

## Lent 2011

Dear Zion Family and Friends,

This is your 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Zion God Sightings. THANK YOU for sharing your stories of faith, hope, love, sadness – the list goes on and on.

Thank you to Jon McQuinn, Sarah Wagner and Sharon Frank for all their formatting and proof-reading help. They were ALWAYS prompt in their turn-around time (sometimes amazingly fast) and I just can't say thank you enough. Their assistance is very much appreciated, as I couldn't have done it without them. They are my God Sightings!

Thank you to Carol Little for all the beautiful artwork. What a talent and tremendous gift! And thanks to Carol for getting all this to the printer for me. She saved me a tremendous amount of time.

It has truly been my pleasure, as Chief Editor to bring you these wonderful stories of God working within our lives. We praise and glorify him by sharing our God Sightings with each other. We have challenged ourselves to look for, identify and share with others how we have seen God at work.

This booklet is dedicated to the sharing of first-hand stories where people have seen God at work. We believe it. We see it. We even look for it. God is at work in our midst. When we work, we work. When we pray, God works. He's BETTER than a phone call away. Place your call to God today.

God bless you. Amen.

Peace,  
Kathy Smith

## Ash Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>

**1 Corinthians 1:18 “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”**

Today with these words, “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return”; you will be marked with ashes on your forehead in the sign of a cross. You are not alone, as you will join millions of Christians of multiple denominations mark the beginning of Lent.

Perhaps being alone is a good thing at times. But when left alone in our sin and pain, it is a living hell.

I was fortunate to be an adult volunteer in “Challenge Day” at Freeland High School. It is a program aimed at breaking down the wall we place around ourselves for protection, and the judgment we often impose upon others. It is about creating an atmosphere where students and adult participants can complete a simple phrase; “If you really knew me . . .,” then share what their life experience is really like.

It was a day that led up to allowing a 30-minute activity taking place called “crossing the line.” After building up to this moment, we spent time in silence, reflection and honesty, then responded to a series of events and situations that started with “If you ever....” This was completed with statements that cause pain, separation, confusion and the challenges inflicted and experienced in life.

And in silence we spent that time crossing the line. There was pain and tears. People bravely let their walls down . . . and crossed the line . . . but together. No one was alone. It was one of the most powerful educational experiences I have witnessed (remember, I was in public education for 10 years prior to ministry).

We learned to trust, support and love one another as we are. At least for one day we were all OK with one another. It was one of the most powerful church services I ever attended. Although God was never mentioned, and public prayer never offered, it was church because it was all about sharing love, and remembering we are in this life together. We shared our pain, and unconditional love.

Today we are marked with a cross and reminded we are not alone. God knows our trial, and suffering. Jesus went to the cross for us. Trust in God, believe in Jesus and know the Holy Spirit remains with us. We are not alone in our life. We have one another. We have God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Rob

*Prayer: Lord, bless all those who struggle alone. Help us find them and love them. Bless all those who battle with choices in life to seek help, be healthy or trust in You. Thank you for remaining a part of our world and life. Help us remember we are never alone. Amen.*

Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup>

**Luke 1:5-6 “In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly.”**

At our first worship service at one of our winter churches, St. Peter Lutheran, I met Zachary McAllister, a nine-year-old who came under his grandmother’s care last July. The grandmother, Linda Servold, is the choir director and Edie is in the choir while we are in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

The second Sunday we were at worship, after some last-minute safety pin altering on the robe, Zach was pressed into service as an acolyte. From then on, being an acolyte was a position he looked forward to, even hoping the assigned boy or girl failed to make it on any given Sunday. He would hang around the pastor’s door just in case he would be needed. (One of the members altered the smallest off-white robe to fit the young man.) Then too, being that his grandmother is the organist/pianist, Zach was with her for the Advent services and happened to be the only young person there to fill the acolyte position. His bright smile and energetic approach to being an acolyte also brightened the days of those in attendance at church.

I remember one Advent service where Zach was ready to march up the aisle and light the candles, but his grandmother, while at the organ to the left rear of the small church, had not yet started the prelude. The silence was broken with Zach's loud whisper, "Gramma," and his dancing left hand's fingers indicating she should play some music so he could light the candles. Linda got the signal and started playing. The service began.

Linda had gotten custody of Zachary because of some bad circumstances in her son's home a few hundred miles away, but Zachary was a blessing to us all at Saint Peter Lutheran. Our church community was even treated to witnessing Zachary McAllister's Baptism on January 9, 2011.

