



Note to Self

2020 Devotions written by BLC parishioners and friends

LENT AT BLC

Ash Wednesday, February 26th

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

6:15pm Worship with Ashes and Communion

7:00pm Pizza served

Wednesdays During Lent, March 4th - April 1st

6:00pm Bridge and Confirmation Class Time

6:15pm Simple Worship Service

6:45pm to 7:00pm Mentors and Confirmation
Students conversation time

6:45pm to 7:00pm Bridge Small Groups

Thursdays During Lent March 5th, 12th, 19th & 26th

6:30pm to 7:00pm Yoga simple movements and soft
centering music

**(Please note we will not have soup supper this year due to
building renovations)*

Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday, April 5th

9:00am Worship with Procession of Palms

5:00pm Worship with the Story of the Passion

Holy Week

April 9th @ 6:15pm Maundy Thursday worship at BLC

April 10th @ 12:00pm Good Friday Ecumenical Service at UCC

April 10th @ 6:15pm Good Friday Service at BLC

Easter Sunday: The Day of the Lord's Resurrection

April 12th @ 7:00am & 9:00am Worship of the Lord's
Resurrection

****Please note there will be no 5:00pm Worship on Easter Sunday**

“As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth.”

These words from John 9:1 offer us an important glimpse into the life and action of God. Jesus notices everything including those things that blind us. And we all are blind in some way. We rely on mirrors to help cover those blind spots driving. Some are physically born blind while others gradually begin to lose sight due to age, macular degeneration or an injury. Sometimes our hearts are blind to what is right in front of us. Lent is a time in the church's rhythm to help us uncover our blinders and heal our vision. *“Healing our blind spots”* is our guiding theme for this Lent! The good news that Jesus offers is new sight and vision so that we can truly see and believe! I am happy to offer you these reflections in our 4th annual Lenten Devotional. This year you will notice the reflections are anonymous. In these *“Notes to Self,”* we've been invited to consider what we would say to our younger self. What wisdom and guidance would we want our younger selves to know? I'm grateful for the honesty and humility of the writers who shared these reflections.

At our midweek services during Lent we will listen to a song by Jesse Manibusan called **“Open My Eyes.”** The bridge of the song strikes me: *“And the first shall be last and our eyes are opened, and we'll hear like never before. And we'll speak in new ways, and we'll see God's face in places we've never known.”* While we listen to the song, folks will be invited to come forward and write a blindness they struggle with on a Band-Aid and place it on the cross.

Our Lenten Almsgiving project will be our new *“Backpacks for Friends”* ministry outreach we offer to the school. Each week we pack backpacks full of food, toiletries and love for families in need at school to use over the weekend. Hunger and those in need are everywhere, including our own community.

As you read the devotions that follow, I pray you “see” and realize that all of our stories come together in the story of Christ's love for us. I want to especially thank Diane Schlimgen for her willingness to help with this project and helping put 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 life and sharing it is not easy, yet it is our baptismal call to be and share Christ's Light to the World. Like the man in the story, we are blind. But Jesus desires to open our eyes and hearts. Let God do that for you this Lent.

Allow God to help you see this Lent,
Pastor Jim

Your Daily Devotionals - Suggestions for Use

1. Read the day's "Note to Self" at least twice. Let it sink into your heart.
2. Record your thoughts/wonderings in the spaces provided.
3. Pray for whomever wrote that day's "Note to Self," thanking God for opening their lives and sharing their faith with you.
4. Use your Bible and look up any verses referenced in that day. Please spend time reading John 9:1-41.
5. Let the "Note to Self" be present with you throughout your day and activities.
6. Read the booklet as a family, at a meal, or with a prayer partner. Invite your children to read along with you.
7. Give a copy of this devotional to a friend or relative.
8. Ponder the following questions?

What did you notice about that day's "Note to Self?"

How was God working in the writer's life?

What does the "Note to Self" make you wonder about?

How might God be inviting you to change or see differently this day/Lent?

Devotionals are also available online:
www.barneveldlutheranchurch.org

Ash Wednesday February 26

Dear Younger Me,

Wait. Don't put me down. This is important. Please. Your future's happiness might depend on it. So hear me out. Trust me. God has our back but you got to listen. I've got a roadmap here for you that might help take some of your blinders off. And yes, you are blind in many ways. Despite what you think, you don't know it all.

Watch your temper. It will get the better of you and, at times, it will get really ugly. Nothing is worth getting that upset over. Your temper will affect many relationships you have in the future. Try breathing exercises. Drink water. Go for walks. These things help.

Relationships are everything. Don't ever take for granted one moment with a loved one. They can be gone too quickly. You will encounter incredible loss in your life ahead. Your grief will hurt. Don't worry so much about doing stuff you think others need. Just be with them. Enjoy them. Relish them. Because soon they will be gone.

You can never love too much. Love those around you and then love them some more. Life's too short not to love. Just being with others is love in action.

Laugh. It's the best medicine for anything. And start by laughing at yourself. Then go make others laugh. It will be one of your greatest strengths and bonds with people.

Don't underestimate yourself. You will shy away from doing things because you think you can't. You can! Don't be afraid to play sports and try new things. In trying to "protect" yourself from getting hurt, you will miss out on some great opportunities. You're smart and strong. You can do these things that will at first frighten you. You can and will succeed.

There is a song you will hopefully hear one day (by the way, expand your music repertoire!) and some of the lyrics go something like this: "Every mountain every valley thru each heartache you will see every moment brings you closer to who you were meant to be."

You are loved by God, so many and of course by me.
Your amazing and wiser older you

Oh Lord, your grace is amazing. It opens our eyes, ears, mouths and hearts to your incredible love for us. Today help us realize every moment You give us brings us closer to who we were meant to be.

My thoughts: _____

Thursday after Ash Wednesday February 27

As a very young minister I was sent to a very difficult parish with an elderly crabby pastor, short with people and no people skills, and he never smiled. He resented my presence and anything new or different I suggested in an effort to reach our younger families with which he had no rapport.

Jesus used the most ordinary of things to change the poor blind man's life: spit and dirt. He had been born blind, and what was the first thing he saw after being touched - the smile of Jesus and he was never the same.

Looking back I wish I had reflected more on this passage as a young minister and person. I would have saved myself several years of grief and frustration. Eventually, with the help of the Lord and good advice from others, I learned to use the simple gifts which were available to me to help other see Christ more clearly, and even for the first time.

I began to make a concerted effort to be wherever I was needed, even if not welcome because the old pastor didn't appreciate my efforts, and smile. Warmth and joy and welcome bring an overwhelming response and with that the community and service thrived. That was many years ago. But the lesson I learned has helped me in my ministry ever since. Many times people have approached me and mentioned they did so because I seemed to be friendly and always smiled!

Jesus used simple ordinary available elements and changed a man, who saw his smile as his first bit of vision. I used presence, friendliness, and a smile to change a parish. And to touch many hearts since, as I now realize.

Simply said, smiling is available for us all to do; is nothing special and not hard at all. You can do the same thing with every person you meet. Especially within your own family where problems and tensions often make it hard to smile with warmth. Do it....it will make a difference. Jesus uses what's available, so during these days of Lent give Him something to work with. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Friday after Ash Wednesday February 28

John 9:25 – “One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

“Using a Wide-Angle Lens”

At age 20 I was really into photography which, in my day, meant a camera and equipment, not a cell phone! I spent lots of time outside – wilderness canoeing, mountain hiking, camping. I used the telephoto lens a lot to shoot wildlife. I used close-up lenses when I fell in love with close-ups of wildflowers and the dramatic lighting possible in those shots.

But I hardly ever used a wide-angle lens. Until I got older. Now I use it often. I still take most of my non-people pictures outside, but I have different eyes.

What changed? I think it's how often I feel overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the whole of God's creation. I take pictures of fall colors, of sunsets, of looming storms. I use the wide-angle lens to take in as much as I can.

I think back to my life when I was 20. There were a few things that filled the lens of my life then – the classes I was taking at college, the circle of friends I was part of, the summer job I wanted to get, the money I needed. Looking to get a car was a really big deal.

My world was pretty small. My lens focused in on just those few things.

So, 20-year-old self, here's what I'd tell you. Those things – classes, friends, job, money – those are important. But they aren't everything. Widen the lens to see everything going on around you, what the lives of others are like, how you fit into the whole of the human family. Ask yourself what the One who created you had in mind for you to be doing with what got put inside you. Use as wide a lens as you can find... the eyes that God has given you!

Using those eyes would have let me see clearly in my 20's what I wanted the next decades to be... and what God may have had in mind in creating me in the first place!

The good news is that we're never a finished product, and whatever we're doing, whatever we become, God can use it.

Lord God, thank you for all that is around us... and give us eyes wide enough to see your presence each day. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Saturday after Ash Wednesday February 29

Dear me,

Over the next 20+ years, you will meet all sorts of people. Some will be nice. Some will be mean, and some will be downright nasty.

You will develop an attitude that no one can be trusted. You may think that the only one who cares about you is you and that everyone is only out to help themselves.

Sure, you will find a few nice people who want the same positive result that you do, but you will think that there aren't many.

There is a different reality that you need to know. Life is good, people are kind, and you have the power to spread joy to many people.

Everyone has their days when they can be selfish. It happens. Most people recognize it after a short while and become kind again. Most people would rather be kind than angry or mean.

The people that you meet who are mean have a story that made them so. When possible, learn the story. Let them tell it to you and they may figure out on their own that they have been mean. Hopefully, they will accept their consequences and make things right.

The few nasty people you will meet will not share their story, will not accept responsibility and won't be kind to you. Treat them with respect anyway, but control the situations they are in to protect yourself and the people around them.

