

“Woven Together: Fabrics of Faith”



2018 Lenten Devotions
Written by BLC Parishioners and Friends

LENT AT BLC

Ash Wednesday, February 14th

8:00am - 11:00am Ashes available at BLC

6:15pm Worship with Ashes and Communion

7:15pm Pizza served

Wednesdays During Lent, Feb. 21st - March 21st

4:45pm Soup and Pizza Supper, Fellowship Hall
(dinner served until 6:00 pm)

5:30pm Bridge and Confirmation Class Time

6:15pm Simple Lenten Worship

6:50pm Mentors and Confirmation Students
conversation Time

Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday, March 25th

9:00am Worship with Procession of Palms and
Reading of Passion

Holy Week

6:00pm March 29th, Potluck dinner at **UCC**

6:45pm March 29th, Maundy Thursday
Worship Service at **UCC**

12:00pm March 30th Good Friday Ecumenical
Service at **I.C. Catholic Church**

6:15pm March 30th, Good Friday Taize Service
at **BLC**

Easter Sunday: The Day of the Lord's Resurrection

7:00am & 9:00am Worship of the Lord's Resurrection

“Woven Together: Fabrics of Faith”

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www.barneveldlutheranchurch.org

“Woven Together: Fabrics of Faith”

“*Woven Together: Fabrics of Faith*” is our theme for this Holy Season of Lent! I am happy to offer you these reflections gathered for our 2nd annual Lenten Devotional and am grateful to each writer for responding to the call to open God’s Word from the Bible and for their willingness to share their faith and experiences reflecting upon that Word! Special thanks to Diane Schlingen for her willingness again to say yes to helping with this project— from the sign-up board to putting together this finished booklet you now see. I thank you, dear reader, for joining BLC on this Lenten journey. Writing about one’s faith and sharing it is not easy, yet it is our baptismal call as sons and daughters of the Lord to be Christ’s Light to the World. All of our stories are equally unique and different but yet at the same time are *woven together* in the one story of salvation that is proclaimed in the Bible.

We will receive a piece of fabric at the beginning of Lent as a visible reminder of how we are all made in God’s image and woven together. Find a sacred place for your fabric piece- perhaps use it as a bookmark for this devotional book. Throughout Lent, people at worship will be invited to take a piece of fabric and write a prayer, need, or blessing on it and leave it in the baskets by the altar. We will then take those pieces of fabric and weave a cross together giving us the visual reminder that we are all *woven together*. As you read the reflections that follow, I pray you know and realize that all of our stories- the good, the bad and the ugly- come together and are woven in the story of Christ.

This Lent and always, I’m glad to be woven together with you,

Pastor Jim

Your Daily Devotionals - Suggestions for Use

1. Read the day's Bible verse over several times. Reading aloud is also helpful.
2. Read the devotional and pray the prayer.
3. Pray for the writer of the day's devotional, thanking God for opening their lives and for sharing their faith with you.
4. Use your Bible to look up the verse and read the verses surrounding it for the context of the day's verses.
5. Let all that you have read be present with you throughout your day and activities.
6. Read the devotional as a family, at a meal, or with a prayer partner. Children can participate in reading aloud and discussing.
7. Give a copy of this devotional to a friend or relative.
8. Discuss the day's devotional with others, asking these questions:

How is God active in my life?

*How were my actions and interactions today
influenced by my Christian faith?*

What is God calling me to change?

**Devotionals are also available online:
www.barneveldlutheranchurch.org**



**Ash
Wednesday
February 14**

Deuteronomy 3:2

“Do not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you.”

I took the challenge this year of searching through the verses in the Bible that correspond to my birthday, March 22. I'd never done that before and it was interesting. There were a few verses – like Judges 3:22 – that were totally non-usable (go ahead and look it up!). Others were intriguing – like Ecclesiastes 3:22 and Jeremiah 3:22. In the end, I settled on Deuteronomy 3:22.

At first, I wasn't too enamored of this verse because it talks about fighting, and in this day and age where everything tends to get so confrontational so quickly, where our response to those who disagree with us or challenge us is to prepare for battle, I found it problematic. But then I remembered exactly how it is that God “fights” and it is not as the world so often fights. God tells us “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9) God, in Jesus, resisted and overcame the forces of evil and domination, not by physically overpowering them, but by surrendering to them. In so doing he exposed them as the empty, impotent forces they are. God has a different way of fighting, and Jesus invites his followers to join him in God's way, as he instructs them – and us – to turn the other cheek and go the extra mile rather than violently strike out.

“Do not fear them.” There is so much that frightens us these days. We are reminded in this passage that we don't need to fear anything because God is with us, confronting, fighting and overcoming all the forces that threaten us – not as we are moved to engage and fight, but with the love and compassion of Jesus. In this promise, we find comfort, guidance and strength.

Prayer: *Gracious God, we are not afraid because we know you fight for us in ways we can trust even if we may not understand them. Help us to follow in the steps of your Son Jesus. Amen.*

Rev. Mary Froiland is currently serving as Bishop of the South Central Synod of the ELCA. She and her husband, Rev. John Froiland, live in Edgerton. Mary and John have shared life and ministry together for 38 years and continue to find joy and fulfillment in both!



**Thursday,
February 15**

Peter 2:17

“Honor all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

I am a believer that simple and direct messages are sometimes the most profound. When scanning the Bible based on my birthday month and date, this passage hit a chord. This is especially important today as we recognize there are so many diverse people in this world based on family structure, religious beliefs, financial circumstances, culture, work and lifestyles.

I grew up in an Irish Catholic family where it was expected that respect was automatically given to all adults- teachers, parents, pastors, shop keepers. My parents instilled in their children that not only were we to afford adults respect but we were to show kindness to all. Even at the dinner table I would recall my mom saying, “if you can’t say anything nice, then don’t say anything at all.” On a couple occasions, we ate in silence!

Now as a parent myself, I try to instill the same beliefs into my children. This can be even more challenging in today’s society, but it doesn’t have to be. It just takes each of us to remember and live by a certain credo.

Not long ago I was in Chicago on an extremely cold day. I sat in a café and a homeless woman walked in. Many of the customers in the café, myself included, avoided eye contact. This is likely because seeing someone homeless makes us feel uncomfortable and even helpless. The thing is we don’t know the reasons why she ended up in a homeless situation. We all have different stories. I bought her a hot cup of coffee. A simple gesture but her gratitude was genuine.

This is a key message as we enter the Lenten season. Have a high opinion of *everyone*, love the family of believers you gather with on Sundays. The king should be honored; but God alone, in the highest sense, feared. Not always easy for sure.

Prayer: *Christ, You tasted death for all of us. Each day during Lent may we remember your sacrifice. Continue to support and love us. We are blessed that You fill our hearts so we can share this love with others. Amen.*

Dona Gilbert is Pastor Jim’s sister. Married to Mark and together they have 5 beautiful children.



**Friday
February 16**

Isaiah 40:28

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”

In reflecting on 2017 there were highs and lows, good times and bad times, times of fortune and misfortune. As we grow we come to realize “this is life.” We all learn to take the good with the bad. And hopefully, we learn to not only survive but thrive during both the easier and harder periods.

At times when we do grow weary, we may question God, we may become skeptical. But the good news is God doesn't. Isaiah shares in chapter 40:28 “Do you not know? Have you not heard?” The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”

One of my favorite poems I rely on brings me peace during times of strife:

One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints. I don't understand why, when I needed
You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you
Never, ever, during your trials and testing's.

When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."

Prayer: *Lord, thank you for walking with us through the seasons of our lives. For the winter, when we are held safe in your arms through the darkness. For the hope of spring, as we are filled with new promise and life. Amen.*

Karen Heitke resides in Barneveld with her husband Geoff and son Garrett. Last November their daughter Brittany and Mike provided one of those “high” times in life with the birth of Ayla Rose.



**Saturday
February 17**

Matthew 7:7-22

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened for you.”

I have never been one that has quoted the Bible but this is the verse I remember my mom saying when I was little and it continued until her last days. Her version of the verse was, “Ask and it shall be given, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and the door will be open.”

I remember going to mom throughout my life with problems or a big decision that needed an answer and after listening to me she would say that phrase, “Ask and it shall be given”... but when mom said those words it was never old or contrary but I heard it more like a song. Mom was always singing, whether it was in the garden, in the kitchen or cleaning the house. She said, “Singing made her feel happy and closer to God.”

One time, early in my coaching career I was up at her house and I was talking with her about a big game and how challenging it was going to be. I said, “Mom, I could really use a prayer to help us win this one.” She looked at me and said, “I always pray before your games but not for a win.” I was like “WHAAAAT???? Mom!!”

She then explained you should not pray for something as selfish as a win, but instead pray that your players can do their best and that all your players can play without having an injury and whatever will be, will be. I listened and I took what she said to heart and for the next 40 years my prayers before a game changed. They were my mom’s words: have my team to be able to do their best and the players perform injury free. As you may know, that prayer did not always work, but many more times than not, it did. As hard as it was at times not to pray for a win, I always remembered my mom’s words.

Many times, I have prayed with that verse in my mind, “Ask, and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be open.” This past year my pregame prayer changed the final two weeks of the season after the passing of a good friend, former player and Malcolm’s mother, Jennifer. What a tough time for all. My prayer changed and I asked God this time something for me to give me strength, not to win a game but to give me the strength for the team, the town, and my family. I again thought of mom and I knew she would say this was not a selfish prayer that I asked. I received the answer I was seeking. I found that door opened and behind the door, I found the love of a community that helped me and all of us get through this tough time.

I could never have done it without the power of prayer and the support and love of Rosann and Matthew. To this, I again say “Thank you mom and thank you God.”

Prayer: “Dear Lord, Thank you for watching over us and guiding us, help us to be the type of person you want us to be. Thank you Dear Lord...Amen.”

Jim Myers son of wonderful parents Thane and Aletha Myers. Raised in Barneveld with my four sisters. Proud to have coached many fine young men and women at Barneveld, but my best team being Rosann and Matthew. Grateful member of BLC.



**First Sunday
of Lent
February 18**

Psalms 16:8

“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”

Where my focus goes....my Faith will follow!

