

**Sermon: July 31, 2009 - the funeral of John Stafford (Jack) Rinehart  
The Rev'd Robert G. Riegel**

God does not intend for us just to be; to only exist; to just grimly hang around. God intends for us to be fully alive and joyfully alive. Jack Rinehart, more than anyone I know, savored life, drank it in and absorbed all the wonders of God's creation. Jack was a mature, successful adult, yes. Yet, in him there lived an eager, excited child, delighted with the world about him; delighted and loving of the family and friends he knew God had given him.

Jack was one of my dear friends and he enjoyed a multitude of friends. I got to know him first on the tennis courts, both of us played a bit tricky, very competitive, but always we had such fun. Then Jack started listening to and reading on line my sermons and he would always comment on them. It was hard for him to see or say anything negative and his eagerness often found gems in my sermons that I did not know were there.

If you were on his large Email list then you know how alive and excited he was about the creation. Looking into the heavens and seeing billions of years and universe after universe. Or looking into a molecule and atom and seeing quarks and other mysteries of creation. Fascinated with the advance of computers and how they would more and more be a part of our lives and even our bodies. His love of science did not move him away from God. Rather he became more religious. He kept realizing that God was always greater than we could imagine. And yet he managed as well as anyone to maintain that God was personal, intimate and loving.

That picture in the newspaper showed the Jack we all knew. And that brightness and eager smile was always with him. The day before his death he took off the oxygen mask for a moment and laughed and laughed about a joke he never told me. He said he had written a sermon and I wished that I could have read it. But I think the sermon was not in words but in his life. His life was sacramental bringing the good news and grace of God and the presence of God to many others.

It was amazing that Jack was even excited about dying and all the new things he would know and experience. It made me realize that we often die according to the way we live. I will venture that family and friends who visited with Jack during his illness learned important, valuable and wonderful lessons as to how to live and how to die.

In early June Jack sent a letter to his children and grandchildren. He said that he wanted them to carry on some of his lifetime search for God's truth. He shared with them a formula for remembering life's purpose. Based on the word PURPOSE

**P – Passion for living – by joyful and spread it around.**

**U – Universe. Be one with it and venerate all God's Creation**

**R – Ring the bell of achievement: good thoughts are not enough**

**P – Pass on your heritage of beliefs and passions**

**O – Others – We are all one – doing for others is like doing for yourself**

**S – Spirituality – Don't let daily hassles keep you from communing with God.**

**E – Enlightenment – never stop learning**

He said to his family, "I love all of you very much. You have been the main meaning of my life. My life has been piled high with blessings I owe a very big debt to the God. I want you each to help me pay it back to God and the world."

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His life was a sermon for us all and it is obvious that Jack practiced what he preached. We give thanks to God as Jack enters into the presence of Christ; in the company of Mary and his granddaughter and all the saints and Jack grows each day with new knowledge of God's creation and God's life giving amazing love.

Let me close with a prayer used often by Dean Stirling, but which describes Jack so well.

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