As you move from one career to the next, you will meet more people who have good stories and are willing to share them. Learn from those stories. When you put a group of kind people together, the effect of their kindness multiplies. So many people will become the recipient of kindness and they will pass it on. For example:

- Kids receiving gifts in Rwanda at Christmas time.
- Social gatherings offered to those who don't socialize much.
- People receiving clothes from the community clothes closet.
- Church services with the beautiful piano and bell sounds.
- Kids rejoicing together at camp.

The list goes on...

Sure, people have their bad days and unfortunately you may see them at their worst. When they say, "I'm not normally like this," take them at their word and learn their story. It might be the one that you learn a lesson from.

Always be kind.

1st Sunday of Lent March 1

John 9:1-5

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Lent is a time for all of us to ponder both what we know and what we don't know about ourselves and about God. This reading about the blind man (the focus of this "Notes to Self" devotional) carries with it the strong theme of John's whole Gospel: the movement from darkness to light in Christ. Yet it is also about knowing and not knowing. The word "know" is found in seven of the story's forty-one verses. *Who* know and *how* one knows are central to the story.

Frederick Buechner, a minister, poet, and novelist, once wrote about Lent as a time to ask ourselves important questions. Reflect silently today on some questions he offers:

If you had to bet everything you have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would get your money and why?

If you had only one last message to leave to the handful of people who are most important to you, what would it be in twenty-five words or less?

My thoughts: _____

Monday of 1st Week of Lent March 2

Dear me,

It's been said when we leave something behind, something new opens up. Or as a music group called Semi sonic will sing in 1998 in their song "Closing Time:" Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end. Trust me, you will like the song and group. And yes the late 90's gave us some great music. Stuff today just isn't like what it was in your time!

You will leave many things behind. People you thought were close friends but in the end were not. They will be interested in things you have and not necessarily you. Leave them. It will hurt but in the long run will be the best decision for you. Many of them will go down paths not meant for you.

You will leave home behind. It will be hard but will be the right decision. You need to get out of the house and experience the world and life. Trust what you've been taught at home. Your family did a great job placing some great foundations in your life. Trust what you've been given. What home will be for you will change dramatically over the years. It won't necessarily be that orange house you grew up in, but rather home will be where you are loved unconditionally by someone who will enter your life out of right field. You won't be looking for it, but it will happen. You'll be scared and nervous. And it will be okay. This something or someone new will change your life forever.

You'll do various jobs and earn paychecks but your heart has always been to help others. Don't ever lose sight of that. Trust what is in your heart. And every time you leave something behind, something new and wonderful will open up.

You're not a fan of long drawn out letters, so let me wrap this up. Life is what happens when we are busy making other plans. Don't let life pass you by. Trust the new beginnings that will always be happening in your life. Take a leap of faith. It will all be worth it. I promise.

From,
Your Older You

P.S. Bet everything you have on the 2005 Chicago White Sox and also on the 2019 Kansas City Chiefs...and "don't stop believing."

My thoughts: _____

Tuesday of 1st Week of Lent March 3

From a spiritual relationship what would I want a younger version of myself to know? Assuming you have committed yourself to Christ and God's promise of everlasting life, what are the most important behaviors to support that decision?

There are many that come to mind: church membership, devotions, prayer, bible study, giving, etc., etc. It's true that all of these are important, but I want to narrow it down to "one word." That's right, one word that my younger self can relate to which would assure my continuing faith. What could that word be? Many will immediately say *it must be love*. If not love, then maybe Trust, or Faith. No, none of these, at least not to me.

Some time ago, when I asked my 5 year old granddaughter how she liked her first day at Sunday school, she excitedly told me she learned about God's son, Jesus, and his promises. I envied her childlike faith. She just accepted the teachings, no questions. My wife has that same childlike spiritual attitude. I wish I could share the same, but I'm sad to say I don't. I've always needed proof to back up ideas, events, or theories. Is there really a divine being in Heaven? Is Jesus God's son? What about everlasting life? As part of our service, we sometimes we recite the Apostles' Creed and we confirm I believe in God, I believe in Jesus, and I believe in the Holy Spirit.

So there it is, that's the word! It's the word BELIEVE! If we truly believe all other good Christian works will follow, church membership, prayer, devotions, along with everlasting life.

So to a younger self I would advise adopting a childlike faith and just BELIEVE!

"Dear Lord, May I have that childlike faith so to truly believe in your promise." Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Wednesday of 1st Week of Lent March 4

Dear younger self,

“Popular” is not a thing. You are well-liked by many, even when it does not feel like it.

You are good at what you do. Do what makes you happy.

Some people benefit from your hurt, that is not your path, those are not your people.

You are not everyone’s cup of tea, not everyone will like you, just be the best person you can be for yourself and for your family.

Smile at everyone, you never know who needs it.

If you see someone crying alone, check on them, you could save them.

Not everyone will understand how you feel, but continue to push on and do as God would want you to do.

If you’re ever questioning yourself, take a deep breath, and pray. You will hear your answer. Every time.

Thank every person who makes a difference in your life.

No matter what everyone else says, it’s okay to say, “No thank you, that’s not for me.”

Make friends that support your life goals and believe in you.

Guide your family on a path where God is the center of all relationships and all will be well.

Always walk, don’t run. Pace yourself.

Talk, don’t yell. They listen better when they can hear you.

Life goes really fast, even if it doesn’t feel like it right now.

God, I pray for guidance. I pray for healing. I ask you to help light the way for me. I ask for you to help open my eyes and ears to what you would want for me, and also what you would not want for me, so I know both ways. Teach me right from wrong. God, I ask for your help every single day so I can come home to you someday. Thank you. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Thursday of 1st Week of Lent March 5

Reflections of my younger days and how I feel now....

I remember when you were a small child, kindergarten and first grade. You felt a little lost, and a little under loved. You didn't want your sisters to take care of you, you wanted to be with your mom. You just wanted your mom and dad's love and attention. They were busy, always busy I felt there wasn't enough time for me.

I also remember my teachers and how much I liked them. Your teachers were there for you and they must have known that your mom and dad needed some extra help. They guided you every day. They showed you kindness and love everyday. Your teachers gave you everything that you needed and everything you thought you were missing at home. They never missed a day without giving you a hug and making sure you were okay. You even got to have sleep overs at their houses. They made you feel special. They made everyone in the class feel special. You had some pretty amazing teachers that went above and beyond for you every day.

So just like John, I was blind but now I see. I had everything I needed and more. I had an amazing mom and dad who loved and cared for me more then I ever thought. They raised me to be strong, independent, hardworking, loving, kind and caring. My teachers were also a big part of my life and helped me to be who I am today.

So rather then look back with what I thought I missed at home I now look back and think wow I was cared for by some pretty amazing people. My mom, dad and teachers. So thank you mom and dad I love you and miss you every day. And to my teachers and **ALL** teachers thank you! You are amazing! Keep being You!

My thoughts: _____

Friday of 1st Week of Lent March 6

When I was a young person, I remember I was afraid to pray for people who were in very difficult situations. Somehow, I thought if I didn't do a good job of praying and the situation didn't turn out well, then it was my fault.

Then one day I was reading the Bible story about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, from the third chapter of Daniel. The king of Babylon was threatening to throw the three men into a fiery furnace because they wouldn't bow down and worship his image of gold. The men bravely told the king that God was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace. But, even if God didn't deliver them, they would not worship the king's image of gold. They still believed in God, no matter how things turned out.

These Bible verses now have given me peace to pray for people in very difficult situations, knowing that no matter what the outcome is, I still believe in God. Our God is able to do miracles. Sometimes these miracles help people in very difficult situations. Other times the miracles help me to accept answers to prayers that I don't understand.

Dear God, thank you that we can come to you with all our heartfelt prayers, knowing that you love us and you hear each of our prayers. Please help us to remain faithful throughout the difficult times in our lives. We still believe. Amen.



My thoughts: _____

Saturday of 1st Week of Lent March 7

Dear Younger Self,

The ninth chapter of the Gospel of John, “A Man Born Blind”, speaks to me at both the physical and spiritual levels.

In my toddler years, I had difficulty navigating my environment because everything was blurry. After a visit to an ophthalmologist and my first pair of glasses, my demeanor changed dramatically to a calm, happy, inquisitive child. A Rapid Healing!

My Spiritual blindness is a greater challenge. Sometimes I focus and see the light. Other times I see a blur as life ebbs and flows. I grew up in a Christian home going through the motions of church and religious instruction. We never read the Bible. I was confused but continued to seek God. What did this all mean for my life?

When my mother was diagnosed with Leukemia and died the summer after my sophomore year of college, my life went into a tail spin as I grieved. I “duked” it out with God. “How could you take someone who was so important to me away?” “Why was I being punished?” (at that time I believed in a punishing God.) One minute I would scream and yell at God. The next minute I sobbed uncontrollably and pleaded for God to help me. Friends and my faith community kept me centered. Fast forward a few years, I married a Lutheran and joined a Lutheran Church. Three older, very patient and encouraging ladies invited me to their Bible Study—my first experience. We navigated the “Book of Revelation together.” When we moved to Southwest Wisconsin, we joined a church and enrolled our two children in Sunday school. I still felt inadequate before God.

“The Divine Drama”—a Crossways study covering the Old and New Testament in one year was offered at my church. It was an amazing, transformational experience. I suddenly felt God’s genuine Love and availability in every aspect of my life—a Spiritual Transformation—of head and heart. “On fire” for Christ’s Mission, God has been with me through so many joys and sorrows. My advice to you—my younger self-- is to seek God now and do not turn away! Keep Praying!! Your life will be richer when you feel God’s loving presence. Join a small group who are honest, trusting, supportive & authentic who pray for each other. Be a part of helping to bring God’s Kingdom alive on this earth!!!

Lord, Thank You for your Love! Amen!

My thoughts: _____

Second Sunday of Lent March 8

John 9:6-12

After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" Some claimed that he was.

Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked. He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.