Bible study has opened my eyes, mind and heart in a lot of different ways. It has been good for my soul and good for me to be able to say “yes” to God in a new way. Sometimes in life we tend to focus on the negatives instead of the positives. This is what I was doing this last Christmas Season. I was seeing Red and Green decorations in stores before Halloween. I was feeling and dreading the countless hours I would have to work. When will the shopping get done? I was feeling left out and not loved when my children couldn't come up with a time to come home and celebrate Christmas.

Through Bible study and the wonderful women that helped me to refocus, I found myself thinking in different ways. I learned to focus and find positive ways to look at what was happening around me. I realized “out loud” that if I started to focus on the positives I would have peace with whatever is happening around me. I know that sounds simple doesn't it? It really was that simple and with the help of others in our class I soon realized that Christmas really is a Wonderful Time of the Year.

My focus became the colors of Advent and the beginning of a new Church Season and the beginning of the new way for me to see and think and be thankful about my life and my surroundings. When I started to refocus on the positives I began to feel my life calming and with this I felt a sense of quiet joy. I felt at Peace in waiting for the coming of Jesus. I felt at Peace knowing that all my children would and are able to come home to celebrate the Christmas Season. I no longer had worries or wonders, instead I began to worship and pray.

Sometimes we just need to refocus to be “BELIEVERS” have “CALMNESS” for comfort, find “HOPE” and feel “JOY.”

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Thank You for all that we have. Please renew our minds so we can think the way You want us to. Help us to find calmness and develop positive attitudes that will fill our souls. Amen.*

Diane Schlimgen married to Bill for 31 years with four children and four grandchildren. I love my family gatherings and traveling with my 4 best-friends.



Monday
February 19

Psalm 61:3

“When my anxious inner thoughts become overwhelming, your comfort encourages me.”

As a wife, mom, teacher and friend, I worry about way too many things in my day. Don't we all? This fall our women's Bible study group read the book "What Happens When Women Say Yes to God." The author Lysa Terkeurst talked about when we find ourselves in a hard place we can make a choice to "Worry" or "Worship." Worrying about something will not make it go away nor make it any better. I learned it is important to not get swept away by worry but to worship and rely on God's strength, love and power to get us through. The truth is that we are all precious and accepted by God no matter what. We need to turn the focus off from ourselves, say "YES" to God and put the focus back on Him. I have always been one to worry and writing this devotion was no exception. Now when I worry I am taken right back to "Worry" or "Worship." When I worship, I feel safe, comforted, reassured and at peace. I trust His plan.

There was a poem in our book by Saint Patrick. The last few lines touched me and has stayed with me.

**Christ in the heart of every person who thinks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in the ear that hears me.**

I hope that we can see and appreciate one another's Christian likeness and see everyone through God's eyes of love because he is crazy in love with each of us.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me to lower my head past my selfishness and pride, past wanting more and on to serving others, past me in search of You. Help me to worship instead of worry when I find myself in troubled times. Help me be that woman who says "YES" to God. Amen.*

Michelle Kleimenhagen married to Ryan with 2 girls Nora and Isla. I love being a 4th grade teacher here in Barneveld.



Tuesday
February 20

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

This is my favorite Bible verse. I learned this verse in Vacation Bible School many years ago at Perry Lutheran Church in Daleyville, when I was maybe 3rd or 4th grade. This verse is basically the Gospel message in a nutshell.

God loved me so much that he sent his only Son, so that if I truly believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord, I will have eternal life. It doesn't get any better than that does it?

As a parent I understand the concept of loving my children and grand-children with all my heart. We are God's children and he loves us so much that he sacrificed his only son to die on the cross for our sins! There is nothing I can do to atone for my sins, there are no works or good deeds that can make up for my sins, but we are to live according to Jesus' example as servants and with kindness. If we have faith and believe in our hearts that Jesus Christ died on the cross to redeem us, then we can take comfort in knowing that we are forgiven. Nothing we have done or will do as sinners will separate us from our loving Father in Heaven if we believe in Christ Jesus. We are forgiven; eternal life with him in heaven is our reward when our life here on earth has been completed according to his will and in his time. What an amazing promise that we can believe and know to be true.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for loving us so much as your children that you sacrificed your only Son to redeem us from our sinful selves. Be with us as we walk in faith through life each day. Help us to live today and every day in a way pleasing to you, by the example set by Jesus Christ your son, our Lord. Amen.*

Marcia Thompson is married to Ted, has three children, four grandsons and is expecting grandchild number five in July. Being a parent and grandparent is one of the many blessings God has given me to enjoy.



**Wednesday
February 21**

Mark 1:9

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.”

November 8th and September 3rd are both important dates in our family. They are the dates of Anna’s and Peter’s respective baptisms. Life gets busy and it is easy for those days to come and go (we may have had to be reminded about November 8th by Anna’s godmother this year!), but Jim and I try our best to spend some time recognizing that day. We will light the baptismal candle, look at pictures and tell stories about the special day.

These days are not just about the beautiful outfits, celebrations, or silly jokes by the pastor, but instead mean so much more. It is through the waters in baptism that we are welcomed into a new life as a child of God. As a community of faith, we are woven together through our baptisms. We have these healing waters in common as we work toward growing our relationships with God, one another and the world.

It is also through the waters of baptism that we are given God’s gift, the assurance of the forgiveness of sins so that we might be given everlasting life. I was reminded of this in the fall after my Grandma’s funeral. As we gathered together in the chapel at the cemetery, the deacon led us in prayer. He ended the prayer with the sprinkling of holy water, reminding us that she was baptized in Christ. What made this moment even more special was that the deacon explained how he used water from the Jordan river (from a pilgrimage he once took). I couldn’t help but smile as I thought about how incredibly faithful my grandma was and how so connected to her I felt at the moment because of our baptisms.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for the incredible gift of baptism. Help us to remember that through this gift we are given so much: a new life in you. Guide us on our journey of faith as we live out your will for us as children of God. Amen.*

Amy Hearne is a wife to Jim, proud mom to Anna and Peter, daughter, sister, granddaughter, aunt, niece and friend, but most of all through her baptism she is a child of God.



Thursday
February 22

Deuteronomy 10:4

“The Lord wrote on the tablets what he had written before. It was the Ten Commandments. He had announced them to you out of the fire on the mountain. It was on the day you had gathered together there. So the Lord gave the tablets to me.”

Moses went to the mountain and was given the stone tablets on which the Lord had written the Ten Commandments. When he came down from the mountain, he was furious at the sinful activities of his people and threw the tablet to the ground, destroying them.

Again, he went to the mountain. He had been told to carve out two more stone tablets as well as a wooden ark. He did as he was told. He was given a second chance to receive the Ten Commandments. He then, according to scripture, stored them in the ark – where they remain to this day.

God gave Moses and his people a second chance. We are all given a second chance through the sacrament of Holy Communion. He asks only that we live by his Commandments. We are given second, third and maybe more chances in our faith journey.

On a personal level, I have experienced the incredible forgiveness of God. The ignorance of youth, taking for granted my life's blessings and not living by the Commandments – I am guilty of all of these. I have taken the unconditional love and support of my church family for granted. Now that I am older – and certainly more humble – I realize importance of patterning my life to the tenets of the Commandments. Thank you Moses for listening to our Lord and making it possible for all of us to receive the Ten Commandments and live the Lord's way

In my faith journey, I find that if I focus on living in accordance with the Commandments, my life is richer, more satisfying. I have found real, meaningful relationships. I find myself turning to prayer many times throughout the day and invite God to walk either with me or to lead me through life's challenges. We need to listen and do what God asks us to do.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Thank You for second chances through the gift of your Son. Help us to live by Your simple rules and Your Commandments which guide and abundantly bless our lives. Amen.*

Peggy Jones member of BLC for 45 years. I try to stay active in the community through church, the rescue squad, Legion Auxiliary and the Summit Apartments Board. I am blessed with a wonderful husband Bill, 2 great kids, better grandchildren and many, many great friends.



Friday
February 23

John 10:11

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

I smiled when I went through the books of the Bible and discovered my birthday and month corresponded to this famous text from John’s Gospel. I always wanted to be in ministry since I can remember. I was the little boy who got a cup of fruit juice and bowl of chips and pretended to have mass for my parents, friends and whoever would listen. I wanted to be like Jesus...a shepherd who cares for his sheep. I think a shepherd does more than just points the way- they *lead* the way.

In the Roman Catholic rite of ordination, the deacon or priest candidate literally lays on the floor of the cathedral church while the litany of saints is sung. It was a powerful moment for me both times I laid on the floor hearing people pray for me. Both times I couldn’t help but think of Jesus’ words “*the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*” The simple gesture of laying down is an image I return to everyday as I pastor and shepherd you. It’s a daunting challenge but I try my best everyday to lay down my life for you so that you can know Christ intimately in yours.

As pastor I am privileged to see some of the most joyful milestones of your lives- baptisms, first communions, confirmations, marriages, anniversaries, etc. I am also present for those difficult times: illnesses and diagnoses, surgeries, divorces, job losses, personal struggles, addictions and yes even death. I get to hold you when you’re born and hold you when you die. And in all these instances, I am humbled by the opportunity as I seek to bring you closer to Christ, our Good Shepherd.

I think these days of Lent and Easter are really about spending some quality time with our Shepherd. He desires to care for us and literally laid down his life for us- *not on a floor-* but on a cross. Go to Him. Trust Him. Talk with Him.

Prayer: *Jesus our Good Shepherd, watch over your sheep. May we know your voice in this noisy world. Enfold us in your care. Guide and inspire those who pastor, teach and lead us so that through them we may grow closer to You. Amen.*

Pastor Jim Hearne “PJ” is married to Amy and father of Anna and Peter. You can catch him preaching, teaching and shepherding at BLC.



**Saturday
February 24**

Proverbs 31:25-26

“She is clothed with strength and dignity and she laughs without fear of the future. When she speaks, her words are wise and she gives instructions with kindness.”

I chose Proverbs 31:25-26 because I feel like it relates to me and the type of faithful, God-loving woman I want to become. This passage shows how God-focused this woman is! It states that she is “clothed with strength and dignity” meaning that she is clothing herself with Christ and with Him, she can truthfully honor herself and find her inner strength. The next line, “She laughs without fear of the future,” indicates that she is not anxious, worried or afraid of what the future holds. She isn’t bothered about the unknown because she has complete faith in God’s plans for her. “When she speaks, her words are wise and she gives instructions with kindness” proves that she is indeed a virtuous woman. She is choosing to live and act the way that God desires and the words that she speaks are a true reflection of what is in her heart.