Me, I was just fortunate to have Zach accompany me on the desert four times while I went bird hunting. He does think quail hunting is cool. Maybe not as cool as being an acolyte, but cool nonetheless. Then too, when I told him how old I was, I will always remember him saying, "Wow! You're almost a hundred!" I guess I am a lot closer to that number than he is, but have never looked at it that way.

I am looking forward to next November when I can see his smile, hear him sing, hear him laugh, and have him join me on the desert again. God has blessed us with his presence in the form of Zachary McAllister.

Tom Novak

*Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the many people who love and serve you in so many ways. Thank you for those who especially serve you in ways that allow us to worship. We celebrate the faithful servant Zechariah who served in the temple thousands of years ago who became the father of John the Baptist. We thank you for servants like Zach and his grandma who serve the church with joy. Bless all who serve the church so others can worship. Help us learn from their service, how to serve others and grow in our own faith. Amen.*

Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup>

**Luke 2:16-20 "So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."**

As I was sitting at my computer trying to come up with something to write for a Christmas God Sighting, I thought about The Christmas Story based on Luke's Gospel. Instead, I decided to base my God Sighting on something that happened to me 25 years ago and how we are to go and do, for the least of these.

I was a sophomore in high school and I was good friends with a guy in my class whose family didn't have much money. As a matter of fact, he came from a broken home and his mom didn't work or drive. If they needed to go anywhere, they had to rely on me or other members of their family to take them. The family lived about two miles away from my house, so we hung around with each other like most kids do in high school.

Christmas was fast approaching and my friend's mom was commenting to me on not having much of a Christmas that year because she had no money to buy her kids presents. Feeling the aid of the Holy Spirit, I took it upon myself to help out the family that year, although my own family wasn't too impressed when they found out about it. They knew they were a poor family and felt there were services and agencies to take care of these folks, but I went ahead with helping them out anyway.

I talked things over with my friend's mom and we planned on a nice Christmas. I asked her if they had a Christmas tree and she said, "No, we don't have one and probably won't be getting one either." Once again, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, I took it upon myself to buy the family a 4-foot Christmas tree and trimmings to decorate their home. The mother and I looked through a Sears catalog for something her sons might like for Christmas and, of course, asked the boys if they liked this or that without them even knowing why we asked them.

The mother and I then went to Sears where we (she) ordered presents for her sons. The presents arrived and were well hidden from the boys. We then wrapped the presents and put them under the tree. There weren't a lot of presents, but what there were, was just as good. Christmas Day came and I went out to see the family and wish them a Merry Christmas. The sons were delighted with what they received. It was nearing dinner time when the mother took me aside and said, "You know, I can never repay you for all that you've done to help

us have a decent Christmas. Would you be willing to stay and enjoy our Christmas dinner with us?" I gladly accepted the invitation. After dinner, we laughed, told stories and enjoyed a time of fellowship.

Isn't this what we are called to do for the less fortunate? I am a firm believer that Jesus called me to help this family when I had the chance to do so. And, while society says to forget the poor and the less fortunate – "there are agencies that will take care of them" -- WE are the "agencies" to take care of the poor. Jesus says, "Whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me." Let us remember the poor and the unfortunate who for some reason don't have much, and offer up a prayer for them.

Tim Welther

*Prayer: Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay, close by me forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and take us to heaven to live with thee there. Amen .*

Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>

**Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."**

It is 8:00 p.m. on a Saturday evening in December. It is 29 degrees outside and the temperature is falling. Our furnace is not working. *Thank you, Lord, for watching over us.*

Perhaps I should explain. Peggy says she is a bit chilly, so I go to the thermostat and kick it up a few degrees. Nothing seems to happen. I check other thermometers in the house and find they all read around 70 degrees, a bit cooler than normal, but no big deal. It takes me 15 minutes to convince myself that we really have a furnace problem. *Thank you, Lord, for letting me find this now rather than waking up at 4:00 a.m. with the house temperature at 40 degrees.*

I call the heating company and get an immediate, live, human answering their phone. *Thank you, Lord, that they have an efficient 24 hour-a-day answering process.*

They have to page their heating technician and have the tech return my call. I get the call within 5 minutes. *Thank you, Lord, that the tech receives the page and calls back quickly.*

The tech has to drive over from Linwood and is at my door within 45 minutes of my first call to the heating company. *Thank you, Lord, that the tech is available and there are not twenty other customers with broken furnaces before me.*