This is one of two miracles in which Jesus is said to have used spittle to effect a cure. The other is the miracle of the deaf stammerer (Mark 7:33). The use of spittle seems to be strange, repulsive and unhygienic; but in the ancient world it was quite common. The spittle of a distinguished person was believed to possess certain curative qualities.

Jesus took the methods and customs of his time and used them. He was a wise physician and he knew he had to gain the confidence of his patient. Jesus today is still doing things which seem to the unbeliever far too good and far too wonderful to be true.

Question to Ponder:

What, how or who have you been blind to this past week? How might God be washing you to truly see those and the world around you?

My thoughts: _____

Monday of 2nd Week of Lent March 9

I would tell my younger self to smell the roses but also pick one along the road so that you always have that sense of wonder and beauty as you travel through life. It sounds cliché but it is true. I took some things way too seriously when I was younger like having straight A's, trying to be popular. These things took me away from more important aspects of my life. I would tell my younger self to spend more time on relationships that truly mattered: family, fostering friendships that made me grow and most importantly with God.

I took many of these relationships for granted. As a young person, you think your family will always be there. It was a shock when I lost a parent at a young age. I had so many things to say and do with them. Those opportunities disappeared in an instance. Don't live with regret. Tell others how you feel about them.

I made choices I am not proud of and would do things differently. I do know with regret comes growth. What I wasn't very good at was forgiving myself for my failings (this is still something I am not very good at but getting better at it!)

I recall an occasion when I was in 8th grade. Several friends and I decided we were going to 'makeover' a classmate. This classmate was extremely shy. Her clothes were wrinkled. She became aware of our plan and told the teacher. I'll never forget how my teacher voiced such disappointment in us for making this classmate feel inferior. That wasn't our intention. I would tell my younger self to invite this person to hang out, to get to know this person. Be a friend. We don't know what might be happening in someone's life-whether they appear disheveled and shy or are wearing ironed clothes and appear confident. Everyone has a story. Be kind and do not judge.

Stop and smell the roses. I would tell my younger self to find joy in every day. These small joys will contribute to overall happiness. Talk to God. Let Him know you hear Him. Let Him know He is your inspiration. Be an inspiration to others.

James 4:14

'Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.'

My thoughts: _____

Tuesday of 2nd Week of Lent March 10

Growing up in a Catholic home during the 50's was a blessing I was unaware of until decades later. My school was under the direction of the Sisters and reinforced by parents who were of the same philosophy. Growing older my friends and I discovered many ways and opportunities to veer off the straight and narrow highway to adventures. Disciplinarians at both school and home were not amused at all the "fun" I was having! The term "house arrest" became a way of life. It was then I came to recognize the help I needed, so I went straight to the top, I asked the Lord! Things did quiet down, so I am sure He heard me.

Attending a Catholic university, a new world unfolded and was loaded with distractions and ongoing maturation, yet in the confusion, I was being drawn closer to the Lord. For whatever reason, I believe that I was pursued by the Lord.

Marriage and 3 children moved me into a new phase of life and it was a hectic one. Life was not without its troubles and it was then, like the blind man whose vision was restored that I could finally see where I had been, where I was, and where I wanted to be. With this revelation came a new awareness that there is NEVER one solitary moment that God is not present to us, whether it be for an immediate need or simply to walk with us, ALL THAT IS NEEDED IS TO ASK!

I have been involved in parish liturgy preparation. Scripture is a major part of this work. I leave you now with scripture passages that have gotten me through a long and blessed life. These passages have had the power to guide and reassure, holding one close to the same God who gave vision to the blind man and like the blind man, "so that the works of God may be made visible".

Matthew 6: 19-21. Isaiah 49: 15-16.

NOTE TO SELF: NEVER GIVE UP AND ALWAYS REMEMBER THE WORDS FROM ISAIAH 49:15-16 AND PLEASE SHARE THEM WITH ALL YOU MEET.

My thoughts: _____

Wednesday of 2nd Week of Lent March 11

Skeleton Island (and Emma's Radio)

Here I am, one of my favorite places – Skeleton Island. It takes 20 minutes to run through our neighbor's woods to this whimsical spot. When I get older, I'm always going to remember this solitude safe place my brother and I discovered while on one of our bonding explorations. This farmland belongs to Robert and Emma, (brother and sister). I stop by their house weekly to buy fresh farm eggs. I patiently wait for Emma, a large-framed humped-over pioneer lady wearing an apron and oversized boots to hobble from the chicken coop to carefully wash the eggs. The clean house is primitive with a "farm" smell. I feel welcomed. I hear religious talk radio in the background – it grabs my attention – I take note!

Robert and Emma don't know city cousins beg to pack lunches and frequent "Skeleton Island" – it will be our sanctuary for years to come! It has an arched formation of rocks on top of a sloping ridge. No admission required, just your imagination! We don't have the latest and greatest toys – we have something better! Once again, I think, "Remember the simplicity of this moment. Remember also what you've heard on Emma's radio!"

One day I make a solo trip to Skeleton Island with my journal. I write: "Let this simple life be your future. Accept the invitation every day to be fully engaged and whimsical. Get up early enough to be in awe of the sunrise. Be silent enough to hear the Whippoorwill! When you see the sun set, imagine yourself painting it, mindful of the sequence of colors. Accept God's invitation daily to live and fully participate in the amazing life he has planned for you. Use your imagination! Use your creativity! Plant seeds of your faith – you'll never know who you'll inspire! What's on your radio?"

On my way home I pick a beautiful bouquet of branches for Mom to put in a vase of water. Yikes – POISON IVY!! (This bouquet was used to swipe the hair from my eyes while walking – POISON IVY ENTERED THE BLOODSTREAM! Misery for weeks!

(Cousins still reminisce about the magic of Skeleton Island. Robert and Emma have passed. Unbeknown to the new owners, I recently trespassed to visit Skeleton Island – lots of overgrowth, but still holds memories!)

My thoughts: _____

Thursday of 2nd Week of Lent March 12

Dear Younger Me,

“Who sinned, this man or his parents?”

Why is that so hard for you to see. No one is righteous. We all sin. That includes the pastor whose actions hurt you so much. He had to live with the consequences and he was sorry. And you are not righteous. What? You thought you were so perfect? I've got something to tell you, you aren't.

But you had to leave the church and you tried to leave God. You were like Jonah, trying to run away from God. You can't run away from God. No one can. You can pretend that you have gotten away from God. However, you know that big hole that you feel in your life, that is the place where God belongs.

Thankfully, there is grace and the gift of forgiveness. Why is it so hard to believe that there is forgiveness? God forgives all sins - the pastor's, yours, all! I think it is because you find it so hard to forgive. It is easy to forgive the small things, but not so easy with the big things. There is the crux of the problem. God forgives all sins - big and small. You are forgiven, and you will forgive that pastor. And, you will forgive yourself. You know what? That big hole will be filled. Filled with God.

Dear Lord, life is so complicated and I don't know which way I am to go. Help me to find my way amid all the stormy paths that lie in my way. Help me to not run away from you. Where could I go to get away from you? And, gracious and merciful God, help me to forgive as I have been forgiven. In the name of Jesus, my Lord and Savior, I pray. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Friday of 2nd Week of Lent March 13

I was lost but now I'm found. I was blind, but now I see. These words can be used literally, and often are, but much more frequently can be used figuratively. In all likelihood, at some point in time you will be lost. A missed turn, wrong directions, at least a moment of panic will set in. Technology is always advancing and there are going to be these things called smart phones that can get you directions in a moments notice, but you must remain calm and remember to use them. Figuratively, you will lose your way many times-your career, friends, attitude, in many ways. Be smart, be sensible, and know that God will always provide for you and guide you so trust in Him always. The literal sense of blindness is that you cannot see. An accident, illness, or something else may cause temporary or permanent blindness. Many will go their entire life without ever being physically blind. Be thankful if you are one of those who don't, but know that even if you do have blindness, whether temporary or permanent, you can always see. Your other senses will help compensate, and you can paint a picture in your mind to see your way. Like being lost, blindness figuratively will happen many times in your life. You will want to turn a blind eye to what is happening around you. You will be naïve or blind to things that happen to you. Troubles will arise, you will be well served to put "blindness" on and look for the solution and light God provides ahead to see your way through. Just as you have already experienced, so will the future be, that you have many hopes and dreams, some come true and make you even happier and joyful than you thought you would be. Some do not come true and you will think it's devastating. Whether it be work, romance, money, or many more things, be joyful and gracious for the good, and accept the bad and move on. And in all things, know God is always with you and will guide you, especially when things may not go your way or you're not sure where to go. Praying/being as close to God as you can is always the BEST choice and will bring you to it and through it.

My thoughts: _____

Saturday of 2nd Week of Lent March 14

As a child I was meek and quiet, but loved the simplicity of life, especially the special moments with family. We always worked so hard, were loved and were rewarded with fun times. These memories involved going to the drive in root beer stand and standing out in the pouring warm rain after unloading hay on a hot day.

Church was an every Sunday event where we sat quietly and were expected to behave and sing along with the hymns. I grew up with Jesus in my Heart! I was so lucky to have loving parents who laid my faith path, set limits, but also let me fly just a bit at times.

I learned kindness and how to tell the truth and to show love at an early age. The one thing I wish I could tell my younger self was not to be so afraid. Being shy and afraid held me back from becoming so much more that I wanted to be. I was afraid to talk in front of a class in college, church. or work.

My fear continued and I was panicked every time. However, my confidence grew slightly as I kept asking myself, "Really why are you so afraid?" It wasn't until I was in my 30's that my responsibility's grew with my job. If I made an error it could cost someone's life.

I became exceptionally good at what I did and then trained others. I received encouragement to do more. That was it I was no longer afraid or held back and for what reason did all those years of worry do me? I did not believe I was good enough but today I can tell myself I'm so much more.

I would also tell my younger self to hug your mother and father a lot, tell them how much you love them and they mean to you.

