Celebrations! We all love them — birthdays, confirmation day, weddings, a new job, retirement. A funeral is a celebration for the life on earth God gave to His child and especially for the life that He grants His children in heaven. What’s been your favorite celebration? Why?

Opening Prayer
Heavenly Father, thank You for celebrations. Thank You for the gifts of love and joy and peace. Thank You for the times I can share these with others. Amen.

Sometimes we forget to celebrate the everyday. Blessings, once received and celebrated, are sometimes forgotten — or no longer seen as special. How many things to celebrate can you find in 1 John 3:1–3? ______________________________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

With whom do you celebrate? Why? ______________________________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

Read 1 John 3:4–6. For whom would you not give a party? A felon? A child abuser? Your neighbor’s gay child? The gossip who maligned you or others? The smelly, homeless person? The know-it-all? The man who beat your friend? The “squeaky-wheel” at work who gets the promotion you should have? The drunk who’s been to AA more times than you can count? Your ex-best friend who dropped you? Who else? _______________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

With whom would you have the hardest time celebrating — or who would you not want to forgive? Why? _______________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

In 1 John 3:7–10, what is the difference between the one who fails to do right and the one who fails to love? _______________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

What else does God say about the differences?
Romans 15:1–7 _______________________________________
Hebrews 13:1 _______________________________________  
With whom did Jesus celebrate? What was the reaction of the local leaders?* ______________________________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

Look at 1 John 3:11–15. Why was Cain’s offering evil? _______________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

Is the offering of a Christian who passes judgment on the alcoholic, abuser, and gossip different from Cain’s? _______________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

When is it right to judge? ______________________________

__________________________________________________

Why don’t the “unlovable” change? ______________________________

__________________________________________________

How can you love them without agreeing with their lifestyle or point of view? ______________________________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

How do you practice “hate the sin, but love the sinner”? 
1 Corinthians 5:12–13 _______________________________________
James 1:19–27 _______________________________________
Read 1 John 3:16–18. Compare verse 16 with John 3:16. _______________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

How do you celebrate verse 18? ______________________________

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________
How can we celebrate when sin and sorrow visit members of our own family or body? Check the following:

1 Peter 4:12–16

Proverbs 3:5–6

Jeremiah 29:11–13

1 Peter 5:6–7

James 1:12–19

We have reason to celebrate in all times and in all places. When tempted to take time to condemn rather than to celebrate loving others, what should be my first course of action? __________________________

What other things can I do? __________________________

What more should I or shouldn’t I do? 1 Corinthians 13:1–7

When am I a noisy gong? __________________________

When do I forget my blessings? __________________________

I am a forgiven child of the King! How can I share that joy with others?

Study 1 Corinthians 4:14–21 (especially verse 21).

Count your blessings listed in 1 John 3:19–24.

We Christians are mightily blessed. What are other blessings we can celebrate? See 1 Corinthians 2:10–16.

Philippians 2:1–11

Joy Comes in the Morning continued from page 9

Leevones immediately bought a plane ticket to Washington, D.C., to talk to the Director of Housing and Urban Development. Through her hard work, compelling story, and relentless quest for justice, the housing project — Queens Court — lost its HUD funding and closed its doors. Later, it was bulldozed.

Now Leevones receives HUD funds to help low-income working poor buy new and refurbished homes in the neighborhood. She has walked through miles of red tape to work with government, business, and contractors to renovate and build affordable, energy-efficient homes, subdivisions, and senior housing.

Judy Jones, who owns a small janitorial service, grew up in the neighborhood but never dreamed she would be able to own her own home. With Leevones’ help, Judy qualified for a small mortgage and loves her new home — on the very street where she grew up.

“It’s felt like home from day one,” she said. “I thank God for Mrs. Fisher. I never could have done it without her.”

Today, Trinity Gardens lives up to its name: there are four large gardens in the community, all dug, planted, and cared for by Leevones, her husband, Mike, and volunteers. These year-round gardens, located at Trinity and other locations, provide fresh vegetables for children, families, and seniors in her community.

You can often find Mrs. Fisher at her elementary alma mater, just a few blocks from her home, where she volunteers. Last fall, she worked with kindergarten through fifth graders in planting and caring for winter collards.

“From the cold, hard ground of that broken community, a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:18–19 ESV) Q

*More passages and leader helps are available at lwml.org.

Sheila is the newly elected LWML Central Illinois District President and the Christian Living Editor of the Quarterly. Sheila has been gifted by the Lord with the ability to sing, to dance, and to write and is thankful to the Him for the opportunities she has been given to use and share these gifts.

Christine Scheele Weerts is a member of the LWML at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Prattville, Alabama.