The tech zeroes in on the problem, has it fixed and is gone within 25 minutes. *Thank you, Lord, for a highly competent tech.*

The problem was a blocked combustion air flow screen inside the furnace caused by four large (dead) bumble bees and a leaf fragment. Only cleaning is required to fix the problem. I had worried about needing a circuit board or gas valve costing hundreds of dollars. My only cost is the minimum charge for a Saturday night service call. *Thank you, Lord, for a relatively cheap fix.*

My whole problem, from first suspicions to the tech leaving the house, takes only two hours, from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., and the house never gets colder than 68 degrees. *Thank you, Lord, for a quick resolution to our problem that does not ruin our weekend.*

Is it a lucky series of events or is it God's omnipresence? I look for the latter and am continuously awed by how often I find it. I believe we would be a lot more thankful if we fully examine our situations rather than stopping at my opening sentences and saying, "Oh darn, my stupid furnace is broken."

**"... Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:19-20**

Ilmars Dobulis

*Prayer: Lord God, thank you for this example of a step by step guide to praying into life instead of reacting without seeking your direction. Help us all grow into our ability to pray into all things that we may be an example of faith for the world around us. Bless us in our ability to share our stories of seeking your direction in all things. Amen.*

Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>

**John 9:1-6** “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.” 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.”

The exact day I read the request for God sightings, my family experienced God's presence in a very profound way. It was Sunday, January 23. I awoke anticipating worship, yet I felt a strange uneasiness and decided not to go. I made a cup of coffee, sat down to check my Facebook page when my cell phone rang. Erika looked at me as I sat looking at the phone. She said, “Mom - get that. What if it's an emergency?” By the time I got up and reached my cell phone, it stopped ringing.

Moments later, the home phone rang. I picked it up and heard Justin at the other end. He said, “Mom, I have been in a bad accident. I hit a tree and rolled the vehicle. I'm okay, but bleeding and banged up.” I immediately asked him where he was and he was just west of Freeland on Freeland Road.

I was still in my pajamas, grabbed a pair of boots, a coat and gloves, and ran to the car. I felt a sense of panic as I drove. Yes, I heard my son's voice, but just two days before, my supervisor left work for the same accident, his son in a rollover. He was conscious until he reached the hospital but then died. I couldn't get this picture out of my mind.

I tried to remain calm as I drove to the scene trying not to speed, praying for Justin and his friend, the passenger. As I reached the accident scene, I saw two fire trucks and the ambulance approaching. The sense of panic rose inside of me. I then saw the vehicle. It had veered off the road on the right, hit a culvert, went airborne striking a 30-40 foot pine tree, rolling and crushing the top of the vehicle with the boys inside. I slammed the transmission into park, ran to the scene praying to myself, 'God, please let my baby be alright'. He was inside a van, that of a good Samaritan that had stopped to help. There were three little children in the rear, buckled in car seats. The driver was caring for the boys, checking vitals, cleaning up blood, keeping them alert until help came.

I broke down and cried just being able to see them alive with my own eyes. They were transported to the hospital, treated and later released. Both survived the accident with just bruises, cuts, scrapes, and sore muscles and joints. The police, fire rescue and medical workers do not know how these boys survived the crash. The vehicle was busted to pieces, unidentifiable from the front, with the axle and wheel pushed into the front seat. It was truly a miracle.

I know that God acts in strange ways. He surfaces when we least expect him. His presence is there when we most need it. That day I am certain that he was sitting in the front seat, along with my mom, next to Justin and his friend as they traveled along that road. We sat together later that day and prayed as a family for the safety and protection that was provided our family that day. I don't think any of us will ever be the same. I look at my children each day as they grow into young adults. I can no longer protect them as I once did when they were children. But God sure can!!

Sheryl Krenzke

*Prayer: Dear Lord, help us remember that in this life, accidents happen, people struggle, choices are made. Help us understand that you are not a God of punishment, but one of love. Thank you for the many ways we are kept safe in a difficult and scary world. Thank you that scripture teaches us about your unconditional love and healing. Thank you for helping protect us, heal us, and remain with us. Lord bless all those who have lost loved ones to accidents of any kind. Bless those that have been injured, and thank you for those that have escaped any harm. Amen*

Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup>

**1 Corinthians 13:3-8a** “If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

One Sunday morning, Steve and I had a pretty big argument. This is really quite uncommon for us. On the way to church, he even raised his voice at me, which is down right rare for him! (And yes, I did deserve it).

