

Dear Friends,

On Saturday, I turn 65 years old. There, I said it or *wrote it* as the case may be. You would think that all these accumulated years would have engendered some common sense, modesty, and decorum as to the inadvisability of calling attention to one's self, never mind one's own birthday. But permit me to use this occasion for three reflections.

First of all, even if I wanted to forget it was happening – there was no avoiding my birthday. During the past year – as if the pandemic with its own myriad of challenges wasn't stressful enough – I have regularly received mail about Medicare reminding me that I would be turning 65. Approximately twice a week, a card, letter or brochure would arrive advising me about Medicare programs and that I had better get my Medicare plan figured out. Rather than bemoan my aging condition, I decided to give thanks that I have medical insurance options and excellent health care. With so many people who do not have the means to access adequate care, we need to ensure that *all people of all ages* can receive skilled and sufficient medical care.

Second, while I didn't begin high school until 1970, I grew up in a time infused with the radicalism of the 1960's: Yippies and hippies, peace protests and civil rights marches, racial unrest and awareness of disparity. The focus on youth and the antiestablishment ethos gave rise to the saying: "*Don't trust anyone over 30.*" So here I am, more than double the age of trustworthiness. As the world took note of Bob Dylan's 80th birthday last week, I think we can retire notions of ageism along with abolishing the other "isms" including racism, sexism, classism, plus homophobia and religious intolerance. It can take a lifetime to let go of harmful prejudices and change our ways and attitudes. How fortunate that many of us have decades to grow and learn and evolve.

Third, I am embracing my milestone birthday as befitting my new grandmother status. While there are grandmothers far younger than I, there are also grandmothers far older. My own beloved maternal grandmother passed away at the age of 101. Birthdays are opportunities to think about all the people who accompany us on our life journey. It is a day to give thanks to God for family and friends and so many others who make the days and years of our lives meaningful and joyful.

William Barclay, who lived from 1907-1978, was a Church of Scotland minister, theologian, popular speaker, and biblical scholar. He once said, "*There are two great days in a person's life, the day we are born and the day we discover why.*" I deeply appreciate his words and know that he is referring to the day of our birth and to the day when we embrace our faith and God's purpose for our lives. But perhaps *every day of our lives* can be a day to re-discover why we are on this earth and what we can do for the betterment of all.

May each day – and not just our birthday – be cause for celebration. I may be over 30, but you can trust me on this!

God bless,
Jane