Prayer: *Dear God, clothe us with your unconditional love and guidance. Give us strength so we may continue to grow in our faith. Honor so we can respect and love ourselves, peace so we may not worry about our future, and a pure heart so we can speak and teach kindness. Amen.*



Elisabeth Taylor married to Ben and we have 2 sweet girls, Hadley (4) and Everyly (2). Ben and I are always busy with our girls, there is never a dull moment in our house! We like to do outdoor activities such as hunting, camping, running and of course playing at the park! Proverbs 31 is a wonderful chapter that provided much needed inspiration for me! I found it encouraging to read about a woman who has so many qualities that I strive for and qualities that I hope to teach my girls!

**Second
Sunday of
Lent
February 25**

Genesis 7:12

“And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.”

Anticipation: The action of anticipating something; expectation or prediction.

I don't think I anticipated anything more in my life than the birth of our very first grandchild-not even the birth of my own two children compared to this anticipation. After all, THIS was a child of MY child!

We couldn't wait to be grandparents. But something goes terribly wrong during labor and delivery and this little boy is ours to hold for only seven days. For those seven days and seven nights I baptized him with the flood of my tears. I must have made the sign of the cross on his forehead a hundred or more times. We were broken. It was at that point when I chose my church word “**HOPE.**” I needed that word. I clung to that word. I could only hope that God would bless us with more grandchildren. This wonderful God of ours brought me through the worst flood of my life to experience the joy of 5 more beautiful grandchildren. I am blessed.

In Memoriam: Drew Cornelius Manteufel 6/26/08 – 7/3/08
And on the seventh day he rested.

Prayer: *Good and gracious God, Just as you brought Noah and his family through the flood, I give you thanks for bringing me through mine. Every rainbow you set in the cloud reminds us of your everlasting love. Amen*

Joann Manteufel a life long member of BLC. Married to David. Proud Grandparents to 6 Grandchildren.





Monday
February 26

Matthew 8:1-4
“Cleansing of a Leper.”

“When he came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.

Imagine being a leper. You are cast out of your community, everyone can see how “unclean” you are, no one wants to be near you, let alone touch you! You are mocked and ridiculed, sent away, not welcome in the church. Life must have been pretty depressing and hopeless for a leper. This leper wanted just one thing, to be clean.

The leper had great faith. He is not welcome in the community but approaches a man that he believes is Lord and asks him to make him clean. Jesus does not ignore him but instead reaches out his hand and touches the man.

Personally, when I am unkind to my family, impatient with a difficult student situation, judge someone else or just having a “bad day” feelings of hopelessness and depression can creep in. I can feel unclean. In these moments, I find that turning to Jesus in prayer for forgiveness and guidance, helps calm me and lifts me up. I remember that I am not alone. How much Jesus can do for us if we ask for his help to make us clean? We are all unclean, like the leper, and need the Lord to forgive and cleanse us.

Prayer: *Lord, thank you for this day. Thank you for my faith, family and all the multitudes of blessings that you have provided for me, especially those blessings that I don't always notice or appreciate. Jesus, I trust in you. Amen.*

Sue Hearne married to Bill Hearne Jr. and we have been blessed with one son, Matthew, who is 25. I have been a special education teacher for seven years and am currently teaching at a Junior High in Oswego, IL. Teaching is a challenging profession but I find my faith has grown as I rely on God to help me through the difficult moments and spread his love where I can.



Tuesday
February 27

John 9:2

“His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

I decided to write about one of the verses that correlates to my birthday which is John Chapter 9, verse 2. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” I have taught confirmation for 20 some years at BLC and every time I read this verse I flipped a coin as to who God was the maddest at. It seems reasonable that either the man or his parents must have done something to really make God mad!! It must have been 10 years into my confirmation ministry that I had lost a job due to some corporate downsizing, and I was explaining it to Jen that I didn’t know why God was so mad a me. It was then that she explained what Grace was all about, and for the first time in my life I finally got it. God is a loving God and does not punish us for things that we do wrong. Grace is a gift that can’t be earned or won. No matter how many sins we commit or how many times we commit the same sin, God loves us and because of his Son Jesus, we are forgiven. It’s Grace upon Grace, upon Grace. Babies don’t die because their folks did something wrong, school shootings don’t happen because the town has sinned, and natural disasters don’t happen as warning to the world. They just happen. We reach out to God at times like this and look for answers and it seems that there just aren’t any. The important thing for me is to remember that God loves me and does not have a score sheet that says whether or not I deserve His love. I receive it because he freely gives it and not because I earned it.

Prayer: *Dear God, I pray that we all know and love God and that we all know in our hearts that God is a loving God and only wants the best for us all. Amen.*

Jeff Ziegler-I, along with my wife Cindy and four children Jesse, Megan, Tiffany and Sarah have been members of BLC for 20 some years now and currently live in the Village of Barneveld. I work remotely for a company out of Las Vegas and Cindy has her own cleaning service. Our children all live within 45 minutes of us and we think we live in one of the best places in the country.



**Wednesday
February 28**

Galatians 5:22-23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

I picked Galatians 5:22 as my birthday scripture. Reading these words, I think these are qualities that we all would like to have in our life. To me the fruit of the Spirit is God’s love working in us to do our best to show those qualities in our interactions with others. Wouldn’t the world be a better place if we all strived to show some love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control every day. His love comes into us and flows through us. To me, it is about trying to do the right thing and treating others like we want to be treated. When life’s challenges and difficulties make it hard to show those qualities, praying and asking for the Holy Spirit to help us in showing patience, kindness and to be loving to others. With the help of God we can do all things.



Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for your unconditional love. I pray for continued faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Please help me lead a life of love, joy and peace, and help me to be patient, kind and show goodness to others. Amen.*

Joni Cleary – I live in Mt. Horeb with my husband, Dale. We have been married 33 years and have 3 sons, 2 are married and we have a new granddaughter. I have worked for St. Mary’s Hospital for 30 years. Dale and I enjoy spending time with family, and taking our dogs on walks.



Thursday March 1

Matthew 6:33-34

“Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.”

If you opened the medicine cabinet above my sink at home, you would find a wonderful collection. That collection is not on the shelves. It’s on the inside of the cabinet door.

Over the years I have taped favorite Bible verses to this cabinet door. Some are copied onto 3x5 cards. Others have been cut out of church bulletins.

Many times as I reach for my toothbrush, I only glance at the verses. Other days I read the Bible verses over and over. I find they are comforting to recite as I’m falling asleep or to recite especially in the middle of the night when worries have woken me up.

The verses that are favorites for me now are from Matthew 6:33-34. “Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.”



Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, Please help us to remember that you are walking right beside us each day, ready to help us through all our challenges. Please also help us to see the joy you are bringing to our moments right now. Thank you for everything. Amen.*

Karen Erickson married to Cory and we live in Mt. Horeb where I enjoy teaching third graders. It is a great joy to play the piano as we worship God together at BLC.



**Friday
March 2**

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but might have eternal life.”

My birthday is 3-16. Therefore, I chose to reflect on John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but might have eternal life.

This is, of course, the very foundation of our Christianity. It is the reflection of God’s love for us. God’s love for us is so vast that He sent his only Son to live as man and to die on the cross. He gave us the way to salvation – believe in Jesus and we can have eternal life with Him in heaven. This verse has been especially comforting to me in the past year. My brother died of cancer on October 3, 2016. Just three short months later, on January 7, 2017, my father-in-law passed away suddenly. My grief has been a tangible, physical ache. I miss them both so much. But I know that these wonderful men were men of faith. I have God’s promise to comfort me. They have eternal life with God and with Jesus. Their earthly time has passed, but their souls are at peace in heaven. I have faith that I will one day be reunited with them and with all of my loved ones that have gone before me.

Prayer: *God, thank you for your love. Thank you for sending your only Son into the world, that we might find salvation. Please bless those loved ones that have gone before us. May they find peace in your everlasting light. Amen.*

Janet Hearne happily married to John for 25 years. We have three children – Johnny (22), Jessie (19) and Jillian (14). My biggest hobby is watching my kids play soccer. My second most favorite thing to do is travel. My top three vacation destinations (so far) have been Australia, England and Rock Lake, WI!



**Saturday
March 3**

The first book of the New Testament, Matthew.

Contemplating this devotional I felt it was much more meaningful to me to choose to explore not one verse, but one chapter. My birthday is January 5th so I thought the portion that would best coincide with my birth date is the first book of the New Testament, Matthew, and the 5th chapter. The earlier chapters of Matthew chronicle the escape from Egypt, the return to Nazareth, and the baptism of Jesus. In Matthew 4, Jesus begins his ministry by gathering his disciples and healing the sick. Also in chapter 4 "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom." This sets up The Beatitudes in Matthew 5. Here, Jesus is teaching his disciples what it truly means to be Christian. Jesus' instruction however transcends a mere description of Christian morals, He injects his teaching with motivation that would make Lombardi proud. With uplifting endorsements such as, "You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world...I came, not to destroy, but to fulfill" he creates an air of optimism and excitement in his description of Christian values. Being a teacher and a coach, this excerpt really spoke to me through, not only the content of the message, but also the vivacity with which it was delivered. A large part of both teaching and coaching is inspiring those to whom you are addressing in an optimistic manner. The approach Jesus takes in Matthew of how to live is in stark contrast to the "Thou shall not" laden negative statements put forth by Moses in the Ten Commandments. Myself, like many educators, have a driving belief that the legacy of a person is preserved by the minds that one touches and how future generations strive to make the world a better place due to the influence of those in their lives. To me, this is the importance of the Sermon on the Mount. Through this uplifting message delivered with zeal, Jesus undoubtedly influences his followers, who in turn, spread the Good Word of God.

Prayer: *Lord, help me to instill the passion of your word in others and to be inspirational in my thoughts and actions. Please give me the strength and patience to cope with life's daily trials but also the ability to appreciate what life has to offer. Please help me to remember that it is not only the message that is delivered, but also the fervor and optimism with which it conveyed.*

Gregg Guenther is a teacher in Mt Horeb who has been a member of BLC since 1998. Gregg is married to Holly and has 3 children Hannah, Caleb, and Noah. All three children have been baptized and 2 have gone through the BLC confirmation program with the third currently attending. Gregg has been an 8th grade history teacher in Mt. Horeb since 1998 and has coached high school football, middle school basketball, and his own children in youth sports throughout the years.



