

## Ritual of Hope

One: Barb and Daniel you are part of our family. The joys and sorrows of your lives are our joys and sorrows too. Three years ago we covenanted to be with you in the ups and downs of your journey with Daniel's autism. Since that time we have cherished the times when you could be with us and held you in prayer when you could not.

One: We have celebrated holy moments with you—the bike ride at Little Light House's family day, and Daniel's participation in Special Olympics. We have prayed with you as Daniel prepared to enter public schools and rejoiced with you as he negotiated that transition. We have hurt and feared with you over Daniel's increasing aggression, and cried with you when that journey has meant deep pain.

One: We give thanks for the courage it has taken for you to live abundantly in the midst of dis-ease,  
-for your decision to love without reservation in spite of the risk of a broken heart,  
-for your commitment to care steadfastly in times of struggle as well as times of joy,

- for your insistence in celebrating the “God-stuff” in every day— the smiles, the hugs, the new worlds learned, the companionship of family, the laughter of friends,
- for your wisdom in continuing over and over to trust the power of community, and
- for your faithfulness in entrusting Daniel, yourself, and your journey to God, every single day, even when God seems far away.

Your courage has encouraged us.

ALL: Today we hold with you the hope of a new treatment, and the possibility it holds for Daniel. As you follow the star from Tulsa to Chicago, not knowing what gifts of disappointments lie ahead, we offer you our fiercest prayers, our wildest dreams and our deepest yearning. We also offer you our renewed commitment to be with you come what may.

[ A few representatives of the community are asked to lay hands on Barb and to sit beside Daniel on the floor, as we pray together. this blessing of solidarity]

God of grace and hope, hold Barb and Daniel in your “fierce tenderness” as they journey to Chicago. Surround them with courage, and wisdom, and strength as they continue to seek all that is possible for Daniel. Be with their friends and family as they wait and empower us, O God, to be instruments of healing and wholeness and compassion and strength as together we face both the triumphs and trials that lie ahead. Amen.

By Reverend Leslie Penrose

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