

## Dear Graduate in 2020... and Member of Bridges Together's Circle of Love-

As you transition from life as you've known it into the next season of your journey, I have 3 wishes for you.

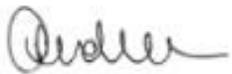
My first wish for you is for **love** - that you will experience love more intimately and share it more abundantly - especially the love of your Divine Creator. You were created in love. Love yourself. I hope that you will recognize that you are in an integral part of a circle of love. Actually, your very being is in the middle of concentric circles of love - different layers of people. In the inner circle, are the people who would do anything in the world for you. Treasure these people. Nurture these relationships. Spend time with them. Share from your heart. Ask them questions. Eat together: sharing meals - day after day - at home, at school, at work - builds relationship and intimacy. Recognize that you are truly interdependent: rely on one another. The outer circles are people who have touched you in some way - or whom you have touched - but people whom you do not see regularly. Appreciate that they are companions on your journey and you never know when your paths will cross again... or how. Life is an amazing journey. Travel in-joy. Cultivate peace and wholeness. Treasure each person - they are a gift to this world - a perfectly imperfect be-ing. When it's hard to love someone, recognize that wounded people wound - so be compassionate (from the Latin meaning "to breathe with someone"). Welcome and strive to include people who at first glance appear different - especially those in other generations - recognize our similarities as brothers and sisters in humanity. In the big and little things, choose life and love. Be grateful. Love blossoms with gratitude.

My second wish for you is that you will become "**more-so**". Aging - the process of growing up and growing old - is a lifelong journey. Within the field of aging, there is a "more-so" theory that older adults become "more-so" of whatever they were when they were young. Typically, this is used to describe people's temperament. But - I hope and pray that you will become more-so of *YOU throughout your life's journey* - in every way. Passionate. Inclusive. Kind. Creative. Loving. Commit to lifelong learning, to trying new things, to gently letting go of the tangible and intangible that no longer serve you and bring you life. More-so. You are an amazing, unique person! Treasure that uniqueness and share it! Gift yourself to this world. We need... and want more of *YOU!*

My third wish is that you will **befriend time**. New parents who are pulling their hair out with the sleepless nights and demands of a precious little one are often reminded to "treasure this time because they grow up before you know it!" Think about how fast this part of your life has gone by. And perhaps it seems like it just started. Time marches on. Now, a new phase is starting. Day by day - time goes by. 24 hours. It is powerful. Be mindful. Connect with the Divine. Think about your day and plan: to fail to plan is to plan to fail. But be open to the wonder-filled surprises that appear and the people who reach out! Think in terms of

"flexible structures" - what are the musts and where is there wiggle-room? What will you do with the next 24 hours? What do you *need* to do? Prioritize. Build in time to rest. Tenderly care for your body. *Make* time to connect in meaningful ways with those whom you love and those whom you want to love more - including budding friendships. Have some fun! Create. Serve. Learn. Manage your money. Collaborate (from the Latin to work together). Laugh. On bad days, make a gratitude list and go to bed early: sunrises are the gift of a new day with hope and strength. And if you string together a couple of bad days, reach out and *talk* with someone (not text). "This too shall pass" but sometimes we need to take action... or medicine. Reflect. Own your mistakes and failures as they are opportunities for growth. Forgive. Apologize and make amends. Treasure the gift of time... and people. As we are learning through this pandemic, life can be cut short or upended overnight. *Make* time to celebrate - the little things and the big things - and of course, the people. Gather with those in your circle of love and invite others to join in.

Love. It is what makes the world go round!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Audrey".