**Third
Sunday of
Lent
March 4**

Timothy 4:6-8

“For I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.”

To be honest, I could not hone in on a passage that I was completely pleased with. Discussing with my brother (Pastor Jim) he mentioned a passage that I may be interested in. As I read the passage over and over it slowly sunk in that this passage was truly how I am living my life. I have always been competitive in nature (type A personality) in business and athletics.

The last couple of years have been ones of sorrow and pain for my family. I lost my brother in law in October of 2016 and my dad in January of 2017. Both of these events made me reflect on the life we are given and made me ask myself the following question. Do I appreciate every day I have on earth? God works in mysterious ways. He helped me through these painful times providing signs that all was good. For example, after my brother in law passed away my sister had a dream that he was out fishing and had a huge smile on his face – he was a big fisherman. Another, on the exact one year anniversary of my dad’s death I had a very vivid dream where my dad spoke to me. He told me he was good and was dressed in a tux. Coincidence? I think not. It is faith in God that has helped me through these times – He kept me focused on running the race and being the best person I can be. As I face my daily challenges, I try to approach each day with grace and gratitude.

Prayer: *God, thank you for the signs you give us every day. Help us continue to keep the faith by competing and finishing the race here on earth so that when that day comes we will be secured a place in your house. Amen.*

John Hearne married to Janet for 25 years (Pastor Jim actually renewed our vows in your presence last June). We have three children: John Patrick (22), Jessica Jean (19) and Jillian Margaret (14). I am very active, in fact have competed in the Madison Wisconsin Ironman twice.



**Monday
March 5**

Philippians 4:4

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

When we were given the opportunity to do our devotional on any Bible verse, this is the first one that came to mind as “rejoice” is my chosen word and this is the verse I chose it from. I struggled to use this verse and contemplated using another verse but my mind just kept coming back to this one. I chose rejoice for two main reasons. To me the best way to “rejoice in the Lord” is to sing his praises and I love to sing! The second is because we sang (here comes that singing again) a song at Basswood Bible School based on this verse and I absolutely loved it. It’s simple, but there was an added descant part which I sang all the time and it just warmed my heart every time we sang it. To this day, I find myself singing this song to myself quite often. It goes like this: Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. Rejoice! Rejoice! And again I say rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.

Many people have asked me lately if Christmas was hard since it was the one year anniversary of losing my mom. At times I wonder if there something wrong with me because no, I did not find it to be a sad day nor do I feel that my mom’s passing on Christmas has ruined Christmas for me. Growing up the focus of Christmas was Jesus’s birth and getting together with family (not always on Christmas Day, but enjoying that time together whenever it happened to be). My mom’s faith was very strong. We talked about this the week before she passed and she indicated she was not afraid to die and I told her with her faith, what better time to meet her Lord and Savior than at his son’s birthday. Do I miss my mom---absolutely! But I do not dwell on the loss of her here on earth but rejoice in the fact that she is in the Kingdom of God!

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank You for sending your son, Jesus, to save each and every one of us. Be with those who are ill, feeling depressed, are lonely or suffering in any way. Let us Rejoice, Rejoice and again I say Rejoice! In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

Julie Reese I have a passion for music. I love to knit and watch sports (Badgers, Packers and Brewers).



**Tuesday
March 6**

James 1:17

“Every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

This past year on Thanksgiving morning at 1:00am Otis and I were awakened by a phone call. The person on the other end was our neighbor's son. He told me that when he was driving by our house he noticed our cattle out on the road and in our yard. Well it did not take long for us to get out of bed and out the door. While running out the door I said a quick prayer: Dear God, please help us to get the cattle back where they belong. Amen. When we approached the cattle Otis could see that they were not ours, but we still needed to get them off the road. We were amazed at how easy it was to get them corralled and into our barn yard. Most of the time this can be a challenge with any cattle and more so when they are not yours. I thought about all of the events of that morning and how they all happened. Our neighbor's son who took time to call us. There wasn't a car cattle accident and that we had a very easy time getting the cattle behind a fence and into our barnyard. We took this as one of God's many blessings. God's perfect gifts, that the events played out as they did. When it was all over I reflected on the quiet dark and peaceful time. There were stars....so many stars and they were all shining down on us! I believe that God was with us and helping us to corral the cattle.

Prayer: *God, I pray that I will open my eyes to see your perfect blessings. Amen.*

Terry Nelson married to Otis for 37 years. We both love country living. Member of BLC.





Wednesday
March 7

Isaiah 12:5

“Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously: let this be known in all the earth.”

My birthday verse in Isaiah struck a chord with me, so to speak. Music has always been such a huge part of my life and is attached to so many of my memories, I could create a sound track for my life.

- “Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam” - My mother signing us to sleep with lullabies.
- “The Church’s One Foundation” - Sitting in church with my parents, listening to my dad’s rumbling monotone and my mother’s soprano voice. And always, the beautiful pipe organ accompaniment.
- “The Holy City” - Singing in church choir as a young teen. Bonding with all ages and learning what a church family was all about.
- “The Lord Bless you and Keep you” - High School choir and band—such great memories of directors, friends, and the songs we learned. Much of the music was religious in nature.
- “Who Puts His Trust in God Most Just.”
- “Let there be Peace on Earth” - In the middle and later years, singing with several choral groups and playing with the Barneveld Community Band. Bach being played by the band at Perry Lutheran Church. Singing “Let there be Peace” in Czechoslovakia just after the fall of the “Iron Curtain.”
- “I’ve Found a Friend” and “It is Well with my Soul” - BLC’s church choir and Bell choir have been ways to praise God with music. Singing and playing music that tells of God’s love and joy has truly helped to form and strengthen my faith in the Lord. I envision a choir again here at BLC. **Would you consider praising God with your voice or leading a choir of voices in song?**

Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, let us sing praises to you with love and thankfulness in our hearts. Please give us guidance to make songs that will be heard by others, so that they may know and love you. Amen.*

Becky Stauffer married to George and have lived in the same home for 50 years. We have 2 children Jon and Suzi and an “adopted” daughter, Brenda and 4 grandchildren.



**Thursday
March 8**

Matthew 6:34

“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

I used to be a worrier...Don’t get me wrong, sometimes I still have worries and concerns but I don’t think I’m a worrier. I find that since I have developed a stronger relationship with my faith and with God that I worry less. I know that worrying only wastes time, time that you can’t get back. Instead of worrying I think to myself “what should I be doing?” I have learned to set goals and try to come up with a plan of action of what can be done, and how I can do it.

In the recent months, our family has made a life changing decision. We have decided to discontinue farming. I prayed, talked and cried to God to keep my Faith strong. I knew that no matter what, my husband and kids needed me. I needed to stay strong. I needed to find a job. I needed to come up with a plan, so that we all could move forward. I have relied on my faith, family, friends and God for help and comfort. I found myself talking to God at all times, day and night. I found that my favorite word is “Faith.” I have to have faith that all will work out. I have to have Faith that God is looking over myself and my family. I find that having Faith in God, knowing he is here for me, that I do not need to worry.

Prayer: *God our Lord, please watch over us in this New Year and fill our hearts with your peace, joy, love, and happiness. Bless us all, our families and friends. Watch over us and wrap your loving arms around us. Lord, we thank you. In Jesus’ name I pray. AMEN.*

Michelle Ihm is married to Kevin and we have 4 children, Amanda (23), Tamra (14), Elaina (13) and Parker (10). Amanda was married in October and we are proud to have a Son-in-law, Bryar Topp. We love animals, we raise Flemish Giants, Mini Rex, Polish, Holland Lops, and Himalayan rabbits. We love participating in 4H and showing our animals.



**Friday
March 9**

Thessalonians 5:17
“Pray continually.”

Pray without ceasing...Is this possible? How? What happens to all the other things I have to think about? I decided some time ago that it is possible. I liken it to developing a spiritual muscle. It doesn't happen overnight; in truth, it is a life-long endeavor.

There is certainly no shortage of situations and people needing prayer. Just covering the basics would give you enough material to pray without ceasing! I don't think this is God's intention. He knows our needs. Rather, we pray without ceasing when we center our minds and hearts in Christ and offer ourselves as vessels of His Love and Grace in the world.

Building spiritual muscles requires some tools. I would like to share a few of mine.

- ◆ Look for Christ in everyone.
- ◆ Reminders of Christ's presence. I keep a flat Jesus and a card stating who Jesus is in the visor of my car. Commuting to work nearly 2 hours, 4 days a week, these are my companions on good and bad days and reminders to bring Christ to my work.
- ◆ Sing! “Marching in the Light of God” is my shower song!
- ◆ Live in gratitude. This is perhaps the most powerful tool.

A favorite quote of mine about gratitude from Melody Beattie is:

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates vision for tomorrow.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, Thank you for your ever present love. Help me to open my heart and my mind to serve as a vessel for your peace and love in the world. Amen.*

Earlene Laudin married to Tom and members of BLC since 2010. I was raised Lutheran in small town in North Dakota and I am so happy I returned to the church of my youth. I am starting my 34th year as an RN at UW Hospital and Clinics, currently at Digestive Health Center. Tom and I live in rural Barneveld with our beloved cats Bernie and Ed.



Saturday
March 10

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

For me, this is the most amazing statement in the Bible because it is about God's tremendous love for his followers.

One of my most vivid memories of growing up was my parents loading all four of us girls in the car for church every Sunday. We laugh to this day about mom spitting on a tissue to clean our faces. After mass at our country church, we'd drive to town for the Sunday paper, then home for breakfast. Sunday was always pancakes. Most special was Easter. All four of us girls had matching outfits lovingly sewn by our mother, and sometimes with new hats, purses and gloves.

Through the years, I have come to realize what a huge gift from our parents this church up-bringing was. I have also realized that Easter is not about being all dressed up so cute in new matching dresses, but about God's undying love for his people to send his only Son into the world, then to have him die on the cross and rise from the dead.

Some days life is not easy, but it is reassuring to know I can always count on God's love and His promise of eternal life.