Prayer: Dear Lord to my younger self, let go of heartaches and to give myself love. Help me to remember that it is okay to be meek and quiet but that it is also important to speak truth and kindness. It is okay to be afraid sometimes, but remind me that you give me the strength to make it through any situation. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

3rd Sunday of Lent March 15

John 9:13-16

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided.

Trouble always looms with Jesus. It was the Sabbath day on which Jesus had made the clay and healed the man. Undoubtedly Jesus had broken the Sabbath law: he worked on the Sabbath by making the clay. He healed on the Sabbath (another big no no). And lastly he made the spittle and placed it on the blind man's eyes.

The Pharisees begin to question the man who received sight from Jesus. They examined him and will continue to do so the rest of this story. When asked for his opinion of Jesus, he gave it without hesitation. He will call Jesus a prophet. It took bravery and courage to give a defense of his sight from Jesus.

Prayer for Day:

Lord, how often we are blind and not willing to speak up for You, our faith and call to love others. Help give us the courage to boldly live, love and share our faith wherever we go this day.

My thoughts: _____

Monday of 3rd Week of Lent March 16

Dear Self,

Well here you are in your early 20's. You married to a wonderful guy, you seem to have your life planned out. You both have good jobs and now you would love to start a family! A few years go by and no children. Instead it's a lot of tests followed with some surgeries. A lot of prayers and a lot of tears.

You're feeling like you are on an emotional roller coaster. You prayed and prayed, but it seems like God did not hear your prayers.

Through those difficult years you became close to a co-worker. Her living faith and the light of our Lord and Savior will shine through her. You leaned on her, she was your rock!

As time goes by you realized God has given you this friend to get you through this difficult time. The years have gone by, God didn't answer my prayers. Or did he? Through all of this you did not give up your faith it only grew stronger. The day did come when you realized that even though you were not blessed with a child God still loves you very much! God blessed me in so many other ways.

Trust Him!

Be Grateful for what you have!

God has blessed you with a life of happiness and so much more.

Love Me



My thoughts: _____

Tuesday of 3rd Week of Lent March 17

Dear Me,

Ever since Pastor Jim challenged us with writing a 'Letter to Self' for this year's Lenten Devotional I have had several ideas on what to write about - trust God to work through you by trusting yourself... let loose and allow yourself to have fun... love yourself for who you are. But I think that these all wrap into one piece of advice that I would like to write about: remember the 10-foot rule.

You are a perfectionist at your core. School, sports, work, crafts, social interactions - you worry and stress yourself out preparing to be perfect and then over-analyze where you may have fallen short. I wish I could tell you that this stressing and over-analyzing has completely disappeared, but it has become more infrequent and less intense now that I have embraced the 10-foot rule.

'We' first discovered the 10-foot rule while completing a poster for a high school homecoming float. After beating yourself up about the streaks from the marker being in different directions (did I mention that you are a perfectionist!?), you took a break and on your way back to the table you noticed that from 10 feet away you couldn't even tell that there were streaks in any direction. Not only is this true with projects, but it has proven to hold true in every day life - if you analyze anything too closely you will find something wrong with it, but step back 10 feet and that tiny flaw disappears.

The majority of people you will interact with in life have their own trials and tribulations that they are going through, which helps to create that 10-foot buffer. The only people who routinely come inside your 10-foot circle are your very closest loved ones (who love you despite... or perhaps BECAUSE OF... your flaws), God (whose grace forgives your shortcomings), and YOU. Allow yourself the same grace that you receive from loved ones and God - remember the 10-foot rule!

Love, Your Future Self

My thoughts: _____

Wednesday of 3rd Week of Lent March 18

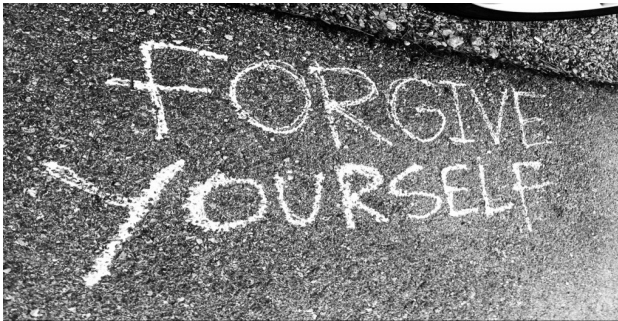
Asking me to write a letter to my past self is like asking me to write a letter to my future self, it's confusing and a little unnerving. Normal people would say I hope to have certain expectations and standards, but that isn't always the case. One can hope to have the American-Dream with white picket fences, a healthy loving family and a career that pays for more than just your bills. I can assure you that my past self wanted this and currently I still do; though maybe not so soon. In John 9: 1-41 we see a man born blind but isn't that just a parallel to us all? Jesus states "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains." We're all born blind to sin, but it's our actions that create the guilt. So I say this; Dear Teenage Me, You're not alone. It may seem like it, but it's not true. In fact you should speak up. Use. Your. Voice. Ask for help. No, your parents don't understand what you're going through and I can't promise they ever will. You should talk to someone, anyone. Because otherwise you'll still struggle. At times you'll think the world is doing everything in its power to work against you, that God is working against you. Your blindness to seeking help from those around you will create a guilt so large that it will consume you. You'll have your "Rock Bottom" moment a few times, both in high school and after but, the one that will get you will come out of no where. You'll be fine one minute and the next your body will stop. It'll freeze. Words will fail you. You'll see nothing but tears. And then, just like the blind man, you'll cross paths with someone who helps you see. This isn't just one person, it's a village. These people turned out to become your best friends, who you can call at 2 in the morning when you need someone to talk you out of a frantic state. "For when you saw one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you." Your friends will carry you through anything, even if they're miles away. Hold onto this. Admit it when you need help and through Jesus believe. -xo

My thoughts: _____

Thursday of 3rd Week of Lent March 19

Note to Self

As you are about to leave home, go to college and enter the working world, you will be excited yet uncertain what the future will bring. That is ok. As you adventure out into the world, you will be leaving behind a happy home and loving family that gave you strong work ethics. You will need patience to adjust to college life, live with roommates and work with co-workers. You will get frustrated but change can be good. Lighten up a little bit, do something enjoyable, have fun, find some good in every day. In a few years you will find the person you will want to spend the rest of your life with, get married and have children. As time goes on, you may feel stress from your job, your family or home life. During these times be careful, don't start to self-medicate. It could be easy to become dependent on alcohol or drugs. Don't be ashamed if you have to go for treatment. Your family and friends will help you get through this time in your life. You will have many feelings of guilt and pain. Before you can move forward you must put all of those thoughts behind you and forgive yourself. Your reward – peace, hope, love and happiness.



My thoughts: _____

Friday of 3rd Week of Lent March 20

"So the man went and washed and came home seeing." **John 9:7b.**

In this Lenten text, the man born blind was forever changed. The Light of the world gave the man born blind the light to see. I wonder what the man noticed first when he came to his home in Jerusalem. What do you think? "...and (He) came home seeing."

If I could offer insight, a note to my 25 year old self, it would be three things. Lets make them yellow sticky notes. Here we go!

First, slow the heck down! What is the hurry? Don't try to 'get ahead of God' (Yeah, like that can happen). I'd reminds me that hurry isn't of the devil, it is the devil! Slow down. God is with me.

Second, when I come home for the day, I'd truly notice, see, relish, observe, the people at home. I would want to "come home seeing." I'd especially notice my wife and kids. I'd listen at a third tier level to words, mannerisms, and body language. I'd be a student of my kids.

Third, I'd play more music. That's right. Listen to music more- folk, rock, country western, (I can actually hear the words- even with twang) classic, Christian contemporary, and more. And, big time I'd play more guitar. That's right-sing and play guitar more. Who cares if I'm very good. The Psalmist wrote "make a joyful noise to the LORD." Psalm 98:4). More noise. More music soothes my soul. What's more, doing music is cheaper than therapy, unless I buy a Martin D45 guitar. Then it is not.

So there are my notes to self. Slow down. Notice family. Listen to music, sing and play guitar more. That's what I'd shout back as a note to self. I hope I hear the echo!

"The man blind from birth..... came home seeing. "

What do you need to see more of in the forty days of Lent? Pray on it right now.

My thoughts: _____

Saturday of 3rd Week of Lent March 21

If I was to give some advice to my 20 -30 years old self, I would focus on telling myself to be confident in my abilities, and that God created me, a beautiful human being. Self Esteem is one big thing to battle. I was impatient, not confident in my looks, and wondered if anyone would ask me out for a date. I did meet someone in my junior year of high school. During our time of dating, I stayed insecure, thinking he would find someone else. The relationship continued, and years later we were married. I think the best advice, to tell my younger self is that "You are worth it, and deserve the best. Be picky on who you choose to be with for the rest of your life." This is advice that I now share with my children.

Another piece of advice would be to tell myself to expect ups and downs, that life is like a roller coaster. When I grew up, I was fortunate to have both parents and we were well provided for. We didn't have any major events happen until I was a young adult. I discovered 'adulating' is hard. Having children, which there was no college prep class for that, and financial worries were challenges. Unfortunately, dealing with the death of grandparents, mother, & spouse, all happened within 16 years and was extremely difficult.

How are we to deal with all the ups and downs of a roller coaster ride, called LIFE? We are to rely on our faith. Even though the down times are awful, they are the closest times I have been to God. God created each of us, unique and beautiful. He gave us our own abilities to share with others. Search out what those are, be confident, and share them with the world. This will provide much JOY. Surround yourself with family and friends who lift you up, to be the best human you can be. God lives in you each and every day.

