

January 31, 2021

Dear Friends,

At 6:18pm tonight -which is Sunday, many of us from the Stephy's Place family will be placing candles in our windows in a prayerful, communal response for our friend and mentor Marion Fitzgerald, who is suffering from cancer and not doing well. Some of you may have never heard of Marion before, so today I want to dedicate this reflection to her.

I first met Marion before September 2001, but it was the tragedy of 9-11 and our response that spiritually fused our relationship for all these years to follow. Marion had no idea how her world would change forever when Elaine Chevalier, who lost her son Swede that day, approached her to help start a support group for so many of the family members who lost loved ones. They approached me to help facilitate what would become the New Life Support Group. Marion, a spunky, fashionable, grandmother and mother of seven had seemingly endless energy and she unhesitatingly jumped into action to help form the group. Marion was a gifted and trained Spiritual Director and was well known to many in our area. She knew this would be her mission for the next few years and, much like me, came to believe that all of her experience and training were to prepare her for this earth-shaking event and the ongoing care that would be so essential. She would begin to devote every waking moment and many sleepless nights to this very special group of wounded women. We met every Tuesday morning at 9:30 for years. I eventually moved out of the area but stayed connected to the group, Marion stayed as the glue, the maternal lifeforce to help the group to continue for as long as it needed. Marion not only became a dear friend; she is one of those amazing people whom I consider to be a local hero. She was the one who took the late-night phone calls and hosted many early morning breakfasts for whomever it was who needed some extra TLC at the time. Marion and I have always mutually admired one another's ability to see God in the mundane and ordinary, and she brought that gift to this bereaved group whose world had been torn to shreds. Her most famous question that she asked all the time was, "Where do you see God in that?"

After years of hosting retreats, leading the support group, and offering spiritual direction to so many of those who were grieving, Marion would eventually need support as she developed

breast cancer, which she overcame with amazing faith, grace and vitality, but then she suddenly lost her beloved husband whom she always affectionately called Fitzzy. The reason we lit our candles at 6:18 was because that is her and Fitzzy's anniversary. As so many of you know, Marion's life was changed forever after Fitzzy died; she needed to turn from being a group leader to a group member as she grieved this catastrophic loss in her life and her family. Amazingly, in a short amount of time, even though she was still grieving, Marion continued to console and help guide those who came to her for spiritual direction. Now, as many of you know all too well from your own experiences of loss, the cancer returned, and Marion is fighting for her life. Her wonderful, beautiful family surrounds her, and we her friends are blanketing her in prayer.

Marion has continued to carry the torch of the New Life Support group until this very day, and out of that experience Stephy's Place has come into existence. Her gift of love, compassion, wisdom, support, and grace just keeps multiplying and giving, and I am confident it will never end. In response to her most famous question, let me say this: How can we **not** see God in **you** Marion Fitzgerald? God bless you and keep you, God shed his Light upon you and grant you peace. Amen.

Peace and Serenity, Kevin