Prayer: *Dear God, I know you are never blind to our tears, never deaf to our prayers and never silent to our pain. You see, you hear and you will deliver. Amen.*

3:16
THE NUMBERS OF HOPE

Nancy Bilse came to BLC in September, 2016. Her husband, Ron, passed in September, 2016.



**Fourth
Sunday of
Lent
March 11**

A Prayer from Mother Teresa

I knew at a young age that I wanted to play the piano and banging on a family friend's piano was just the beginning of my improvisational skills that I developed later in life! "I want to play the pianoooooooo!" was confirmation for my parents to get me a piano and sign me up for lessons.

I loved playing it instantly...although it was tough at times to practice daily. "You need to practice, or I am not paying for these lessons" my Mom would call from the kitchen. I knew deep in my heart that piano playing was fun and even talked about teaching piano lessons at age 10.

Mom and Dad would listen to me practice often, but Dad would critique me from the olive green chair.

"Linda, play that again" or "That sounded really good Lindsey!" Dad thought I was so darned good that when company came over, I had to play for them. That is when the performance anxiety took hold of me.

Do you know that I am nervous and anxious before I play for church? I revealed this to a few people at church and they are in disbelief. Don't get me wrong, I love, love, love to play for folks and here at BLC.

When Pastor Jim asked one Sunday at church, "Linda, why do you come to church?" I responded, "to continue to have faith." I really believe it meant to continue to have Faith in myself.

It also meant that I may have PEACE within, that I am where I am supposed to be, and that I may continue to use the gift of music, from God, to share and express praise and love.

The anxiety will always be there.....but as a "friend" who knows I care.

May today there will be PEACE within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of FAITH.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God.

Let this presence settle into your bones and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.

It is there for each and every one of us. -Mother Teresa

Linda Seeley is married to Mark and lives in Ridgeway. Linda teaches private lessons at her studio in Ridgeway. Linda also substitute teaches and performs on the piano for senior citizens and private venues. Mark and Linda both love nature and the outdoors.



Monday
March 12

Mark 4:35-41

“He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

This verse has been so powerful in my life, especially the last 4 years. Many times, I have been reluctant to move forward on ideas or aspirations I have for myself out of fear. Fear makes me paralyzed so I do nothing, failure is the only option I see at times. One day, I looked at this verse and was suddenly overwhelmed, I literally cried after reading it out loud. I was trying to decide to take a chance on myself and go for something I never thought would be possible for me to accomplish. I was on the fence, just couldn't make up my mind because I was so afraid of failing. It would just be easier to forget the whole thing and not even try. When I looked at this verse, I was suddenly full of Hope, Excitement, & Joy. I knew if I **let my Faith be Bigger than my Fear**, I would do great and I DID! This verse is on my prayer board in my office and several times a week I will look at it and know that I am never alone. I can, and I will, Let my FAITH be BIGGER than my Fear.

Prayer: Dear Lord, may we take a moment when we are fearful and remind ourselves, “**Let your Faith be Bigger than your Fear**” what beautiful things life holds in store for us when we live in Faith and not Fear. Amen.

Tammie Thronson, married to Lowell Thronson for 32 fun loving years and have two sons, Levi & Jacob. I enjoy spending time with my family, traveling, Saturday morning runs with friends and Ice Skating.





Tuesday
March 13

Matthew 7:25

“The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.”

We all have “storms” in our lives. Some pass quickly, some appear insurmountable at times. This verse reminds me of the unexpected passing of my mom in 1996. As an adult, I was blessed to have a really close relationship with my mom. I used to always tell people I would be a basket case when the time came to say that final goodbye to her. I was with my mom the day she had a massive heart attack. We had a full day planned with flea marketing, a favorite pastime we shared. Thankfully, we were still at home and not on the road when my mom’s heart attack began. I was unsuccessful in my trained attempt at CPR. I was surprised that I didn’t crumble. I was grateful that I did not dip into a valley of guilt because I was not able to save her. Yes, I was sad, depressed, upset, angry and overcome with grief as would be expected. But I was also strong, stronger than I ever thought I could be. I realized that my religious upbringing really was founded on rock, solid rock. I definitely felt God’s loving embrace during those dark days. I felt close to him in a way I never had before. I am forever grateful to our Savior for giving me strength and comfort to get me through those tough days and months following my mom’s death. That solid rock foundation was so very evident that day, June 8, 1996. I remember reminding my mom that morning that it was the anniversary of the Barneveld tornado. It is now, after that fateful morning, also the anniversary of my mom’s entry into the Promised Land.

Prayer: *May God continue to go before us to guide us, be behind us to encourage us, be above us to watch over us and be beneath us to support us. May we also discover and remember the presence of God within us and know that He will always be there to comfort us and be our friend. Amen.*

Deb Piquette a very active member of BLC which includes teaching Bridge. When I am not volunteering, I love digging in my flower beds and traveling.



Wednesday
March 14

Psalm 119:105

“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

Sacred Scripture, the Word of God, provides us with the wisdom on how to fully live a life rooted in God, our Father, and in his son, Jesus Christ. We must not only read the Bible but also be open to seeking, receiving, and obeying God’s word.

Psalm 119:105 is one of my favorite Scripture verses because God’s Word is my source of strength and encouragement. The Psalm reminds me that the Bible will guide my way. As I have journeyed through life, I have faced challenges and experienced times of darkness. I turned to Scripture seeking wisdom and peace. There is great comfort in knowing the promise Our Lord, “And remember, I am with you always . . .”(Matt: 28:20). We are called to enter each day knowing that the Lord is faithful and with us on this journey.

In the last few years I have grown in a deeper understanding of the importance of Scripture in my life. My husband and I have participated in several Scripture studies; The Story of Salvation, the Gospel of Matthew, and the Prophets. We are currently studying the Book of James. I have come to depend and trust in God’s Word for His Word sustains me!

Prayer: *Dear Lord, May I always seek your Word to guide my path. Illuminate my way even when sadness, discouragement, and temptation darken my journey. Help me to always turn to your Word for guidance. Amen.*

Kathy Lucas married to Chuck for 33 years. We have three adult children, Amy, Kate and Tom. Grandma to Anna and Peter Hearne. I have been a teacher in the Archdiocese of Chicago for 31 years and currently teach 6th grade religion and math to fifth and sixth graders at St. Giles School in Oak Park, Illinois.



**Thursday
March 15**

Romans 12:9-10

“Love must be sincere, hate what is evil; cling towards good. Be devoted to one another in Love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

A roller coaster ride best describes a marriage....

Those early years of marriage can be fun and exciting, buckled in and not knowing what to expect. When the ride starts it is new and fresh, and you cannot see the end of the ride.

As you start up those first climbs, they are scary and unknown but you can't abandon the ride. Both of you may be feeling concern and regret, but God put your buckled-up companion by your side to offer each other comfort. He knows putting each of you together will build trust between the two of you and also trust in Him.

When you reach those high points in the ride, you are thankful and exuberant that you have made it thus far. God has been safely guiding you, through the up and downs, loops and turns.



Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of patience and love. Please be our light and guidance during times of trial and remind us of the wonderful bond that marriage brings. Amen.*

Melanie Markhardt

I have a coaster phobia, and my husband Paul loves roller coasters. Paul and I will celebrate our 20-year anniversary this November.
Children: Cailynn, Dalton, Greyson and Lela



Friday
March 16

John 6:9

“There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?”

The story of the loaves and the fishes is one that I’m sure many of us are familiar with. It is one of those stories that I am guilty of thinking I already know the message when it begins to be read, but there is always another message to be found.

Starting the story with this particular verse highlighted the perspective of the disciple Andrew. He comes to Jesus with the boy’s loaves and fishes and has already written it off. There’s no way that can do anything for us, there are so many people to feed. Even after spending time following Christ, he still loses sight of all the miraculous things Jesus can do. He doesn’t have faith. This line resonated with me because there are many times in my life when I feel the same way. When I face challenges or am not sure what will happen next in my life, I question whether what I’m doing is enough, if the prayers I am saying are enough—can God really make anything good come out of the struggles and uncertainty I am facing?

But like the young boy who freely gives up the food he brought for his own meal, I have to be willing to give up what I have—my gifts and talents, my plans, my prayers—and give them all to Jesus so that He can create something more with them, more than I think is possible. His plan is so much greater and all I need to do is have faith in His ability to take what I have and make a miracle.

Prayer: *Lord, when I am overwhelmed, when I am have a challenge before me that doesn’t seem to have a solution, when I doubt Your ability to create what is good out of the difficulties I face, help me to have the faith of that young boy who knew You were capable of providing all the crowd needed, and much more beyond that. Like him, help me to give everything I have to You—my hopes, fears, doubts, dreams—so that You will use my life for Your purpose. Help me to always be aware of and grateful for the moments when You truly are making miracles in my life.. Amen.*

Kate Lucas - Aunt Kate to Anna and Peter, sister of Amy, and sister-in-law to Pastor Jim. Kate lives and works in Chicago, but loves making trips to Barneveld to visit the Hearne family and always enjoys stopping by the BLC community.



Saturday
March 17

Luke 18:1

“Jesus told his disciples a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary.”

Was He serious – ALWAYS! We, Christians are challenged to pray several times a day. We’re just too busy. Always – I think not.

Many Christians today denigrate Muslims, most of whom pray the mandatory five times a day required in the Koran. Except the crazies – who may pray – but interpret their holy book according to their own misled minds.

How often do you pray? I try several times a day, but always – never. And then along come this day of Patrick, a fascinating man. You know the story – son of a deacon, kidnapped off the west coast of England, sold into slavery in Ireland. Escaped, studied, returned, brought the pagan Irish to Christ, drove out snakes and gave us the shamrock.

The young captive spent those years as a shepherd. All those days and years protecting his charges from predators, human and animal. Alone, out on the hills. And, obviously, he prayed. He had to be driven by prayer. How else could his life’s journey have unfolded the way it did.

Which leads me to our world today. Everywhere I go I see men, women, teens, children with an apparatus glued to their ears. They are called cell phones or I-phones. Driving I see others speaking on them – which they should not – or talking away into the Bluetooth. Would it not be wonderful if each of us tried to speak to the Lord as often as we are on these contraptions?

I suggest that before we dial or text we say a prayer for the person we are reaching out to. Or, after finishing, a prayer of thanks for their life, their love and friendship. Or a prayer for someone you know who needs it, for our country, your faith community, or your young minister (who needs the help by the way). Maybe even someone you really don’t like or who has hurt you. Let’s try, maybe not always, but often. That handy apparatus can be a good reminder.