BIBLE VERSE: Philippians 4:13 NRSV

I3 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

PRAYER: Thank you Lord for creating each of us, beautiful and unique children. Help and guide us each day, help strengthen our faith, as we do what we are called to do, to share Your love with others. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

4th Sunday of Lent March 22

John 9:17-23

Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

John is a wonderful story teller and the characters in this story are no exception. There was the blind man himself. The apostles. There were the man's parents. There were the Pharisees. There was Jesus. The story is making a crescendo towards an ultimate showdown between the blind man, the Pharisees and Jesus.

Could you ever imagine your parents leaving you high and dry to defend yourself to the court of our day? Could you picture them abandoning you for their own well-being? Perhaps a few of us could. But I suspect most of our parents would defend us to their last breath even if we were on the wrong side of a case or ruling.

A meaningful life is finding and valuing the beauty of God. Once found, we will inevitably respond and give back to God. When the blind man's parents fail him, the man seeks God who has already sought him out. When the things and people of this world disappoint us, God never disappoints.

Thought for Day:

Is there any person in the world, or any cause, that, if circumstances called for it, you would be willing to die for?

My thoughts: _____

Monday of 4th Week of Lent March 23

Whether we have 20/20 vision or our sight is impaired, we, like the man born blind, are spiritually blind at our birth. The gift of faith that has been taught to us, perhaps by our parents, relatives, or friends, is in the end, the hand of Jesus Christ reaching into the mud of our lives and opening the eyes of our soul.

Like the blind man's parents who were fearful of being expelled from the temple, when I was younger, I listened to others too much, followed others too much, for fear of rejection. Many times the influence of others and society led me in the wrong direction. I knew who Jesus Christ was, had already experienced a call to holiness, but became lost because of the pressure of society and the false truths that were presented at that time. The "Cultural Revolution" that greatly influenced the moral direction of the world was and is a false truth that has led many away from true faith and morality. "Make love, not war," "if it feels good do it," and the premise that we are solely governed by our personal choices and civil liberties, are the fallacies that continue to pervade societies throughout the world.

The greatest relationship I have known is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When I first experienced the call to holiness and years of grace after, Jesus Christ was as Real as you or anyone sitting next to me. When I was deceived I quickly became lost and without hope. It was only the grace of God that called me out of darkness back into His wonderful light. I believe in Jesus Christ, there is nothing that can compare to a personal relationship with Him. I have looked, I have been lost in the darkness even after I have known the light. It is out of God's great love for me, that He has brought me back from the blindness of sin and false truths. I now clutch to the faith and love of Jesus that I have known and am grateful for Jesus the Shepherd who continues to search for the lost and forsaken. May Jesus continue to reveal Himself to us. May Jesus Christ bless all of our lives with the fullness of grace and enlighten our hearts with the Holy Spirit.

May Jesus Christ be praised now and always!

My thoughts: _____

Tuesday of 4th Week of Lent March 24

I WAS ONCE BLIND - BUT NOW I SEE

If I would have known what God could help me with, what would I have changed or done differently?

We all have trials we face in our lives. Some are internal trials while others are external trials. In both, we need assistance from God, as we cannot face these issues alone. Our internal struggles could be thoughts we do not share with others, because we feel they will not understand, since "no one lives in our shoes." But God knows these thoughts and He can help us sort through them. Did I cheat or lie to someone that I now regret? Did I hold a grudge against someone that I need to forgive? God can give us the answer if we go to him. Some of our external struggles are ones where we neglect the beggar on the street because we were too busy to acknowledge them or we were embarrassed to show others we were willing to help? God will always guide us with what to do, if we will only go to Him. In my younger days, I never considered using God for my answers. I only wish I would have utilized His guidance back then as I do now. He is always there for us to listen and guide us. Had I used Him for these internal and external struggles earlier in my life, how much would my life have changed? Somehow, I believe God was still making sure he was guiding me, with or without my reaching out to Him. For that I am grateful, as He has certainly blessed me along the way.

PRAYER: Dear God, thank you for all the Blessings you have bestowed upon me and thank you for all the Blessings which you have yet to send me. Amen.

Blessings

My thoughts: _____

Wednesday of 4th Week of Lent March 25

When Pastor Jim asked me to write what advice I would give a younger version of me I quickly replied "Live fast, die young and have a great looking corpse."

Seriously I would worry less. I would cherish my family, friends and my faith more. All three of which have made me who I am today. I would live in the moment and enjoy what God has so freely given me. We cry, we laugh, but most importantly we remember. Cherish those memories, but continue making new ones. Don't take yourself too seriously.

Romans 5:3-5..."More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." Family has provided me strength to get through difficult times. Hope is so important to me and I can't imagine where I would be without my faith.

I would not judge people and situations so quickly. Life is precious and should not be taken for granted. Life is meant to be lived and enjoyed. When I was a child, I wanted to be a teenager and then an adult always looking to the future as being better. I am now 73 and loving life. I love my God, family and friends. The order may change depending upon the need.

To sum up my flippant response to Pastor Jim.....

Live fast (live each day to the fullest, be kind, caring and sharing.

Share your smile, reach out and touch someone's hand (especially in a hospital or nursing home). It's the little things that can make a person's day.)

Die young (young at heart and with the assurance of where you are going)

Have a great looking corpse (take care of yourself while here on earth)

Heavenly Father: Guide us on a path you feel we should take.

Putting others' needs first. Being present in the day and grateful for all we have been given. Help us to remember all we have is a gift from you. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Thursday of 4th Week of Lent March 26

I have been given an incredible opportunity, the ability to reach back in time and depart my hard earned wisdom upon my early 20s self, so here it goes, in a nutshell, don't blow it! Everything that we have done, everything that we have experienced, everything... made us who we are today. For the record, I kind of like who we've become so don't mess it up for us. I know getting up in the morning to work on a farm and taking classes in the afternoon seems tiresome but believe me that the dues we are paying now, will pay off in the long run. What we are learning in college is broadening our view and forcing us to think deeper and in more meaningful ways. The jobs we work while going through school teach us other sets of skills like diligence, fortitude and the ability to problem solve. By the time you hit 30 you will look back and really appreciate the many varied experiences and appreciate the myriad of opportunities that we have opened up for ourselves. Congrats- but there's one more thing. Although we like to consider ourselves to be self-made and a person who forged his way on his own without help- there was always someone there guiding us showing us the right direction to get us here. Work hard, but also keep the faith.

Prayer: O Lord, you have given us time. Time is such a fleeting gift. We plan ahead, preparing for things and then those things pass quickly by us. Years, months, weeks, days, hours, seconds...in the end those things we think are important are really not. Time has a way of humbling us and even passing us by. And yet, you are our constant. You remain. You are the past, present and future all together in one. Time means little if nothing to you. Help us realize the gift of you has you bless us in time.

P.S.-invest in Starbucks...



My thoughts: _____

Friday of 4th Week of Lent March 27

Dear Younger Me by MercyMe

Dear younger me
Where do I start
If I could tell you everything that I have learned so far
Then you could be
One step ahead
Of all the painful memories still running thru my head
I wonder how much different things would be
Dear younger me, dear younger me

Dear younger me
I cannot decide
Do I give some speech about how to get the most out of your life
Or do I go deep
And try to change
The choices that you'll make cuz they're choices that made me
Even though I love this crazy life
Sometimes I wish it was a smoother ride
Dear younger me, dear younger me

If I knew then what I know now
Condemnation would've had no power
My joy my pain would've never been my worth
If I knew then what I know now
Would've not been hard to figure out
What I would've changed if I had heard

Dear younger me
It's not your fault
You were never meant to carry this beyond the cross
Dear younger me

You are holy
You are righteous
You are one of the redeemed
Set apart a brand new heart
You are free indeed

My thoughts: _____

Saturday of 4th Week of Lent March 28

In my note to self I should tell you that in my younger days:

- I should have been a better daughter and sibling. Your parents are not as unreasonable and uneducated as I thought they were. Being the oldest sibling does not make me the boss so I should have been nicer and more tolerant.
- You should not have smoked, drank (especially when driving), or did drugs of any kind.
- You should have been a better student you could have if you had applied yourself and not thought that having fun was more important.

I believe that we are who we are because of all the choices good and bad that we make. I may have been a different person if I had changed things but then I would not have the life I have today. I am happy with where my life has taken me because of my choices. My choices have given me:

- A husband whom I love today as much as when we were first married, and I believe he feels the same which seems hard to believe, he has put up with a lot.
- Grown children that are good, kind, loving and hardworking who I am so proud of.
- Grandchildren, there are no words that can express what they mean to me and how they have changed my life.
- Friends, the friends that I smoked and drank and partied with that are still an important part of my life and have remained lifelong friends. Friends that I have met along the way that have become like family and have allowed me to grow and do so many things that I would not have done without them.
- Jobs that I have loved and have allowed me to meet some of the most awesome people ever. They have also brought more friends into my life and they have taught me so much and helped me grow.

I am blessed just the way I am, good and bad!

Dear God, thank you for all the blessing in my life. Thank you guiding me in my life when I was on the right path and the not so right path. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Fifth Sunday of Lent March 29

John 9:24-34

A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

In verses 24 and 25, the authorities insist that the man 'give glory to God', i.e., confess that he is lying, admit that the authorities are right, and that Jesus is a sinner. The formerly blind man obliges: he gives glory to God not by denial, but by fearlessly reiterating the truth that he knows and has experienced.

At first the man tells the religious leaders that he doesn't even know where Jesus is when asked. The only thing the man clings to is his experience: "One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see." The man is on a journey of faith; he grows in knowledge of Jesus. At first he calls Jesus a man, then a prophet, and finally, "Lord." The religious leaders, the experts of the day, never make the journey with Jesus. They are so certain, so smug in what they think they know that their very certainty prevents their openness to Jesus and where his authority comes from.

How might God be challenging us to grow our vision this day? We are two weeks away from Easter Sunday. Can we confidently proclaim the resurrection and sing the alleluias when perhaps our own smugness might get in the way of truly journeying with Jesus?

Question for Day:

What are some ways that we today can exhibit the Pharisees' attitude toward a marvelous work of God's grace or power?

