

# Letters of ENCOURAGEMENT

God Loves You  No Matter What

February 21, 2024  
A Note from Di Huey

**Dear Friends,**

Some years ago, a group of women — some, long time acquaintances, and some newly met — gathered in a meeting room off the kitchen in the Warehouse 839 building. Their purpose? To form a small share group using the Wesley model. We were called to be responsible for each other, to hold each other accountable, and to lift each other up on those days when we could not stand alone and needed that reminder that Jesus was right there beside us.



*L to R Front row: Beth Latella, Elaine Cooper, Di Huey. Back row: Linda Overman, Marilyn Lee, Louann Liming.*

The Wesley model is both simple and complex. **We would meet weekly and ask each other two questions. The first: Is it well with your soul? The second: Where did you see God?** It felt daunting. It felt overwhelming. It felt hard. It felt ... good. And it felt right.

**We called ourselves the Intrepid Divas.** Intrepid, for we intended to be resolutely fearless, to endure together any hurdle we might encounter, and to act with all of the strength and fortitude our faith could muster. Divas, because we were the opposite of self-important nor entirely difficult to please. It was our tongue-in-cheek way of challenging ourselves to be more-together than we might ever be as individuals. And it was Elaine's idea.

Elaine Vance Cooper was a founding member of this small group. An intensely gregarious and curious woman, she had a wit and humor that brought life and joy to our meetings, even if (at times) she was prone to nodding off. I suspect she was “born with the gift of fab,” for she found a way of seeing God in what others might take as simple encounters with strangers. That expression about “she never met a stranger”? That was Elaine.

She was self-deprecating, often modest and unassuming. She smiled readily, and was quick with a kind word or a hug. And she was a storyteller. Elaine had a way of meeting people and gaining their confidence. Perhaps it was because she was such an easy listener, or perhaps because she had that demeanor of encouragement, but strangers would offer up their life's story to Elaine as if she had been known to them their whole lives.

She and I bonded over *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little Women*, over Sci-Fi and gardening, and over our mutual love for our families. We enjoyed crafting together and plotting mischief. She had a delightful sense of humor that was never cruel nor teasing, but was reflective and healing. She could laugh at herself — and us — in a way that wasn't self-deprecating.

Elaine passed away last month. She was a dear friend, and a faithful child of God, and I am a better person for having known her. The six of us — now, five — are a stronger group because of her.

We took the energy and bond that we built and channeled it into action. We wrote letters protesting injustices. We organized social events and fundraisers in support of different ministries. And we leaned on each other when times felt difficult.

**If you have been curious about participating in a small group, or wondered whether it would be worth your time, I can only offer up my own experience as an example of what it could be.** I say “could” because it takes work. It takes honesty, bravery, self-reflection, and fearlessness. I was terrified, to be honest. I had doubts. I had reservations. I had real, boot-quaking fear.

These amazing humans, and particularly Elaine, somehow knew just how to set me at ease. And even though my heart crumbles with the weight of Elaine's



absence, I know my heart is also buoyant with the joy of each treasured memory. It's worth it. It is so, so worth it.

If you're interested in being in this kind of small group, I encourage you to reach out to Beth Palmer, Director of Adult Discipleship. You can read more about the possibilities here (<https://hilliardumc.org/grow/adults/ongoing-groups/#class-meeting>).

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