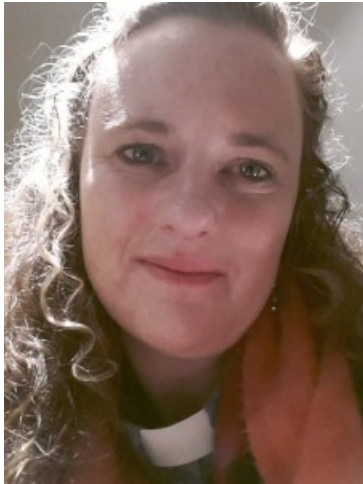


Let everything that has breath (in honour of Gillian Briggs)



*Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord, O my soul!
I will praise the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.
(Psalm 146:1-2)*

This is Gillian Briggs. It's her facebook profile pic so I'm sure she won't mind me posting it here.

Today Gill turns 40. She enters her fifth decade. And judging by the sunrise this morning it is going to be an awesome one. She married me 18 years ago almost-to-the-day. I win ☐

The thing is, we almost didn't get married. Not because of anything relational, but because we almost didn't meet. Gill almost didn't reach decade number three. Twenty years ago complications with surgery almost took her from us.

There's a story she tells from that period of her life in which she was starkly faced with only having a finite number of breaths left. She tells of the resolve that Psalm 146

brought to her: *I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.* And Psalm 150 says it too: *Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!*

I have had the privilege of walking next to Gill and having her walk next to me for many years now. I have heard her troubled breaths, pain-filled breaths, laugh-filled breaths, weeping breaths, contented and relaxed breaths and downright frustrated breaths! But I listen to them, and I learn from them (when I'm not being a fool). Because each one of them has something that points me to divine truth and God's heart and therefore to life itself.

If you know me you will have heard me say that I admire Gill, and when asked to sum up that admiration I give two inadequate but accurate words: tenacity and vivacity. Gill is tenacious and vivacious. It's what happens when you have praise-filled breaths.

The tenacity is strength. Yes, sometimes it's stubbornness and immovability. But mostly it's just-keep-going-ness. It's more aware than blind perseverance; it's an unwillingness to close the eyes and descend into darkness, and to be able to respond when the heartbeat of God and hope break in when darkness does envelope. It's that sense of "this isn't good enough" that refuses to be content with injustice and half-heartedness and looks for gold when others think they have it right with lumps of lead.

The vivacity is beauty and life. Yes, sometimes it flashes with passionate anger. But mostly it's a glow that fills the home, lightens hearts, and wakes people up. It can be fierce – what I see and hear when I wake up to hear music or singing, and I know that she is kicking down some darkness inside her or around her. But it's also warm, a cloud of understanding and discernment, and place of rest and connection for others, with someone who just "get's it" and knows how to speak life.

I would like to bear witness to Gill's strength. These last four decades have not been easy. Many are yet to see the fullness of the gift God has given to us all in her. I'm sure there is more adversity and difficulty to come – although I long for a season of release when she, and I, get to rise up on some wings together. But I also know that Gill is finding her voice, or perhaps finding a *renewed* voice (because she has always had one), and through it we will all be blessed by her tenacity and vivacity.

Today, on her birthday, Gill is singing with the Southern Gospel Choir in a combined performance with world-acclaimed grammy-award-winning acapella group *Take 6*.

Today, on her birthday, with every breath, Gill is praising the Lord.

It is very very right.