When we got to church, I was still very upset. Steve and I walked into church and sat down in a pew. When we sit together, we normally are touching, but this Sunday, I literally stiffened my body and sat further away from him than I ever normally would.

During the sermon, Pastor started talking about loving one another as He loves us. He said that some of us might be having trouble loving somebody at the present moment, even a family member. For a quick second, I thought he had ESP but suddenly it was so crystal clear. God was literally speaking through him to me (and also to Steve). When the sermon ended, my sweet husband reached his hand out and held mine tight. Of course I moved over next to him, where I should have been all along.

It literally was so emotional for me and I have absolutely no doubt that I was meant to hear that message. I could not control my emotions for the remainder of the service. I'm sure people were wondering what was up with all the tears and me! LOL

Thank you, Pastor for delivering the message. Please know at least two people left church that day who loved one another as He loves us. :)

Sheila Boensch

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us remember gathering in your house of worship is always a good choice, especially when we are in conflict and do not feel like worshipping. Help us battle the lies of the Devil that tell us we need to "feel good" to go to church. Help us come to worship always, and free our hearts and minds to the power of your message of faith, hope and love always remembering the greatest of these is love. Amen*

Tuesday, March 15<sup>th</sup>

**Psalms 107:28-30** “Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven.”

#### CLEAR DAY

Back in 2005, we moved cross-country from Georgia to Texas with a 2 year old and a 6 week old in tow. This was our fourth cross-country move since our first child was born in 2003. We knew no one. My husband was working a lot of hours and the closest family lived 3 1/2 hours away.

The baby (my son) was a very difficult baby from birth. At two weeks old, it became obvious that something more was wrong. In hindsight, he had reflux that was medically under-managed and a dairy / soy protein intolerance. Both conditions made him scream inconsolably (not cry), have horrible gas and frequent bowel movements that made sleep almost impossible for everyone involved. He only took "22 minute" naps and slept no longer than 2 1/2 hours at a stretch during the night. Most of the time, if he fell asleep, he slept in a Baby Bjorn carrier that my husband wore while sitting up in a chair or in the swing.

I was eating only range fed turkey, brown rice seasoned with olive oil and sea salt, pears and water in order for my milk to contain the least amount of irritants. He would not take a bottle so any special formulas were not an option. My pediatrician was of no help, telling me that I was letting the baby wrap me around his finger.

I remember being at the breaking point between sleep deprivation, hunger from my restrictive diet, no support from the medical community and just plain stress of a family. I strapped him on my chest in his baby carrier, grabbed my 2 year old and went for a walk. I was praying so hard for God to give me the strength to go on. As I rounded the corner of the block,

I met a pregnant woman standing outside her home with her little 2 year old. We instantly became wonderful friends and an unending source of strength for me. I know that God answered my prayers that day and I am forever thankful for the lifelong friend he guided me to.

Sarah Wagner

*Prayer: Dear Jesus, help us in times when we seem to reach the end of our ability to cope with the challenges and trials of our lives alone. Hear our prayers for help, work in the world around us to care for us in just the right way at just the right time. Thank you for the special moments when we realize you are present with us, and when we find others to share our journey as a friend. Amen.*

Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>

**John 1:5 “The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness did not overcome it.”**

#### NEON CROSSES

Several Sundays during the Fall of 2009, it was extremely foggy as I made my way to church. In fact, it was so bad that as I turned onto Powley Drive, I could not even see the church and I remember thinking, ...too bad there isn't a bright light on the church to help us find our way to it. And then I thought,...just like the churches in Korea.

Koreans love colors; they love lights, and they especially love neon. As a result, many of the Christian Churches in Korea have a red neon cross at the top of their steeple. (Red is considered a celebration color in Korean culture.)

At first, these beacons seemed a little odd to me; it was a little too Las Vegas strip for my faith. However, the longer we were in Korea, the more comforting these beacons of light became for despite the billions of lights from the city or the extreme darkness of the countryside, the distinct shape and color was always visible in the night sky. It was extremely comforting to realize that no matter how lost you became, all you had to do was look up and find the light that would lead you home.