Edward Patrick Salmon – child of Irish immigrants. Lifelong Chicagoan. Priest for 58 years, ministering in Chicago area. As I age I become more aware of Patrick’s words: “I am certain in my heart that all I am, I have received from God.”



**Fifth Sunday
Of Lent
March 18**

Matthew 5:13

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor?”

This holiday season has been an especially emotional season for our family. Having Dad/Vivian pass onto his next chapter of his faith journey, this scripture has special meaning to us.

Dad was a “Salt of the Earth” sort of man. What does that mean in Biblical terms? One way it can be perceived is that salt gives flavor and enhances our food. We as Christians can be like salt. We can go through life flavoring and enhancing the world by being good and honest, kind and humble. Jesus asks us to be salty.



Prayer: *Dear Lord, help us to be the “salt of the earth” today and every-day. Help us to not lose our flavor but to bring all that is good to those that cross our paths. Amen.*

Rochelle Lee married to David, this year we celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. We have 4 children and 6 grandchildren.



Monday
March 19

Psalm 37:5

“God has a reason for allowing things to happen. We may never understand his wisdom but we simply have to trust his will.”

To say that this last year has been difficult for my faith, would be an understatement. Losing one of my best friends was one of the hardest blows I've ever faced. I hurt for myself, for her friends and family and her two boys that now have to live their lives without their rock and loving mother. For a while after she left us, I felt like I was just going through the motions of my life. I was physically present throughout my need to latch on to my family and those close to me, however my mind was elsewhere. I can't quite pinpoint the exact moment things changed for me, but I finally found myself needing to just let go, and trust in God. Rather than asking why things like this happen, or why my cousin and close friend struggles with infertility when there are people out there literally putting their kids in garbage cans, or why my uncle had to die of such a freak accident when he had so much more life to live, I had to put my trust in God. While I truly dislike the old saying “things happen for a reason”, I do believe we are all part of a bigger plan. Just because things may not go the way I envision, doesn't mean they aren't going the way they are supposed to.

I am a wife, mother, sister, daughter, aunt, niece, cousin and friend. All of these titles mean the world to me. I love to travel either with my family, friends or even alone. I find fulfillment and enjoyment from hosting and planning parties and gatherings because I think it's important for people to be together and enjoy each other's company. It is my goal to take advantage of as many things that life here on Earth has to offer because I have learned that life is a gift, not a guarantee.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I ask you to be patient with me in my times of doubt. When I am questioning my faith, please guide me back into your loving arms and forgive me for not always trusting in you. Amen.*

Karla Pohlman married to Carl, mother to Jadon, Isabel, MaKinley and Griffin.



Tuesday
March 20

Romans 8:31

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?”

Life is not always easy. Some days are a real struggle. Unbearable? No. But, nothing seems to go right – the odds are against you. Like Murphy’s law – anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. It’s time to leave and the girls still aren’t dressed (even though I’ve asked them to get ready five times), one of them can’t find her shoes (again!), I hit every red light on the way to work, someone took my parking spot, and I left my lunch sitting on the counter. Even though at the time it feels otherwise, these struggles are trivial in comparison to others.

Other struggles *are* real. A health scare, for example, is a struggle. It’s a struggle at the time of occurrence, as well as afterward. A febrile seizure happens for a reason and can range from simple to severe. Regardless of its scale, they are scary and traumatic. While it only lasted for less than a minute, it felt like an eternity. A fever over 104 was far too high, so her tiny infant body reacted to protect itself.

These struggles can be overwhelming and can make us wonder if the world is against us. But, it is important to remember that through all of life’s struggles – no matter how big or small – one thing remains the same. God is for us and we must seek solace in knowing that He will *always* remain for us!

Prayer: *Dear Lord, in our times of struggles, help us to remember your love for us so we may find comfort in knowing you are on our team. Amen.*

Megan Mieden. I live in Barneveld with my husband, Kyle, and two daughters, Landyn and Kylie. I work full-time outside of our home, am attending school to complete my MBA degree (master’s in business administration), and help coordinate the Holy Moly program here at BLC.



Wednesday
March 21

Ephesians 2:21

“In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.”

I believe that one of the main causes of strife in this world that we live in is that many people will look at an outsider's differences before looking at how the outsider is similar to themselves. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he writes that Jesus didn't see the Ephesians as outsiders. In fact, Jesus “came and preached peace to you who were far away (the outsiders) and peace to those who were near” (the people more similar to Jesus). In fact, because Jesus died for us, there is no longer “foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people.” It is easy, the “safe” thing to do, to look for differences upon meeting a new person, but do you think that is really what Jesus wants for us? By only looking at differences we are limiting ourselves and our opportunity to grow and learn new things, but if we look for similarities in a new person there is a better chance that we will get to know the new person and build off of each other's strengths. If Jesus can look at an outsider and see a “fellow citizen with God's people,” I think at the very least I can look for similarities before jumping to conclusions about someone's differences.

Prayer: *Dear God, thank you for the blessings you have brought to my life. Today, I ask you to help me, and all of your people, to see the similarities and help us realize that we are all your people. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Danielle Moyer I was confirmed at BLC, married my husband, David, here, and our three children (Makena – 5, Mason – 3, and Logan – 10 months) were all baptized here. This is my second year as a confirmation leader at BLC.



Thursday
March 22

John 19:28

“After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said, “I am ready.”

“I thirst.” These were among the last words that Jesus spoke before his death on the cross. His words remind me that Jesus was also human and endured the excruciating pain and suffering of death so that we may have life. I hear Jesus speaking to my heart and my soul. Jesus thirsts for us, for our salvation, for us to open our hearts to God’s outpouring of love if only we will look through the cross.

I have a memory of watching my father make quenching one’s thirst seem like heaven on earth. My father loved to work in our yard and muscle through weeds and overgrown shrubs to bring the flowers and yard back to their intended glory and beauty. He would work up a sweat and thirst to match. Loving the work, though, he’d stop only once in the afternoon just long enough for a refreshment break. I’d watch him open a bottle of ice cold 7-Up, the bottle much colder than the air, dripping wet with moisture. He’d give me a wink, then tip his head back, close his eyes and drink the whole thing down without stopping. When he guzzled the last, he’d open his eyes and smile with pleasure as his eyes teared from the blast of fizz that came from his fulfillment. He knew I marveled at his unnatural ability to do that! Never did he doubt that it would sate his thirst so he could go right back to his gardening.

What do you thirst for? Comfort? Forgiveness? Understanding? Love? Companionship? Freedom? Purpose? When you cry out from places of loneliness, frustration, sadness, or heartbreak, do you remember Jesus died to give us life and gave us an advocate so that we would never walk alone? Do you know that Jesus thirsts for your love and to know his purpose will be fulfilled through you?

Prayer: *God of grace and mercy, you have given us water, but for this water, our Lord had to die. Stay with us and remind us that there flows a river that comes from you that quenches our thirst. Help us turn to you for your mercy and life-giving love. Amen.*

Deacon Vicki Hanrahan is a member of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church (Sun Prairie) and is called as Synod Communicator and Event Manager for the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin, ELCA. She lives with her husband of 33 years, Steve, in Sun Prairie and is the mother of two adult children, Clare and Nick.



**Friday
March 23**

Psalm 29:11

“The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.”

When I think about my faith story the two words that are intertwined are journey and serenity. These two words are how I feel now with God and how my story has been. I was born into a Presbyterian faith. My grandfather was a Presbyterian minister and I was baptized by him. We moved to Blue Mounds in 1980 and joined the Lutheran church there. I attended Sunday school and church regularly up until my teenage years. My family just sort of stopped attending.

On October 21, 2000, I married my husband at Barneveld Lutheran. My journey with God brought me to a stop when I developed severe anxiety. I was not feeling well and went to the hospital. They ran several tests and at first thought I may have cancer. They finally found out I was pregnant. Shortly after they figured out I was carrying twins and lost one. My anxiety grew so bad I wouldn't get out of bed. I was mad at God. How could he do this to me? Why wasn't he making things better? Little did I know he was making me capable of handling anything. I learned to handle when times were bad.

Along my “journey” my faith was put to the ultimate test on March 11, 2011. My husband had been sick for several months prior. He had horrible headaches and dizziness. He finally got a MRI done on the 11th. We had to go to our family physician in Cross Plains for the results. We went into the room and she told us that John had a brain aneurysm and we needed to go straight to UW hospital. John's surgery was scheduled for Sunday, March 13th. I walked with John down to where we said goodbye. The doctor said to me “there is a chance you might lose your husband.” I felt this overwhelming need to pray. I went to find the chapel which was in the children's hospital. I walked and walked and got lost. I started to cry and looked up and said “God it is in your hands”. In that moment I felt serenity, a feeling of peace came over me.

After the surgery we felt the need to go to church. We went on a Sunday and were greeted with open arms. Pastor Jack and the congregation was there for us through the journey. John had two more surgeries and was deemed fine after the third. I made a promise to God that I would give back since I received so much. I brought the kids to church, got them baptized, taught Sunday school, joined council and currently have been a confirmation leader, able to see two of my daughters confirmed. My third daughter is in confirmation now with my guidance and I plan on being a leader until my last daughter is confirmed. When you're in confirmation you are asked to pick a word that means something to you. When I think of God I feel a serenity.

Anne Forbes is married to John. Mother of four girls: Aly, Lexi, Alayna and Alora



**Saturday
March 24**

Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.”

Kindness, that is the word I chose a few years ago when the confirmation kids were choosing words. I believe that kindness is what the world needs more of to be a better place to live. I have always thought of myself as being kind. About a month or so ago I was with some friends and we were talking about the words we chose. When I said that I had chosen the word kindness one person in the room started laughing. I did not ask if she thought the word was just funny or if she thought that it was a strange word for me because maybe I wasn't kind. At first I felt bad. Then, it got me to reflecting on what it means to be kind. Kindness in the dictionary means the quality of being friendly, generous and considerate. So, do I have those qualities? I think most of the time I do but what about the rest of the time? I think about the times when I am talking about someone and am not always talking in the kindest way, or even when I am thinking about someone, whether I know them or not and my thoughts are not so kind. Am I living the word I chose? Maybe not all the time. So not knowing for sure why my friend laughed it has made me stop and reflect on how I treat others, not only in the deeds I do that are kind but also in my thoughts and words that sometimes aren't so kind. Will I always be kind? Probably not but I will sure try and hopefully think before I speak. I will try to be kind to everyone, tenderhearted, forgiving one another just as God in Christ forgave me.

