A congregational poem composed during the February 27 worship service….

I am surprised by life

I have been surprised by life.
What an amazing amount of experiences I've had over the years.
Some good…and some bad…

I've gazed upon Mt. McKinley
I have taken delight in watching my grandchildren grow up.
I was surprised by a stunning view, quite unexpected, that I came upon while walking up an abandoned road in the Sierras. It might be the most beautiful sight of jagged snow capped mountains I've ever seen. The Kaweah River cascaded noisily below, adding sound to the vision.
I have experienced healing through the last two and a half years.
I just read a wonderful, life changing book.
I've seen sparkling light in the cool morning garden.

Yes, I have been surprised by life.

I have had successful surgery.
I am very joyful to have friends from twenty-four different countries…they are amazing people.
And I'm joyful to have a lovely family…they are so very kind to me.
I have seen pink blossoms.
I would not be in this place today if I had not fallen in love with a wonderful Mennonite woman—out of this congregation!
I have helped others in loving ways.

Yes, I have been surprised by life.

I have climbed Reedley/Campbell Mountain and picnicked on the summit.
I long for the preservation of Jesse Morrow Mountain.
I have experienced snow in the mountains with a sky full of clouds and the wind blowing from the north.
I've been awakened by a horde of cockroaches flying around our bedroom once in Africa, and another time, while visiting in the bush, I was awakened by a bat flying over our bed.
I am still able to smile despite all of the hardship in my life. I'm able to forgive and still love.

Yes, I have been surprised by life.

I've been blessed by the beautiful people God has placed in my life and in our home.
I am surprised and amazed by both the beauty and destruction of nature. Likewise, I am surprised at the goodness and evil of my fellow human beings.
I am surprised that I still have my singing voice at my age.
I have experienced someone—someone whom I would never have imagined would do this—explain my actions and my heart to fellow workers who had misunderstood my actions.
I am thankful for each new day.

Yes, I have been surprised by life.

I have experienced our children grow into adults, living their lives in deep faith in Christ.

I am surprised every year by the blossoms that surround us here in our area.
I have lived long enough to welcome a great grandchild.
I love to see a red tailed hawk soaring over the Kings River.
I have been blessed by a long wondrous life with such a wonderful life partner.

Yes, I have been surprised by life.

I have been given a second opportunity.
I have seen a double rainbow. I have held my grandchild in my lap. I have heard the men's chorus sing in front of a stained glass window. I have seen snow in the mountains. I have sensed God's presence in the quietness of home.
I am surprised at the love my family and friends have given me, and the love they allow me to give back.
I have climbed to the top of Mt. Whitney.
I have seen the light of understanding spread across the face of a young student.

Yes, I have been surprised by life.

I have within me the capacity for love and service.
I once sat quietly while a doe and a fawn passed by on either side of me, not knowing that I was there.
I have seen seals swimming in the water, playing in the waves along with the surfers.
I have been surprised by how kind and forgiving my partner has been, by the feeling at the birth of a child, and by the beauty of snow in the Sierras.
I have tasted the first orange of the year freshly picked on a cool December morning.

Yes, I have been surprised by life.

I have noticed how so many lives, in some respects so similar, are in other ways so different.
I am amazed how having children has changed my perspective on everything.
I have washed my mom's back and massaged her limbs with baby lotion.
I have flown above the clouds, gathered sea shells at the shore, wandered through wheat fields, and married the special one I love.
I have been surprised by how helpful and considerate people are.
I'm amazed that there is still so much to learn and enjoy.

Yes, we have been surprised by life.