Sandy Schwan

*Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for shining your light into our lives. And when the darkness sets in, thank you for not letting it overcome us. Please help me to remember that when the darkness does come and I feel lost, all I have to do is seek your light and it will help guide me safely home. Amen*

Thursday, March 17<sup>th</sup>

**Romans 8:35, 37 “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”**

#### DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

My God-sighting involves some remarkable and exemplary Christians from times past. I have been working with the adult Sunday School class that is studying the History of the Christian Church. Among the things that really “popped-out” at me were the experiences and behavior of the early Christians. Those who chose to follow the way of Christ were very faith-filled and very committed. They lived their faith in a way that made them stand apart from the rest of the populations and culture of the Roman Empire.

The early Christians cared for the poor, for widows and orphans...when others did not. They showed acts of compassion during famine, earthquake or war...when others did not. They showed respect for the dead...when others did not. (They buried their poorer brethren...not leaving them out to rot as was the common practice). Christians would stay away from social functions that involved offerings and prayer to pagan gods – something that was very commonly done! They refused to engage in emperor worship.

The early Christians stood out as being a very different group of people...their very life-style was a God-Sighting. For this and other reasons, they eventually became the target of persecution by the Roman Empire. Beginning with Emperor Nero in 64 AD, twelve different Emperors engaged in the terrorizing or attempted eradication of Christians over a period of 247 years. The property of Christians was confiscated and their rights of assembly were prohibited. Christians were tortured, crucified, attacked by wild animals and burned alive. Clearly, being a Christian during these times was not for the faint of heart.

Being a Christian today seems much less risky and problematic...at first glance. Our circumstances may have changed a great deal, but the world still makes its attempt to separate us from our Lord and from our path of Christian discipleship. I ask myself the question, "How much do I stand apart from the pagan culture around me?" In honesty, I have to admit that I too often fall short of that standard. As we go about our daily lives, we face many opportunities to choose between living in the way of Jesus or in the way of the world. It still takes courage to dare to stand apart from the crowd because of our faith. And it still takes determination not to lose our way on the road of discipleship. I'm still working on that and I hope you are too.

Ralph Flatt

*Prayer: Lord, don't let the world separate us from You and Your grace. Grant us the courage and determination to live as Your clearly identified people in the world. May our lives be a window through which others will clearly see Your love and forgiveness at work in the world. Forgive us when we fall short of Your calling, and direct our lives to minister where your love is needed most. In Christ's name. Amen.*

Friday, March 18<sup>th</sup>

**Matthew 18:2-6 "He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."**

The last few months at work have been tough – longer hours, Saturday hours – it's been tiring – both physically and mentally; but fortunately, there were (and are) a few things that brought my spirits back up when they were low and kept me going when I didn't want to anymore.

The first one, of course, is my new granddaughter, Braelyn. I was able to be a part of her birth and I feel truly blessed for that. There's nothing else that can compare to the miracle of birth. I keep a book of her photos on my desk to share with others and to bring a smile to my face. It helps to remind me to stop – take a deep breath – and remember what the important things in life really are. Work is not 24/7, but family is.

I've always enjoyed going to lunch with my daughter Amanda whenever she's able to come to Midland where I work. Now it's even better because she brings Braelyn along with her. The first time they joined me together, they did it by surprising me and just showing up. What a great way to change your mood and your outlook on the day! ☺

The second one is my involvement with the Lunch Box Learners mentoring program in Midland Public Schools. You are partnered up with a child and join them during their lunch hour once a week to read books, play games, or just hang out and talk. I hesitated participating this year – knowing that my work load was going to increase. My family even suggested taking a break since I've done it for the last few years, but my heart won the argument and I participated again. I'm glad I did. It too is a great way to brighten your outlook on the day. My buddy is always waiting for me on Tuesdays and when I leave the school that day, I feel refreshed and ready to take on the rest of the week.

The third one is my confirmation student that I am a Guardian Angel for. It is so great to be a part of their life (even though they don't know who I am). It is truly another blessing to watch them grow in so many ways.

One day I thought to myself, "What do these have a common?" And then I realized that the common factor for all of these "spirit lifters" is a child. My own child now with a beautiful loving child of her own; my partnership with a child that I've just met and bonded with; and another child that I will soon have a bond with. There is nothing greater than the unconditional love of a child – no matter who they are – that can touch your heart. I reminded myself that I've had the unconditional love of a child all of my life – Jesus' love. And he has brought me the love of these other children to let me know that he's in my life and always will be. Amen.