My thoughts: _____

Monday of 5th Week of Lent March 30

Dear Me,

I have learned that most of the time we ask the wrong questions, especially when times are difficult. In the story of Jesus healing the man born blind, the Pharisees ask the wrong question to Jesus. They ask “Who sinned? This man or his parents? Instead, maybe they should have asked Jesus something like, “how can the Lord work for good in this man’s life?” The Pharisees are focused on the wrong thing, instead of the brokenness in this man’s life, they should have focused on the good God can do in any situation.

I know this to be true in my own life. There have been many times when I have been hurt, heartbroken or just struggling. Just recently I have struggled with the feeling of not belonging. Not belonging in the community or among people who I thought were friends. It is times like these that I tend to ask the wrong questions. “Why me? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do I feel this way?” I have been blind to seeing what God can do in a broken situation and truly trust His plans for my life.

I have learned to change my response when hurt or heartbreak happens to me or this world...“Lord, remind me to trust your plan with my life...show me how to do your will among the brokenness.” It is not always easy. There are times I fall back to the why me question. I do know when I look back on my life so far I can say for certain that God surely has done “infinitely more than I could have ever asked or imagined for my life” (Ephesians 3:20). The best part is there is more to come when I put my trust in the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, help us all to remember that we live in a broken world. Because of this, we will experience great hurt and hardship. Help us, especially in these times, to trust in you, knowing your plan is always better than our own. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Tuesday of 5th Week of Lent March 31

Dear Me,

There's a lot I would tell my younger self that my present self now knows. Of course, age and experience have been wonderful teachers.

First, stay calm. Some things are totally out of your control and you can't worry about them. Things will work out as they are supposed to work out in the time intended. This takes trust and patience. Not that I have an abundance of patience today, but I certainly did not have much when I was in my 20's. Trust has been developed over time, but I wish I had had more of it years ago.

Be open and stay curious. Ask questions. Step out of your comfort zone and explore something totally unexpected. Read more to open up the world to you. Don't be afraid to get embarrassed. Again, stretch your comfort zone. Be comfortable in your own skin and others will be comfortable with you.

Try to make a new friend every year. It might sound strange, but move an acquaintance from just an acquaintance to a deeper friendship. Your life will be enriched.

Listen to the person speaking to you until they are finished. Remain quiet, understand the meaning of their message, believe, and remove any doubtfulness. If you do not understand, be courteous and ask them to repeat the message. Be patient and seek understanding. The day and time of the message does not matter. Share the message with others without seeking personal gain. Stay active in your faith and religion despite worldly temptations.

When asking a question to an audience listen for the unknown response and not the known response. What is the unknown response telling you? Seek more explanation on the response.

Trust your heart,
Me

Lord, keep me devoted to my faith journey whenever worldly temptations arise. Bless the faithful departed. Bless those who seek and follow your word. Bless this faith community during Lent season and beyond. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Wednesday of 5th Week of Lent April 1

I would like my younger self to be more outgoing, smile more, take school seriously and enjoy life.

We will start with school. Your education is so important. I understand that it is hard for you. You don't want to put the effort in because you feel lost and alone. Mom and Dad don't have the patience to help you out. They don't understand why you don't get it. You need to go into your room and just figure it out like you normally do. You are smart. Think of it like a puzzle, you like puzzles. You can do it. Don't cut class in high school. When it comes time to go to college, go to a university. Get out of your comfort zone. Get that degree to be a teacher. You will be so happy you did.

Next be more outgoing. Life is too short to sit and let it fly by. When they say life is too short, you have no idea. Put yourself first. You should have went on more vacations and spent more time with your friends. You took life too seriously and raising your kids you put your needs aside. Not that I'm saying that raising your kids is not important, its very important. I'm just saying that you need some fun too. Enjoy your life. Do weekend trips with the kids. You never have enough money, but that's ok. You can find a lot to do with no money. Don't let things bother you so much. Not sure why it does. Maybe it's because you didn't feel respected by people and you let them push you around. Just walk away. Don't let them determine your day. You feel like no one listens to what you have to say or what you are saying matters. In the end it doesn't matter what they think. Smile! When you smile no one knows what you are thinking. They will think you are the happiest person.

Let your walls down. I know some crappy things happened to you. But keeping the walls up is not good either. You don't judge people, but you don't tend to believe people when they are being nice to you. Or you feel that you are not good enough. You are good enough, you are more that what you think. Don't let anyone tell you different.

My thoughts: _____

Thursday of 5th Week of Lent April 2

A note to Self,

Looking back, I've noticed that the insecurities you faced developed at a very young age. Isolating yourself from others felt good and comfortable. Was it fear of failure? Fear of not meeting your expectations? Fear of making mistakes? Shyness?

Fear is a Liar!

You were introduced to Pure Creativity at age nine. Pure Creativity became your best friend and her love flowed through you. Your friendship allowed you to experience the most magical moments of fun and excitement! Pure Creativity even listened to you when you went through tough times as a young adult. A best friend indeed, and still is to this day.

But, even Pure Creativity couldn't guard you against that liar, Fear. Fear still kept you isolated and kept your best friend contained in a box.

Fear is a Liar!

Finally, not too long ago, Pure Creativity reminded you that God sent her to you.

She and Him are one in the same.

She reminded you that Spirit nudges you for a reason.

Open your eyes and ears.

Don't be blinded by that liar, Fear.

Jesus has your back and you are never alone.

Remember...



My thoughts: _____

Friday of 5th Week of Lent April 3

NATURE

God must have made her
There is no doubt in my mind
Look at the trees with their barren lure
Waiting for the snow to cover them with their find
Like a lion pouncing upon the supper prey
Look at the wind in the sky with it's curling grey
Making you shiver and say, "I am glad there is a God."

Someone had to devise her
And I am sure no man has

Look at the vast waters around the earth
Laughing at all the land with it's smiling mirth.
Look at the high mountains standing so tall
Trying to tell us men we really are quite small.

Yes, we have all wondered about it's great beginning
But here we are with all it's great trimming
Too often our thoughts are turned away
To material things that we think make us gay
"Ah, but we are fooled, with such a thought
Because a spirit cannot be sold or bought."

So I have my spirit and love
For the God who created earth from above.



My thoughts: _____

Saturday of 5th Week of Lent April 4

Dear Self,

It's 2020, and no, cars still can't fly. You aren't a professional athlete, and you aren't rich and famous. In fact, you're doing many of the same things you've done your entire life to this point. Your small circle of friends and those you interact with hasn't changed much. You even live in the same house. You live a very ordinary life.

But that's nothing to be ashamed of, and actually it's a blessing. Your life is full of blessings—your wife is amazing, your kids are fantastic, your family and friends have been mostly blessed with good health and good fortune, and as ordinary and routine as each day may be, you wouldn't have it any other way.

I'm not sure I'm qualified to give you any life changing advice or fill you in on any tips that may lead you to a more extraordinary life. I could tell you to work harder in football and basketball practices, and then just maybe you'll play sports at the next level, or I could tell you to go the extra mile in school to be top of the class, and then just maybe you'll be on the fast track to a six figure job; but, I'm not going to. In fact, I might suggest the opposite. I think you need to loosen up a bit—relax and have fun. I'm not suggesting you all of a sudden become an under achiever, but in your quest to be perfect you may lose sight of all the wonderful blessings you have right in front of you. Enjoy each and every day and each and every moment for what is.

Perhaps most importantly, appreciate those things that even though you may not know it now, have become your foundation—your family, parents, sister, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins; and, maybe surprisingly, your faith. Yeah I know, church is boring, and you're way too cool to go to church and join church groups, but you're going to come across a couple of pastors at BLC that may just open your eyes to a different way of looking at faith.

When you find yourself worrying about perfection and looking too far into the future, take a step back and look at all the wonderful things right in front of your eyes and say a quick prayer, "Lord, as Jesus restored sight to the blind man, help me to see the blessings that are right in front of me, to see the extraordinary in the ordinary, and to appreciate those blessings that I all too often take for granted."

Sincerely,

A slightly older, possibly a little wiser, and more handsome version of yourself.

My thoughts: _____

Palm Sunday of Lent April 5

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

When this man had been cast out from the Temple and everything and everyone he knew, it was the Lord of the Temple who came to seek him out. Jesus seeks him out a second time! Jesus is true to those who are true to him. The more we know Jesus, the greater he becomes in our life. This magnificent story by John illustrates something very important for us. The man born blind moved toward full sight while at the same time there is a growing blindness of the Pharisees and others in the story.

This week begins the most sacred week and time for Christians throughout the world. We recall, remember and celebrate Jesus' suffering, death and rising. And yet the world is becoming increasingly blind and cold to these days and events that occurred 2,000 years ago. Does it matter any more?

John leaves out one important detail in this story. The man born blind is never given a name. That doesn't mean it didn't happen. Many of the gospel stories capture the healing moment without worrying about the particular details. When there is no name, any one of us can jump into the story. What if that is the point of the story? You and I are blind. Jesus heals us and desires us to journey closer with him. There is a growing and going from darkness to light in Christ. This story illustrates God's saving power for us. This week ahead invites us to participate in it. Open your eyes and heart. God is there waiting for you.

Questions for Day:

Through what weakness, failed relationship or disability in your life could God reveal his glory?

How might you "see" differently this Holy Week ahead?

My thoughts: _____

Monday of Holy Week April 6

This year will be a busy yet blessed one for my husband and I. We will joyfully be celebrating our daughter's wedding; the birth of a new grandchild two First Holy Communions; a Confirmation; an Eighth Grade Graduation, and last but not least, a Kindergarten Graduation! It seems like only yesterday that I was changing diapers and chasing toddlers! After 44 years of marriage and motherhood, I have reached my "golden years. God's grace, love, and mercy have brought me to this point.

