

**“Risky Caregivers”**  
Sermon by Lisa Crismore  
John Knox Presbyterian Church – August 21, 2011

Exodus 1:8-2:10

This past week there was a memorial service held for the victims of the tragedy at the State Fairgrounds. Both Dr. Bill Enright and Governor Mitch Daniels officiated. They both shared how many people came together and helped when the disaster occurred. Governor Daniels said, “There was a hero ever 10 feet!” I’m sure many of you have seen the pictures of the fans coming together side-by-side lifting the collapsed scaffolding to free those people pinned under the staging apparatus. In the midst of the chaos and the upcoming storm, brave strangers came together and cared for one another.

Caring for one another is NOT a strange term here at John Knox. In fact “Caring” is one of the words used in our new tagline to describe our church. I think it fits us pretty well. We show care for others in many ways. We visit each other when we are in the hospital. We take care of each other when we are sick and shut-in at home or we take each other to dr. appointments. We help with meals, when needed. We work out together in Cyd’s fitness class. When one of us needs something repaired, we fix it for them. We send one another cards.

We also are great at taking care of our building. Many of us are continuously giving our metal to be recycled by Harlan and Don. We generously give to our building campaign. We serve in the church in various ways. Many times trustees are here at all hours checking on the building and fixing things that need repaired. We support our Presbyterian Women, who are always fund raising, cleaning or making something for the church.

Our caring nature is also shared with those outside our walls. Some of us have gone to New Orleans to build homes with Habitat for Humanity. Our youth have gone to West Virginia to refurbish flood victims homes. We support Kelly and Jon Simpson in their mission in El Salvador. We tutor students on Wednesday nights. We open our doors to hundreds of strangers to host VBS and the Easter and Fall festivals. We offer our building for many groups to use as a meeting space.

I believe Fishhook nailed us when they gave us the tagline “Open. Caring. Community.”! But they would have not known this if we had not shared with them who we are. I think we live up to what we told them.

What is it like to be on the receiving end of all this caring? I have heard from many of you that this is an incredible feeling. When you know that this entire congregation is lifting you up in prayer and they are sending you cards. They are coming to visit you or calling and leaving messages that you were in their thoughts and prayers. It is truly amazing!

My parents have been spending a lot of time recently at my cousin’s lake property. They have been entrusted to be the caregivers or overseers of this property as my cousin lives in Utah. This is why you haven’t seen them very much in church. They have been worshipping God in nature not playing hooky...well maybe a little! We are always welcome to join them in this little piece of heaven. So a couple of weeks ago, Jim and I drove down to Sweet Water Lake after church to enjoy an afternoon out on the boat. Now my dad recently bought a huge canvas covered tire inner-tube called “The Screamer”. This thing floats or bounces along as it is being towed by the pontoon boat. It is quite fun actually. I had finished my turn and was trying to get back into the boat, when we realized my dad had forgotten to bring the ladder. It was quite hysterical as I have lost most of my upper body strength from leaving FedEx and could not raise myself up into the boat. I tried and tried. At first it was funny but then it became very tiresome. My husband, Jim, was finally able to pull me up out of the water so that I could catch my breath and feel secure inside the boat. I think that is what it is like when other people pray for you. There are times when life seems overwhelming. But the power of prayer and others caring for you can make all the difference. God’s love and power is felt through others!

Moses is definitely on the receiving end of God's gracious caregivers. This amazing story is filled with people who are willing to risk everything to give life to Moses and eventually others.

Pharaoh is worried about the growing numbers of the Hebrew people. He is concerned about losing power and control. He forces them into slavery. This does not stop the Hebrews from multiplying. Pharaoh continues to be concerned. So he sends out a request to the midwives to destroy all newborn males. But this falls on the deaf ears of Shiprah and Puah for they honor God more. They are willing to risk the outcome of Pharaoh's fury by refusing the political orders. When asked what happened, these women lie and speak of the Hebrew women having dream deliveries, which only a man would believe! God is pleased with them and protects them.

Pharaoh does not stop there. He continues his mission by ordering genocide to all male children! This horrible news comes to a mother, who is pregnant and scared for her unborn child. She gives birth to a beautiful boy, who she loves and adores! Oh she must keep him safe. Her son must remain hidden. After 3 months, it has become too risky to keep him. The mother devises a plan. The baby will be placed in a basket and sent down the Nile River just at the right time. The infant's sister will be sent to watch out for him. The plan is executed with a surprising ending because it is Pharaoh's daughter, who finds the basket.

