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**A Word of Greeting by Arabella Meadows-Rogers
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Joe just said very quietly, “Welcome home,” and that feels like a very fitting phrase both to me and to members of my family who are not here today. I don’t know if you all know what an incredible community this is. Not just an incredible community of support, but an incredible community of witness and outreach. Every time I am back, I am so impressed by the warmth and the welcome I receive, but also by what I witness. As an Executive Presbyter for twelve years, I got to see a lot of churches, and this is a very, very special one.

I want to say something else to you this morning, and that is a little bit more personal. I was thinking about this yesterday. I still get your newsletter every week and read most of it. I think most of you know I was diagnosed with a terminal form of cancer twenty-two months ago. Some of you may know the progress of my disease has been something miraculous. I’m supposed to be dead, but I’m not!

What I want to say to you is about the power of prayer. My name has been on your newsletter list for twenty-two months. And some of you know me and pray for me. Some of you don’t know me and pray for me, and some of you don’t pray. Some of you think that list ought to be shortened, and some of you think it ought to be lengthened. I have been so upheld and nurtured and fed by people praying for me.

At one point in New York, I went to an installation service, and I was introduced publicly. A woman leaned forward and tapped me on the shoulder and said, “I’m so glad to meet you. I’ve been praying for you for a year.” It’s not something that liberal Christians talk about a lot, but the power of prayer upholds us in ways that we don’t even know. It’s like a canopy underneath us, when we’re in trouble or

afraid or in pain. So I want to thank you for that witness that you have been both for me and for many, many other people, and ask you to continue it.