What advice would I give a younger version of myself? I would encourage you to love yourself; believe in yourself and know that you have worth and goodness. That doesn't mean that you can be haughty, selfish, or proud. I wasted too much precious time comparing myself to other people and feeling that I never measured up to them. As a result, my self-esteem sometime suffered. It wasn't until my more "mature" years that I became comfortable with who I am. Everyday I pray that my kids and grandkids will know and believe in their worth and goodness.

The next piece of advice that I would give my younger self would be to relax and to "Stop and smell the roses." What a cheesy cliché, right? I wanted to be a "Norman Rockwell" family, and I lost sight of the blessings before me. When I was pregnant with our fourth child, I developed toxemia and as a result I spent 5 weeks in the hospital. The grandmas took turns helping my husband to care for our 3 little ones at home. Instead of being grateful for their help, my first instinct was to ask, will they dress the kids in clothes that match? Joy and wonder can often be found in the most unexpected, awkward, and messy moments!

And to my younger self I would say: Believe that God's love, mercy, and compassion are beyond anything that we can ever imagine! Faith, even the size of a mustard seed can be a comfort and guide in our lives. Spend time with Him in prayer, even if just for a few minutes. Praying for my kids and grandkids is part of my life's work. Prayer can bring you strength, peace, healing and hope even in the darkest of times. John 14:18 reminds us: "I will not leave you orphans. I will never abandon you." Praise be Jesus Christ Now and Forever!

My thoughts: _____

Tuesday of Holy Week April 7

JOB 5:10 “He bestows rain on the earth; he sends water up on the countryside.”

It was March 4, 1976 my dad was ushering the High School girls basketball games in Madison. I did the morning chores and was finishing up when the rain came. It was below freezing so the rain turned to ice. Dad didn't get home until 10:30 that evening. Dad and I rigged up a gas powered vacuum pump, shined the car lights in the barn and milked the cows. It took us three hours to milk. The cows were uneasy sensing that something wasn't normal. The neighbors came with a generator to pump water and heat up to the house. On March 6, 1976 my dad bought a PTO generator. We were without power for 8 days. I hope my younger self would appreciate these moments.

SUBMITTED FROM THE SAME FAMILY

Proverbs 23:22 “Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old”

Turning back time.....Thursday, June 6, 1985.

My dad was at St. Mary's hospital receiving medical care. My sister and I were at his bedside. He started telling us about life.

Now always remember the following:

- ◆ Your health is the most important thing in life.
Take care of yourself.
- ◆ If you work for something, take care of it.
If you have it handed to you on a silver platter you most likely will discard it.
- ◆ If you ever loan money to a family member or friend.....most likely you will not receive it back.

My dad died in the early morning on Friday, June 7, 1985. He was 56 years old. I was 25 years old. As I look back in life, I will always remember this conversation that my dad had with us.

My thoughts: _____

Wednesday of Holy Week April 8

The Haunted House

Have you ever been to a haunted house? A real haunted house? Come with me! About a mile from my childhood home is a huge unpainted two-story house – it's been idle for years! The huge front porch yells, "Do not enter!" Boards are missing from the front steps. The wood porch squeaks when stepped on and the main door is warped enough to make you ask, "Dare we go in?" The entrance is draped with cobwebs. I whisper, "Who does this belong to? What's their story? What kind of people were they? Looking around, you get a sense of their personality though the dust, webs and old black dusty clothes. For me, the antique black furniture is displayed eloquently. Large oval family portraits fill the walls and yes, it does seem like the eyes in the portraits follow you everywhere. My imagination runs wild – I love everything here. The kitchen table is still set as if there was a family meal earlier in the day. I see financial documents on the table and then I see this quote: "Do not prosper me beyond my capacity to maintain my love for you." What does this mean? Is it possible to appreciate this quote as a kid?

I find some old paper, pencil and write a letter to myself. I slowly walk the old beautiful staircase to the second story. I leave my letter in the 4th bedroom with the most beautiful antique bed. It reads: "Someday you will appreciate your home – many people do not have one. When you get up in the morning, thank God that you are able to – not everyone is healthy enough. When you arrive at work, thank God that you have a job – not everyone does. You will teach your kids the difference between "wants" and "needs" and will put enough fear into them from having credit card debts. You will also appreciate what your Mom says, "When you get sick of something long enough, you'll change it." (Weight, financial debt, bad habits, addictions.)

I still love this quote: "Do not prosper me beyond my capacity to maintain my love for you." God has kept me humble enough to think of him every day. As for the haunted house, a mysterious fire took the life from it about 15 years after my visit.

My thoughts: _____

Holy Thursday April 9

Be strong but
not rude.

Be kind but
not weak.

Be humble but
not timid.

Be proud but
not arrogant.

Growing up I was always trying to please others. I thought if I did that, people would like me more. In giving, giving, giving I learned that I was giving to the wrong person. In letting go, I learned there were many other arms opening up waiting for me.

Lord, thank You for bringing me from where I was to where I am. Teach me to be MYSELF and in doing so, trust that You are always there for me with Your arms open. Amen.



My thoughts: _____

Good Friday April 10

Here I sit pondering what to say in a letter to my younger self. The first thing that comes to mind is that I am truly blessed. The 2nd thought is that I am getting old.

Besides these thoughts I mentioned above I started to reflect on what I would really tell myself as a young man.

First, I would start by congratulating him on a job well done. Let me explain. I would tell my younger self that I have done well navigating the many temptations/obstacles there are in life. I always remembered what was important - FAMILY. I did well in my career but I did forego opportunities due to travel and/or relocation which would have disrupted the balance and importance of my family. Life goes too fast and I did not want to miss AH-HA moments due to work.

Secondly, I would tell myself to not sweat the small stuff. In fact I would tell myself to NOT sweat any items as God is in control. This is hard, and as I age I still struggle with this (much better) but I would want my younger self to know and believe that things work out - always a purpose.

Third, I would tell my younger self to not take for granted the time you have here on earth. Spend quality time with loved ones, don't be bitter and make the choice to always be happy. As we age we appreciate the ones we love more fondly. Don't regret any second, minute, hour or year you spend with others. Make it count and be true to the person you are. Be alive and enjoy life and the others that surround you. Be that piece of sunshine that everyone looks to and not be afraid to share.

Lastly, I would hug, kiss and high five my younger self for being a Bears and Steelers fan and not falling victim to the Chief Kingdom - HA!

My thoughts: _____

Easter Vigil April 11

"We make plans and God laughs." This common phrase is so true. I think Garth Brooks nailed it with his song "I Thank God for Unanswered Prayers." I remember having my life plotted out when I was in college. My mindset was to get through school as soon as possible, marry my high school sweetheart, have a couple of kids and then live "happily ever after." This all happened in the mid 70s, a time when divorce was not considered a big deal. Vows were often interpreted "as long as we both shall love" not "as long as we both shall live." When my well laid out plans never materialized, I was devastated. I rushed through college needlessly. After several unsuccessful attempts at finding love and my "happily ever after" I eventually gave up. I decided marriage and a family were not meant to be. I truly believe I would have been counted in the divorce statistics of the 80s. With the guidance of a trusted church friend, instead of wallowing in misery, I turned my focus on mission work. I eventually came to accept the idea that if the traditional American dream it wasn't meant to be for me, that was okay. I could peacefully live with this revised path in my life. Thankfully, God had his own plans for me. After allowing me the experience of living life more mindfully He surprised me when I wasn't "Looking for Love in all the Wrong Places" as Johnny Lee sang. I eventually did find my "happily ever after" many years later. So, yes indeed, I heartily thank God for unanswered prayers.

Gracious God. Thank you for your abundant blessings, even when I don't realize or understand them at the time. Please remind me daily to "Let Go and Let God." In your name I pray, AMEN.



My thoughts: _____

Easter Sunday April 12

Dear Younger Me,

It is the year 1989; you will be 27 that year. I chose this year because it is a major point in your life in how you live your life for the next 25 years; how you base your thoughts and actions. This is the year that your mother, who is was your best friend, passes away; and even though you come from a large family, you feel so alone.

After her death you begin to build walls, walls to keep you from feeling; you avoid your pain, sorrow and hurt. Unfortunately, this leads to becoming self-sufficient, prideful, and a people-pleaser which spirals you into making some costly choices and unhealthy relationships that drain you emotionally, psychologically, financially and most of all spiritually. The next twenty-five years you live a life filled with anxiety, depression and self-indulgence. You eventually get to a point in your life that you do not want to live anymore because everything is so out of control; you were so far from God that you truly believed He wanted nothing to do with you.

The truth is in Hebrews 13:5 “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” Your brokenness leads you back to God. The day you contemplated taking your life is the day you gave your life to Jesus; Jesus did not come here to condemn you, he came to save you. He died for your sins so you do not have to face that horrible death. The Holy Spirit begins transforming your mind, heart and soul.

Your life begins to turn around; you learn to feel the peace amidst the storm, you feel content. Does all your pain, anxiety, depression, trial and tribulations go away? No, they do not, but you have a newer outlook on life and you believe God has a purpose for you. Everything you went through has made you a stronger person.

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for dying for my sins and taking on my burdens so that I may be free to become more like you and to serve your Heavenly Father. Help me tear down the walls that I built to protect me. Please help me to feel loved and to open my eyes where my heart is closed.

God Bless you, child of God!

My thoughts: _____

Monday in the Octave of Easter April 13

Dear “Younger Self”

You are young, beautiful and fit...

I know that you feel as though you have the world by the reigns, you are young, energetic, funny, friendly, can accomplish anything and trust anyone. You have great and grand plans for the future.

Beware Self: things will NOT go as planned. Life on life's terms will hit you extremely hard but please don't forget the faith that's deep within you.

In the next years you will go through some of the most unbearable losses of your life, crying yourself to sleep for months.

You will feel as though God is punishing you...loss of your mom at a young age, turning to alcohol to hide the pain. You find yourself trusting the wrong people, broken relationships, loss of a child, total despair.

