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## *All-the-Time Faith by Christine Fischer*

**Youth Summer Mission**  
**Union Gospel Mission**  
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Sally just turned 14 years old, but she was only 4 when we first met. I guess first impressions really do count, because I still remember her energetic spirit that day... She had me hooked. When we were younger we never left each other's sides. In fact, my parents used to say Sally was my shadow, following my every footstep, always sitting next to me at the dinner table, patiently waiting for me to drop a piece of bread on the ground for her. You see, Sally is my dog.

She has her special qualities that you won't find in many other dogs. For instance, when I throw her a Frisbee, she runs in the opposite direction, to dodge the "attacking" saucer... She absolutely dreads playing in water, and will even bark at a falling leaf. In fact, Sally doesn't even have other dog friends. I think she has an issue with jealousy. When another dog approaches us, she'll bark until she scares the other dog away. I guess she fears I might find another dog to replace her. Well, Sally died last month from old age.

I know now, better than ever, that she cannot be replaced. She was something unique and special to me. For weeks I was miserable, I felt so alone. It didn't feel right not being woken up to Sally licking me in the face, seeing that tail wag, and ready to play. I was walking around without my shadow, I was empty. I kept thinking about how happy I used to be when Sally was around. Why did this have to happen to me? My life had been so peaceful, then Sally died and everything was thrown off balance. I was miserable. Sally's death was a major, unexpected bump in the road.

All of us hit bumps in the road. We experience death, anger, sadness, heartbreak, that's called life... and guess what, it's unavoidable. We are sailing along this great journey, until a devastating wind throws us off our path. We become distraught, confused, scared, even angry. We may ask ourselves, why did this happen to me? I was just so peaceful. But the peace never seems to last long enough.

During these rainstorms we may also question our faith. Why would God lead me into a position like this? I ask myself, Why would God allow Sally to die and leave me so unhappy? I know God loves me, and in fact, loves me so much to bless me with the gift of eternal life. It's easy for us, sometimes daily, to forget this (arms) tremendous blessing that awaits us in God's kingdom. Knowing that God is always at our side, we may still wonder if God is listening, especially during the storms.

In today's Gospel, Jesus invites his disciples to cross the lake with him. While on the water, a giant storm arose, bringing great danger. The disciples were scared for their lives. Predictably, they relied on Jesus for a sense of security. Yet, Jesus didn't seem to be disturbed by this violent storm. In fact, he was sleeping!!! "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?!!!"

As a disciple, how would you feel? I would feel as if Jesus had forgotten about me! I mean, Jesus must have known a storm was coming, he is Jesus! When we turn to our Lord for help, we pray and pray to make it through the storm safely. At times, the storm can feel endless! Is Jesus sleeping on us?

We'll never know for sure why Jesus was sleeping. Maybe the rocking of the boat, the sound of the water, the peaceful atmosphere. But, just maybe, Jesus was testing the faith of his disciples.

Though it is easy to do, we cannot have selective faith. We cannot trust a God that invites us on the lake, and not trust that God will safely get us to the other side. Trust is a strong word, it's reliance on the integrity, strength and ability of something. If we were to trust anything, wouldn't our Lord be the one to depend on? Absolutely. You see, In the end, Jesus calmed the storm, leaving his disciples unharmed.

As St. Paul reminds us, every affliction, hardship, calamity, beating, imprisonment, riot, and sleepless night we deal with, will be overcome by the great power of God. Friends, there is no storm too great for God to handle. And, with the Holy Spirit, there is no storm too great for us to handle.

I enjoyed many years with Sally by my side. Sure, the storm passed through, and Sally moved on from this life. But, I have gained peace and comfort in Christ, knowing that Sally awaits for me in God's kingdom. I have also found comfort through friends, my many brothers and sisters in Christ.

As God's children we have the spirit living within us. When we turn to one another for guidance and comfort, that spirit rubs off. God's love is contagious, and there is no greater blessing than to spread God's love to others, especially in times of struggle. We all experience going through the storm, we all know what it's like to feel lost and empty.

But, God has a purpose with every storm; whether to strengthen faith, friendships, love, or simply to humble us, we may never truly know. Our task is not to understand, but to trust, have faith. Though storms are unavoidable, God will never leave us alone in the chaos.

So, reach out, lend a hand to a neighbor in need. Be patient, we are in God's care. Remind one another that the storm will cease, the kingdom of heaven is shining through the clouds, awaiting us all. AMEN