Prayer: *Dear God, please help me to be kind to everyone every day in my thoughts, words and actions. I pray for your forgiveness if I am not kind. Amen.*

Jo Ellen Uptegraw, I live in Barneveld with my husband Roger and this year we celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. We have three grown children Sara, Eric and Jenny. We also have four grandchildren, Blake, Frankie Jo, Greysen and Rylee who are the light of our lives. I have been a member of BLC for 38 years and the BLC treasurer for the past 21 years. Roger says my hobby is not staying home.



**Palm
Sunday
March 25**

James 5:9

“Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged.”

As suggested, I chose a verse using the Birthday theme idea and chose James 5:9 - *Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!* After some reflection of this verse I thought of our world today and the struggles we can have getting along with others. It comes naturally for us to be selfish and to do whatever it takes to get ahead. A good question would be... ahead of what? Why do we do this and why do we compare ourselves to others? Why do we care so much what others think of us? All the things that seem important in life will mean nothing when it's time to be with the Lord. Our Grandson, Bryce loves to hear about stories in the Bible and about people from our past. These stories could have many details, but his main question in the end always is; “are they in Heaven with Jesus now?” What a good way to look at things. It's not about what these people had in life or all the things they did that were right or wrong. It all doesn't matter because they are all in the same place now. This is a great reminder that life is not about “things,” it's about relationships and faith. Isn't it time we all start to simplify our lives to enjoy the little things more!?

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I Pray that my family, friends and this world can all appreciate one another and not judge others or ourselves. May we have faith that God is there for us and helps us handle what we are given daily. May we use our time to fill our lives with relationships and appreciate all the small things.*

Melissa Lease a BLC member along with her husband David. They have been married 22 years. She is blessed to be both a mom and step-mom to 4 beautiful girls and their families, which includes 5 awesome grandkids under the age of 5! Melissa and David love to spend time with friends and family at their cabin and they both enjoy hunting and the outdoors.



**Monday
March 26**

Deuteronomy 6:5

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

As a youth I went to church with my parents, sister and grandparents. I remember the moments at church we were always together doing projects; serving lent suppers, playing youth bell choir, singing in the youth choir, cutting down the Christmas tree, and decorating the church for the Christmas season. It was my home away from home.

As a parent I wanted my children to grow with GOD and make memories at their home away from home. In August 2016, that is where it started for all of us. With BLC my faith and love towards God has grown stronger. I am able to teach the youth about the Bible and stories. I enjoy watching the children grow with faith and know that my teaching about God's love will help them continue to get stronger with God.

Not only did I choose Deuteronomy 6:5 because of my birthday but also from that verse I have learned always to love your GOD, no matter where you are and obey the commandments. Never forget them and be sure to teach them to others.

Prayer: *Lord, lead my way through this devotional, let me soar through my thoughts and bring this story together. Amen.*

Alycia Hathaway, married to Josh and together we have Evan (12) Elliot (7) Emma (3). We live in Barneveld. I work at home doing day-care to 7 families. I would say my strength is helping others, being interactive with children, my own or at church. I teach Holy Moly, and Bridge classes. I am a member on the Church Council and play in the bell choir here at BLC.



Tuesday
March 27

Hebrews 6:19

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf."

It is December, 2017. I'm watching the Vikings play while addressing my Christmas cards – I just can't do it – can't remove the name and address: John Brogley, Hollandale, WI – he loved the MN Vikings! Gone for three years! Too young! He never knew his birthplace, his dad and little about his mom. "Brogz" was good at grasping onto **Hope**. He lettered in football, baseball, and "state" wrestled while living with the Campbell's and attending Iowa Grant H.S. He wrestled at UW Platteville, moved to Hollandale, and "weaved" additional family bonds with the Kleppes, McSherrys and our family – he was included on vacations and family portraits. He made us laugh! Brogz had storms that pulled at the anchor of his soul, but **hope** always shined through. In 2009, he didn't let the loss of health insurance and stage four sinus cancer dampen his **hope**. Friends drove him to treatments and helped raise \$30,000 following surgery. His school loan was forgiven and his much-needed birth certificate found in Arizona! With a year of recovery and a new job, he had new **hope**. Then on New Year's Eve, 2013--bone cancer! It hit our souls. Trying to be strong for Lacey, (Shayla & family) I knew God wanted me to bank on "**Hope**", to trust in it, feel secure in it, and be satisfied with it. I longed for it the way you long for the coming of the dawn after a long, dark, scary night. The Kleppe's moved Brogz into their living room. Lacey stayed around the clock.

During his Hospice stay, he was asked to give a speech as honorary coach at a UW Wrestling match – 300 "Brogz Strong" fans attended. (Greg Jennings & Josh Robinson of the Vikings participated in his t-shirt photo contests.) On 3-20-14 Brogz received his new zip code - heaven! We miss him! **Go Vikings!**



Greg Jennings: When I learned of your story, I was moved! So I'm standing with you and supporting you today! #BROGZSTRONG

Prayer: Heavenly father, sometimes God permits a time of darkness in our world where it's hard to see our Lord - we see only the fabric of circumstance woven and interlaced. We question the purpose behind the thread of that. God has a pattern. He has a plan. Our forerunner, Jesus entered on our behalf. He gives us **Hope** as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure! And, yes....sometimes we need to hold onto old addresses. Amen.

Cindy Reeson (and family) frequently reminisce about the weaving of hearts with young Brogley. From his 2013 "Hope" Christmas card - "I will never be able to repay you for all you did for me in my time of need and being the type of people you are, I don't think you would let me. I can safely say you are the nicest people I have ever met and I am so thankful that I met you."—John



Wednesday
March 28

2 Samuel 13:14-15

“But Amnon wouldn’t listen to her (Tamar), and since he was stronger than she was, he raped her. Then suddenly Amnon’s love turned to hate, and he hated her even more than he had loved her. “Get out of here!” he snarled at her.”

One of the most disturbing stories in Scripture is about Tamar, daughter of King David, who is assaulted by her half-brother. Tamar is condemned to a life of seclusion and disgrace. Although David is angered by the incident, he does nothing. Amnon goes unpunished until Tamar’s other brother takes revenge.

Things have not changed enough in the ensuing several thousand years. A friend of mine was recently beaten by her husband. The community, including the legal system, let him off the hook. Even the church abandoned her. It is very unusual for survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault to see the perpetrators punished.

We need to do better. Survivors of violence need three things: healing, justice, and a repentant society. They need support as they recover from pain, reclaim their dignity, and find ways to live in joy. The people that hurt them must be punished for what they have done, and prevented from harming others. Finally, survivors need to see their communities to reject violence and exploitation. We need to hold offenders accountable, even if, like Amnon, they are wealthy and privileged.

The God who suffered on the cross suffered with Tamar when she was attacked. Likewise, God is with all those who are assaulted. I pray that God will be with us as we work to end violence against women.

Prayer: *God, be with all of us who struggle to build a more just society. Comfort those recovering from assault. Let there be justice, so that domestic violence and sexual assault are taken seriously and punished appropriately. Thank you for being with those who live in fear, pain, and desolation. Amen.*

Pastor Carolyn Kennedy, Pastor of the UCC Church in Barneveld.



**Maundy
Thursday
March 29**

2 Corinthians 4:18

“Because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

When I was 17, I graduated early from high school and biked across the country (from Virginia to Oregon). The “discussions” with my mom during that winter before I left went something like this:

“You are *not* going to miss your high school graduation.”

“Mom, I’m going on this bike trip.”

“You are not going even if it means I have to take you to your graduation with a ball and chain.”

I’m not sure where I got the courage to embark on such a trip but something inside me knew to trust the Unseen. The people I went with (all strangers at the time but lifelong friends now) must have felt the same way because somewhere along the way we adopted the motto, “Follow your heart, wherever it takes you.”

Not long after that trip, I read the book, *The Little Prince*, and was taken with the advice to the fox: “And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

And later, I found the same wisdom in Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet* (in the chapter on Death, no less). “In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond;

And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams of spring. Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity.”

The dreams, your heart, the unseen... to me those are all the Holy Spirit calling us to listen and follow.

Prayer: *Dear God, thank you for the mysteries of Your world. Help us to see the unseen, listen to the unheard and follow You. Amen.*

Jen Bronsdon grew up in Madison and followed her heart in moving to a family friend’s old farmhouse in Brigham Township in 1989. I have adopted and fostered many kids and have tried to look to the unseen for help along the way. On June 6, 1982, I was biking in Kentucky on a beautiful summer day while my classmates were graduating from high school. My mother didn’t go to the ceremony ... but was proud of me anyway.



**Good
Friday
March 30**

Psalm 23:1

“The Lord is my Shepherd.”

David was a warrior, minstrel and ambassador for God. Couldn't he have thought of a better metaphor than “shepherd?” He could have said “The Lord is my commander-in-chief” or “The Lord is my inspiration” or “The Lord is my king.” Why did David have to choose “The Lord is my shepherd?” I suppose he remembered his days as a shepherd. He remembered how he lavished attention on the sheep day and night. How he slept with them and watched over them. And the way he cared for the sheep reminded him of the way God cares for us. David rejoiced to say: “The LORD is my SHEPHERD.”

I have trouble admitting the Lord is my shepherd. The world and society tells me I don't need a shepherd or better yet that I am my own shepherd. That's what true freedom is all about...at least that's what we've been sold.

Here's another way to look at this: I suppose if you can't control your moods, some of your relationships are shaky, you have fears and faults and yet you still rely on your own self for the answers, you might end up with a Twenty-Third Psalm looking like this:

I am my own shepherd. I am always in need.

I stumble from mall to mall and shrink to shrink, seeking relief but never finding it.

I creep through the valley of the shadow of death and fall apart.

I fear everything from pesticides to power lines, and I'm starting to act like my mother.

I go down to the weekly staff meeting and am surrounded by enemies.

I go home, and even my goldfish scowls at me.

I anoint my head with extra-strength Tylenol.

My Jack Daniel's runneth over.