Patty Paisley

*Prayer: Lord, thank you for the love and blessing of children. May our spirits be lifted through their leadership, and our service to them. Amen*

Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>

**Hebrews 3:12-14** “See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.”

Mat Bila was seriously injured in a car accident late last summer. He lost his glasses in the crash and his spare glasses were in the wrecked van. On Monday, I went to see the van and could not find any sign of either pair. The tow truck driver told me to go to the crash site because there was still a lot of debris. I went over there Monday afternoon.

When I arrived at the accident site, I instantly started losing it. I could not be there without trying to recreate what happened and imagine what he went through when the emergency personnel were trying to get him out of the vehicle. I was only there a few minutes when Janice (a good friend) walked up. I was far off the road but she saw me and came to help. We were wandering around for at least 30 minutes, finding a little change and a lot of glass and plastic. It was beginning to look like there was nothing there. I told Janice I had to keep looking until I found something that told me they were destroyed because he was at the hospital in Royal Oak and I was here, and that was all I could do for him. I was pretty sure Janice thought I was crazy at that point, and was willing to be crazy with me if it helped. We kept looking. I returned to the center of the crash site and found a 2-foot square area where all the grass was gone. Lying right in the middle of that square was a little, cheap, 2-inch tall wooden cross that Darren got at Vacation Bible School.

Janice and I had walked past the cross 30 times. It was light wood on top of black dirt. It had been outside for four days in the rain, yet it was not dirty. Of course I got all emotional again. We expanded the perimeter of our search and a few minutes later, I went back to where the cross was. I knelt, looking through the grass and noticed in another cleared spot about three feet away a bright, shiny penny. I went to that penny and picked it up, but I didn’t lift my hand as I looked through the grass. There was a lot of junk, and as I was getting back up, I looked down at my hand. Right behind my hand, tucked in the grass, folded up like they had been set there, were Mat’s glasses that he was wearing – dirty, but otherwise undamaged.

I feel like God left me a Post-It note, reminding me he is still right here. I am just a slow learner so he had to sign his name.

Melanie Bila

*Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for sending us in the right direction when we search. Thank you for friends to share our journey as we search. Thank you for pointing the way toward love, peace and contentment with your own cross. Thank you most of all for our faith which is a gift we cling to at all times. Amen.*

Sunday, March 20<sup>th</sup>

**Mark 10:14** “When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

My God sighting involves my working with our confirmation youth here at the church.

I grew up in an ELCA church as a child, went to Sunday School, was an Acolyte, went through my church's confirmation program, was confirmed, all the usual stuff. When my daughter reached confirmation age, I decided to volunteer to help with the confirmation program as I figured, hey, I have done this - piece of cake.

God has used the confirmation experience to reach me. I started out just sitting in and helping where I could. Now I help organize the pre-confirmation planning sessions. I found that God has used the program – and, more specifically, the kids -- to help me grow. Many times when we are working on an exercise, the words spoken or actions by the kids hit me as though God is speaking directly to me. God has found a way to find me where I am, and speak to me at a time when I am listening. I have learned from these experiences to listen for God; he may not approach you as you might expect.

Mark Frazier

*Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the lessons of life and love that children can teach us. Help us love, honor and protect our children, praying for them always for every decision and moment of their life. Bless our efforts to educate our children at all levels of the church as we are entrusted to teach and grow them in faith. Amen.*

Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup>

**Luke 2:48-49 (New International Version, © 2010) “When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”**

This winter I had a job that sometimes required me to work on Sunday, which interfered with our church attendance. Wednesday nights weren't an option either, because of my daughters after school practice schedule. On a rare Sunday that I was not scheduled to work, I became ill. That Sunday morning, I went in and told my daughter Alex that I was feeling very unwell and we would not be able to go to church after all. Alex asked me if I felt well enough to drive. I explained that I was really feeling sick and didn't feel like I should be at church, thinking that she just didn't understand or wasn't listening to me. She went on to explain how much she looked forward to going to church. She really wanted to go, even if it meant being dropped off and attending service alone. She further explained that in her high school world where drama is an everyday event, the messages she hears from Pastor Rob truly help her. She stated each time she attends, she feels like she can relate some part of the message to her life personally. Either to help her to feel strong when people are mean, forgive when people disappoint, and believe in the goodness inside everyone. It simply helps her make sense of things. One particular message that struck her was about faith and faith being something that no one can take away from you. No matter what happened that week, you would be blessed and protected because you made a choice to come to church. Faith would make you strong.