You will feel abandoned by God, by loved ones. Like God doesn't love you. The feeling that you deserve these things, afraid and embarrassed.

There will be times in your life you want to end it all; simply desperate: feeling as if the string your hanging onto will break at any moment. You won't want to live anymore because you cannot bare the pain anymore, nor the judgments of others. Believe me one day you will thank God that your little home that you were able to purchase all by yourself doesn't have a garage...

Please remember that God isn't testing your faith but making you see your strength, the better version of yourself.

Spend more time with those that love you unconditionally.

Be patient, be still, and enjoy being alone. Alone can be okay.

Remember don't hurt people. Be kind.

Remember that those hurting people sometimes will hurt you. Still be kind. Don't forget what values grounded you.

Dear self, I'm thankful that you never gave up, that you hung on tight to that rope, that string, that you walked through the most horrible, painful times of your life. *You are strong, you are beautiful and you are loved.*

My thoughts: _____

Tuesday in the Octave of Easter April 14

Note to self: What are you doing? Whatever happened to that nudging at heart you have felt since 8th grade? When I was in my early 20s, I was attending a small Catholic College in the suburbs of Chicago. I was really enjoying my time as an undergrad, if you asked some of my more serious friends, they would say I was enjoying my time in college a little too much. The nudging at my heart that I felt all of those years ago, was that I would be involved in ministry. I never entertained the idea of becoming a priest, but there weren't many other options open to me at that time. But self, I don't understand why you never pursued ministry in another direction. Oh sure, you toyed with the idea of joining a Catholic order to become a Christian Brother, but when you didn't feel the Spirit leading you in that direction, you just stopped any pursuit of following that nudge. Self, instead of pursuing what you felt was God calling, you turned to partying and basically doing everything you could do to distance yourself from the One who loves you most! I know you loved God, but you worked so hard at not admitting it to yourself. I still don't understand that and probably never will. Remember how you would try to act cool by making fun of those involved in campus ministry, while at the same time, I know that down deep, you wanted to be a part of it. When you graduated with your BA in Sociology, you had some amazing ideas of how you wanted to work for equal rights and justice. To some degree you did pursue that dream, but remember how empty you still felt? Self, take a close look at how you have blessed. Think of how you could use those gifts you have been blessed with to serve God? Remember when that was so important to you? Pray. That's right, pray. My prayer for you dear self, is that one day you will realize how God is working in your life and you will see not just with your eyes, but with your heart how you can use your life experiences both the good ones and the not so good ones, to serve our loving God. Gracious and loving God, thank you for never giving up on me. Amen.

My thoughts: _____

Wednesday in the Easter Octave April 15

My Prayer: (Psalm 51:10-12)

Create a clean heart in me, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence,
and take not thy holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit. Amen

If I could talk to myself when I was in my mid-twenties, I would start by telling myself to SLOW DOWN and enjoy where you are today! Don't worry so very much about tomorrow and what might go wrong. Just try to take each day as it comes.

Enjoy the time you spend with your friends and family, because their lives are also passing quickly. Listen more to what they say, and talk less.

Spend more time with the older members of your family, and the older people you know. They will not be around forever. Ask questions about their lives and experiences, and listen and learn from what they say.

Learn the art of patience, for good things will happen throughout your life, most in spite of your great planning. God has a plan for you. Accept the good and the not so good, knowing there is something better just up ahead.

My thoughts: _____

Thursday in the Easter Octave April 16

Hey Kid,

You know me, but you do not. I am inside of you and will keep meeting me everyday as you grow up. So far, you are doing the right things: listening to your parents, helping them out as you grow, having fun and staying out of trouble and that is a good thing. One thing that you may want to know is take your time when making some decisions. I am trying to let you know that you might just make too many snap decisions that you might regret as you grow older. You are making some great friends that will be a trait that will follow you as you continue to grow.

Sports will always be a important part of your life and life of those around you. Push yourself so you will learn how to push others near you in sports. Do not let others give up or just go through the motions. They might even regret that they did not try as hard as possible.

Don't fret that you might not be as popular with the girls as you would like, but you will meet somebody to share things with. Just Trust me. At some point you will slide away from the church like many do, but you will return and be an important part of the church families that you will belong to. Also, in many ways you will be following in your parents path that they have laid before you and for that I am certain they are and will be proud of you as they show it in their own way.

Your future is bright and with the path you are on, you will be successful. Have fun and stay the course.

Good Luck and remember, take your time when making decisions.

Signed, YOU

My thoughts: _____

Friday in the Easter Octave April 17

You were lost, but now are found.

You were blind, but now can see!

Please continue to Taste and See the Grace from God which has relieved you from Fear, the moment you first believed.

Remember when long ago, you had lots of worry, doubt, and many tough questions. Your faith waivered so much that you were pulled down into the Pit of Darkness and just a flicker of your light had shone. Anxiety, sadness, perfectionism, and self-doubt emerged and fear continued to take control and trap you.

But, now you are found and can see!

Fear not.

Win the Day!

You still continue to learn that not everyone will like, approve, and even listen to you. It's ok! Your world will not crumble.

If you are content to be simply yourself, you will

Become more than yourself.

Spirit has blessed you with many talents and gifts. Listen, while in the quiet and stillness.

He speaks to you.

Continue to be grateful, even when failure takes place.

Make sure to illuminate the Sacred Path for others to see, especially children.

Grace has brought you safe thus far. How sweet that sounds!

You are finally discovering how *Amazing* this life can be!

Sincerely,

Me



My thoughts: _____

Saturday of the Octave of Easter April 18

LIVE YOUR LIFE WE ONLY HAVE ONE

Stay true to who you are but be willing to hear others' points of view.

Allow space for multiple truths and perceptions.

Be agile - change is constant. Agility allows you movement.

Don't hold grudges for today's enemies will be tomorrow's allies.

Speak Your Truth but temper it with clarity.

Know when to hold your tongue. You don't have to win every argument or take ownership of a conversation.

Love who you want. Never let anyone define the way you love.

Be strong but not at the expense of love, vulnerability and sensitivity.

Find comfort in alone time. Being constantly surrounded by people and distractions won't allow you time for your own discovery of you.

Forgive others. You may not forget, but forgiveness allows you to move on.

Never stop reaching for your dreams for they don't happen overnight and they change, but they never leave you fully.

Don't be afraid to fail because with failure comes knowledge and experience.

Don't judge the story playing in someone else's life. It often is not the one playing in your mind.

My thoughts: _____

Now What?

“God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.” -Ephesians 3:20 (Msg)

The hope is that this devotional has been a tool that God has used to move you deeply and gently. We pray that you have grown closer in your relationship with Jesus on this Lenten and now Easter journey. We also pray that you truly believe God really will do more than you can every imagine or ask in your life! The Easter promise reminds us that no matter the suffering or challenges we face here on Earth, that there will be a beautiful and wonderful time ahead when we are wrapped in His glory!

Perhaps you are wondering what do I do now? This devotional book might be ending, but that doesn't mean your prayer or focus time must end. There are so many great resources that sometimes it can be overwhelming making us unsure of where to begin. Here are a few resources to help you continue spending time in God's word.

Online Bible: <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Message-MSG-Bible/>

Devotionals you can Purchase:

- ◆ Jesus Calling Devotionals by Sarah Young
- ◆ Daily Power 365 Days of Fuel for Your Soul by Craig Groeschel
- ◆ The One Year Love Language Devotional (for couples)
by Gary Chapman

Online Devotional Resources:

- ◆ Daily Moravian Texts: <https://www.moravian.org/2018/11/the-2019-moravian-daily-texts-are-here/>
- ◆ Our Daily Bread Devotional: <https://odb.org/>
- ◆ Lutheran Hour Ministries: <https://www.lhm.org/default.asp>
- ◆ Daily Devotions from Max Lucado: <https://maxlucado.com/category/daily/>
- ◆ Daily Living for Seniors: <https://www.crosswalk.com/devotionals/seniors/>
- ◆ She Reads Truth & He Reads Truth <https://shereadstruth.com/plans/>
or <http://hereadstruth.com/plans/>
You can follow along with current plans and reflections. They also have beautiful resources you can purchase.

Lutheran-Related Sites:

- ♦ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA): <https://www.elca.org/>
- ♦ Thrivent: <https://www.thrivent.com/>
- ♦ The Living Lutheran: <https://www.livinglutheran.org/>

Christian Radio Stations and Music-Related Links:

- ♦ Life 102.5FM Local Area Station <http://life1025.com/> You can listen online or on their app.
- ♦ The Moody Bible Institute Radio Station: <https://www.moodyradio.org/>
- ♦ K Love: <http://www.klove.com/> You can listen online or on their app.
- ♦ Let's Sing It! Is a helpful web site where you can find the lyrics to your favorite songs, including contemporary Christian songs: <https://www.letssingit.com/>

Family Ideas:

- ♦ Use the "Taking Faith Home" bulletin insert throughout the week.
- ♦ There are a list of ways to implement prayer and faith conversation with your family!
- ♦ Read a Bible story as your kids are eating breakfast or dinner.

Spiritual Exercises:

- ♦ Dwelling in the Word: <https://www.elca.org/Future-Directions/The-Process/Dwelling>
- ♦ Lectio Divina: <https://www.conceptionabbey.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/lectio-divina-card.pdf>

Other activities you can do to help your prayer time:

- ♦ Silence, Lighting a Candle, Listening to Music, Taking a Walk, Visiting other Churches, Journaling, Coloring/Painting

An abstract, painterly background featuring a mix of warm colors like orange, red, and yellow, with cooler tones of blue and green. A light-colored, winding path or road is visible, leading from the bottom towards the center of the image. The overall style is soft and textured, resembling a watercolor or oil painting.

*I was
Blind
but now
I see*

John 9:25