



*An Advent
wrapped in Love.*

A Gift of Love

By Bonnie Schwartz

December 24th 2013, my sister Charm, husband Pete and daughter Niki, came to spend Christmas with us. They knew my husband Clem had Alzheimer's and lung cancer. Diagnosed in 2012, it was hard to predict the time it would take for the diseases to change the person we knew and loved. We were getting ready to go to church and hear a bell choir Christmas Eve. As we all conversed in the living room, Clem asked if he could speak to me in the kitchen.

In the kitchen he looked at me and said
"I think everyone is really nice but I don't have any idea who they are. And I think you are very nice too but am not sure who you are as well."

At that moment I knew my research about the ravages of Alzheimer's was coming true. Stories of experiences with loved ones, potential behaviors expected, prepared me on an intellectual level. When they happened, the reality was an awakening.

I had no experience with the condition, nor did I know anyone who had. I was fearful of the journey ahead. What was he feeling? How confusing it must be. How uncertain it was. He does not



know me. How can that possibly occur? The cruelty of this disease, knowing, but not knowing all that lay ahead, made it very difficult to grasp. But there it was.

My gratitude to my sister and our family for being there at this moment was enormous. Words do not adequately describe the support needed and my emotions.

After 45 years together, our love defied explanation. We would travel this journey together. In the caregiving years, I asked God for strength many times, grateful for His presence in my life. Compassion and commitment came naturally to me. I was to call on each many times, as well as prayer.

December 24th, 2014, Christmas Eve, after Clem's death in September I attended First Church. Where there had been a hole in my heart, this decision filled that hole. It was an emotion I felt and was so moved by it.

The gifts: Deeply loved, supported by friends and family, a connection to God's grace.

Prayer: (selections from 1 Corinthians 13 (KJV)
Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol...Love never faileth...And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.