Can you imagine how nervous this child was when she saw the Egyptian princess look into the basket? I mean this really had disaster written all over it. The relief she must have felt when the princess was willing to save the baby's life by looking after him. What courage it took for her to offer a woman to nurse the boy? Of course she would take Moses back to his mother to be cared for until he was weaned. But then this unnamed mother must give this child up again.

Did she know at this time that this child was not only special to her but special in the sense that he would be called later by God to do great things? Every mother thinks their child is wonderful. Most mothers want to hold on to their children in fact it is difficult to let them go.

My daughter Bethany leaves tomorrow for a year-long mission trip in San Antonio, Texas. She will be working for the Presbyterian Church USA. This last week, I was feeling sorry for myself at a meeting at the Presbytery Office. We were sharing prayer requests. I was asking that God be with her as she begins this extraordinary adventure but also that God help her mother say goodbye. Now, I am embarrassed to say that she will be 25 yrs. old next month. She has become a good friend and I will miss her. So, I can't imagine what it would be like to give up your infant child once let alone twice! But after we gave our prayer request, we went around the room praying for the person on our left. As we prayed, the person praying for me said, "God help Lisa realize that Bethany is your child. She belonged to you first and she will always belong to you. Perhaps this is what Moses' mother knew when God gave her the strength to give him back to the Egyptian princess. Maybe she knew that God had something planned for him and she must let him go.

The risk and courage that these women took to care for Moses is incredible. It is not known how Pharaoh's daughter kept this hidden from her father. We only know that Moses grows up and is called by God at the burning bush to go and save the Hebrew people. Moses follows in his mother's footsteps by taking the risk of faith to care for the Israelites and lead these people through the wilderness to the promise land.

Being a risky caregiver is never easy! In the movie "The Helper", the maids of Jackson, Mississippi decide to tell their side of the story, which takes place during the 1960s. This story tells of the amazing strong Spirited African American women, who have spent their lives taking care of prominent southern families. Skeeter is the young society girl, who returns from college, eager to become a writer. She talks Aibileen, Skeeter's best friend's housekeeper, into sharing her story and risking everything to tell the truth. ([www.google.com/movies](http://www.google.com/movies)) This is back during the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. African Americans were being shot by the Klu Klux Klan and the public officials in the deep-south looked the other way. One of my favorite scenes is when

Aibileen enters the church after the book is printed and the entire congregation greets her with a standing ovation. By taking a risk, she was able to change lives.

As Frank shared with the people at our Presbytery meeting, the congregation of John Knox took a risk in making the decision to stay in this community and build our new sanctuary. Our community has changed as it has become more culturally diverse. We have made a commitment to our neighbors that we are here to stay and do ministry into the future.

“Open. Caring. Community” is who we are. We have to keep taking a risk. We can’t stop now! God did not stop with saving the infant Moses. God had other plans for Moses. I believe God has other plans for us too and we have to keep going! What does that look like? It was Friday night during the week of Vacation Bible School, we had over 180 people in our fellowship hall for the pitch-in dinner! Barry Sumner, who is the Commissioned Lay Pastor for New Creation Church, asks Frank and I, “So what does this say about the ministry here at John Knox?” This question has stayed with me ever since then. I believe this is our future, which is ministering to our neighborhood. Many of our neighbors are not white-Anglos. Seventy percent of the children that attended VBS were Hispanics.

What will the future ministry at John Knox look like? I’m not sure. I wonder if this means focusing on a more partnering relationship with Iglesia Nueva Creación rather than a simple nesting arrangement. I see the advantages of partnering when we do tutoring, VBS and the Easter Festival.

Do we become more advocates for our Hispanic neighbors when it comes to immigration legislation? I have been reading about the “Dream Act”, which is legislation that if passed will allow illegal immigrant children to apply for college scholarships. This will also protect them from deportation. These scholarships could be awarded to children with good grades and honorable character, children like Daniel, Luiz and Angie, who many of us tutor on Wednesday nights.

I use to believe that politics didn’t belong in the pulpit but isn’t that what our story is about today. Pharaoh was the political figure, who was using his power to control the Hebrew people. He was using his office and title to crush this race. It was our sovereign God, who saved Moses and by doing so saves the Israelite nation!

During the closing remarks at the State Fair Memorial Service, our Governor Mitch Daniels said, “We need to get back to business...back to the business of caring for each other! May we here at John Knox continue to take the risk of caring for each other, our church, our community and our world! May we take the risk so that we can change lives! Amen.