanks to our ancestors who worked so hard and still had time to pray for us. We are now, and will always be, surrounded by their faith, love and grace.

This is a story about my Dad, John Olson, that my Mother told us: After Sonny and I were away from home, she, Daddy, Honey and Johnny took a trip to Seattle, Washington to visit my Dad's brother, Harold, and his wife Louise.

Uncle Harold and Aunt Louise attended a Presbyterian church. They lived a good life and had prayer before meals. At one of their meals, they asked my Dad to say the grace. My mother said her heart almost stopped as she knew that Daddy was not in the habit of saying the grace. She shouldn't have worried, because he didn't even appear startled, but bowed his head and said the prayer my Grandpa Piper always said before meals. My mother was so relieved and very pleased that he had memorized that prayer.

This is the prayer:
 Bless us God.
 In Thee we live and move and have our being.
 Make us thankful for these mercies.
 Forgive us our sins.
 In Christ's name, Amen.

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 March 2013