Surely misery and misfortune will follow me, and I will live in self-doubt for the rest of my lonely life.

Maybe all I needed to do was apologize, but I had to argue. All I needed to do was listen, but I had to open my big mouth. All I needed to do was be patient, but I had to take control. All I had to do was give it to God, but I tried to fix it myself. Most of my life is sung to the anthem of “I Did It My Way.” Why is it that the ones who most need a shepherd resist him so?

The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is YOUR shepherd. That shepherd continually watches over you. No fees or strings attached. That shepherd has seen it all, done it all and survived it all, including death. Seems to me we have the answer to all the questions in our life right in front of us, behind us, beside us, beneath us and inside us. The Lord is OUR shepherd. There are no more beloved words in all of Scripture than the 23rd Psalm. These words come to us at our cribside, fireside, bedside, graveside day and night. Don't be afraid. We all need the Shepherd. He's waiting for you to come home.

Prayer: *Lord, You are our Shepherd. Let us not want anything but YOU. Help us to come seek you instead of the things of this world. You take away the burdens we were never intended to bear. Be with us, now more than ever.*

An anonymous friend of BLC.



Holy Saturday March 31

Psalm 16:17-19 “I will praise the LORD who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure.”

I feel I have always believed in the powers of the LORD as I lived my 42 years of life from a child, teenager, adult, wife, mother and police officer. I have almost always put others before me; knowing and/or feeling it was the right thing to do.

In January 2017 I was diagnosed with Stage IV Glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer; I had my first surgery on January 9th and my second surgery on February 7th. Something happened to me during that first surgery. When I woke up I was afraid, but I could feel the presence of God “at my right hand.” I was and am still able to remain positive through prayer and I am able to rest secure knowing God will remain beside me. It took some time to embrace my scars, but they document my journey and the courage and strength I did not think I had. I just completed my 3rd surgery and will continue to stay in the fight; as a mother, a wife, a friend, a daughter, a sister and a parishioner at BLC.

I feel blessed to have my incredible family, friends and community with us always; lifting us in prayer and bringing us joy as we move forward in this journey.

Prayer: *Dear LORD, please guide me as I continue to say yes to you; as I commit to my faith and refuse to turn back. Stay beside me as I fight this disease and embrace the time that I have with my family, friends and faith community. Thank you for the many blessings I have been given in life. AMEN.*

Katie Barrios lived in Barneveld for many years and recently she and her husband, Joseph and children moved back to Barneveld. We have been BLC Members for 1 year. We enjoy our time together laughing, playing and watching our children grow.

A photograph of a church interior with a large, colorful, multi-colored Easter banner hanging from the ceiling. The banner features a cross and the words 'Easter Sunday April 1'.

**Easter
Sunday
April 1**

Psalm 25:4

“Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths.”

How many times have I chosen the wrong path? Too many to count. Haste and not taking the time to think, have in most, if not all cases, taken me down a wrong road. Sometimes by peer pressure, trying to please someone, etc., etc., the incorrect path was taken. Most times the decision was made without thinking about how this is going to end.

We live in a “me” first society. So if I don’t take care of me, who else will? The Lord is there to help. I have been blessed with so many great people in my life. First of all, my parents who led by example and had to “reign” me in when I had chosen a questionable path. Then Joan came into my life. She has been my “rock” and love of my life. She has been my partner in life for over 34 years and been blessed with two wonderful children. A number of other people, too many to name, have been there for support and friendship.



Prayer: *Dear Lord, thank you, Lord, for providing me with guides through my path of life. I ask for continued guidance to following your path. Amen.*

Bob Johnson married to Joan. We have been members of BLC since 1993. We have two children Logan and Kylie.



Monday
April 2

Psalm 138:7-8

“Living in troubling times, raging adversaries seem all around. But with your gentle arm you guide us with steadfast kindness. Connecting Spirit, you call us to become community.”

I find it is easy to feel down on oneself and inadequate in these chaotic times. We can easily feel discounted, discriminated against and/or lonely. But when I am in the woods working with others, I sometimes get a glimpse of a promising future. I sense that we are becoming more than we could ever be alone. What a promise. God's everlasting love is truly beyond our imagination.

Like a father at his daughter's wedding dance, when new beginnings happen, the connecting Spirit is lifting us up, and swinging us in joy. It's like a father at his daughter's wedding dance. The connecting spirit is lifting all of us up together and swinging us all together in joy, like a father lifting us up together so we soar as one body in Christ.



Prayer: *Connecting Spirit, you raise us up, so we, as a people, can stand on mountains.*

You raise us up so we, as a people, can soar on stormy seas.

We are strong when you lift us together as on eagles' wings.

You raise us up... to become more than we could ever be alone.

You raise us up... to become more than we could ever be alone.

Mary Kay Baum is retired pastor, lawyer and public official. She lives in Ridgeway close to the Ridgeway Pine Relict State Natural Area that she helps preserve. With her family and personal history, Mary Kay often teaches groups about how best to friend persons with cognitive challenges. Her husband is George Swamp and she has two grown children in California.



Tuesday
April 3

Psalm 96:11-13

“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice:
Let the sea roar, and all it contains: Let the field
exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the
forest will sing for joy.”

I believe God is with us in our every day life. When my neighbor was very ill I was able to talk with him about God. We need each other to get through bad times and good times.

God is mighty; there is nothing He cannot do.

God is the creator; He created everything that dwells on the earth.

God is love, His loving arms are wide open to embrace us all.

God is light, He shines on us.

God is gracious, He blesses without any reservations.

God is merciful, His love endures forever.

God is our comforter; He comforts us through life's hardships.

God is our provider; He gives abundantly according to our needs.

God is our rock; with God we stand firm over life's storms.

God is faithful; He walks with us all the time.

God is our dwelling place, He keeps us safe.

God is power; He gives us strength to keep carrying on.

God forgives; He forgives and washes away our sins.

God is eternity, He is everlasting.

God is life; life itself evolves from the Mighty Great God.

Prayer: May God watch over me until he calls me home. Then I will rejoice to be in his hands. Amen.

Judy Busser, I have been a member of BLC for 2 ½ years. I have three children: Don my oldest, Barb is my daughter and my youngest son is Ken. My Barb is my main person for anything I need and makes sure I stay on the health issues I have.

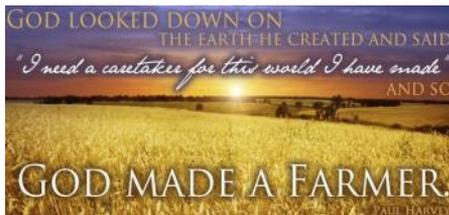


Wednesday
April 4

Ecclesiastes 10:12

“Words from a wise man’s mouth are gracious,
but a fool is consumed by his own lips.”

One of the perks of being a farmer is having the freedom to step away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and to just listen to nature, whether it is the land or the animals. The lesson I take from Ecclesiastes 10:12 can be applied in our interactions with other people. Communication is a two way street, and it seems that the ability to listen is becoming a lost art. In our social media driven society where it’s so easy to voice an opinion without having to confront others face to face or take ownership of our opinions, too often we become the “fool consumed by his own lips.” It’s easy and convenient to ignore differing opinions and refuse to listen to other viewpoints. We see examples of this everyday among our political leaders and other public figures such as athletes and entertainers. Ecclesiastes teaches us that a wise man doesn’t run his mouth, but rather chooses his words carefully which commands the respect of others.



Prayer: *Dear God, thank you for all the blessings you’ve brought to my life and thank you for empowering me with the ability to listen and to be heard. On this day, help us be more like a wise man, to choose our words carefully and to listen to others and more importantly to listen to your word and guidance. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

David Moyer I have been a member of BLC my entire life. I am a dairy farmer and my wife, Danielle, and I have three wonderful children: Makena, Mason, and Logan.



Thursday
April 5

Matthew 14:20

“And they all ate and were filled. And they took up fragments that remained, twelve baskets full.”

As long as I can remember, I’ve enjoyed this gospel story in Matthew’s gospel. To me it speaks of how Jesus meets our needs and is ultimately the answer to all of them.

The story, as you know, begins with Jesus withdrawing to a deserted place and mourning the death of John the Baptist. Certainly, there are times in my life, when I needed to be left alone to my thoughts and feelings in the presence of grief, sadness or just moments of introspection.

Jesus, although deeply saddened by the death of John the Baptist, put aside his own needs when he noticed a need that had to be addressed. First, he cured the sick among the crowds. Later, despite the protests of the disciples he performed another miracle to meet the needs of the crowds he multiplied the meager number of loaves and fishes (five and two) and turned them into food for hundreds or I daresay thousands? Jesus can perform the multiplication miracle of the loaves in my life as well.

He can take small amounts of patience and turn these amounts into a fully patient person. He can take small amounts of mercy and transform my being into a forgiving person. He can take a small amount of charity and large amounts of selfishness and reverse them into selflessness and charity.

By dwelling on the gospel message of Jesus this Lent, I hope that God working through Our Savior Jesus and the Holy Spirit can multiply some of these virtues in my life so that I can “feed the people” who are closest to me in my life.

Chuck Lucas husband to Kathy (We’ve been married for 33 years—where did the time go?) Jim is my son in law and I am Dad to Amy, Kate and Tom. Proud “Papa” to Anna and Peter.

Lucky to have all of the above in my life!

This BLC Devotion book is dedicated to Pastor Jim!

Pastor Jim.....

- ◆ You have counseled and consoled us when we were suffering.
- ◆ You never cease to speak courage and strength to our souls.
- ◆ You make time to help us with our needs.
- ◆ You awakened our FAITH.
- ◆ You bring us laughter with your great sense of humor.
- ◆ You sing to us.
- ◆ You brought new life to BLC...GOD is alive in all you do and say.
- ◆ You strengthened our Community and surrounding Communities.
- ◆ You bring us JOY.
- ◆ You brought us Amy, Anna and then Peter.
- ◆ Amy, Thank you for taking a leap of FAITH by leaving your comfort zone and saying yes to BLC. We are truly blessed.
- ◆ Thank You for being our Shepherd.

It is only fitting that we close with the prayer that you said to us the very first week you were here.

*May God go before you to guide you;
Be behind you to encourage you;
Above you to watch over you and beneath you to
support you. But may you discover the presence of
God within you and know that God will
always be your friend. Amen*