I ended up dragging myself out of bed, driving her to church and dropping her off alone. I watched her walk in the door of a church that we joined just a few short years ago, knowing how much stronger she has become in those years. I felt awful about letting her go alone, but also proud and happy for her; proud of her determination and happy that we have found such a wonderful place to worship filled with wonderful people that she knew would welcome her.

Lisa Erwin

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for a place to worship; a home we call Zion. Thank you for all places of worship that provide a link to you and the teachings of Jesus. Bless all those who worship with great gifts that come through your grace and love. Bless all those looking for a church, and those unable to come to worship. Thank you for our ability to attend worship. Amen

Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Isaiah 40:31 (New International Version, ©2010) "But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."**

I believe God puts you in the place you need to be and helps you get there. During these past few weeks, not only was our concern for Mom's well-being and pain relief, it also was about getting all our kids here safely to see Grandma one last time. We had just been dumped on by more snow than we have had in awhile and many airports were closed or had limited flights, BUT my Becky got a flight into Flint 15 minutes after I called her about how bad Mom was. Jackie was to fly in the following week and had to wait for her son's birth certificate that had not come in the mail, BUT when she received a call from Becky and how to get an emergency flight the next day, Brody's certificate was in that day's mail allowing him to go with her. Andrew drove from Houghton through the ice and snow, 8 hours. Daniel, driving from Washington State with a u-haul trailer on treacherous roads, drove straight thru to arrive on Saturday night. As we prayed for Mom and the kid's safe arrival we learned that her best friend was also trying to get home to her from Alabama. Her and her husband arrived on Monday afternoon. Those of us that lived much closer had invaded our parent's house earlier in the week and waited. One by one they all came; they all made it to say good-bye, safely. And she waited for all of them.

Lauran Stirrett

*Prayer: Lord God, thank you for the opportunity to care for and say goodbye to people we love before they enter into your hands and care. Bless all those who miss the chance to say goodbye. Help us rest in faith that assures us we will all be together again in your never ending kingdom. Amen.*

Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>

**Judges 6:36-40 (New International Version, ©2010) "Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised - look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said." And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew - a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew." That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew."**

One day, I was riding my motorcycle to Shanty Creek, Bellaire, MI for the National Honda Valkyrie Motorcycle Club's annual get-together. This is a club of people primarily between the ages of 30 – 75 that have Honda Valkyrie motorcycles, but they do let anyone join as long as they like to ride. When I first became a member of this club, I had a Honda 750, but now that I have a Harley Dresser, I'm surely taking a lot of ribbing from the members, but all in fun.

Since the gathering began on a Wednesday and I had to work, I posted a note on their message board looking for someone leaving on the following Friday to have someone to ride with. A younger member responded from Waterford, MI and before I knew it, we were meeting at Valley Plaza, Midland at 8:30 a.m. that Friday morning. We began to make the 2 ½ hour trip (which turned into 3 ½ hours with several stops along the way). It was a beautiful Friday morning, a little cloudy, but the temperature was comfortable for riding.

Whenever I ride my bike, I find myself talking with God quite frequently. Actually, I always pray before a ride, but on this particular day and in a hurry, I was off and on the road before I realized I had forgotten. As I was driving, I began to pray to God to keep us safe, for our bikes to run without flaw, and to keep us under his personal care until we arrive home safely at the end of our trip. No sooner did I pray that prayer, we came upon a 4' x 8' sign on posts on the side of the road that read, "I ♥ U". Then, in the far bottom right corner in much smaller print, it was signed, "God". At the moment I read that sign, the sun came out and the warmth of his arms were felt as he hugged me. He held me that day, that night, the next day, the next night and all the way back home. It was a most wonderful weekend.

Kathy Smith

*Prayer: Hi God, it's us again! If you are not too busy, could you send us a sign today? A sign that you love us, a sign to direct us, a sign to remind us that you never forget us? Lord, many of your servants call upon your name for a sign in simple and dramatic ways. Like Gideon! Bless us with the ability to remember when we are in a prayerful relationship with you, we have a better chance to understand how you speak back to us. Amen.*

Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup>

**1 Chronicles 4:10** “Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request.”

On Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving, I was working extra hours getting ready for the after-Thanksgiving sales at the Hallmark store where I work. My back was hurting, I was really feeling it, and I was ready for a day off on Wednesday; a day I knew would be busy preparing for our family Thanksgiving dinner.

I woke up on Wednesday and, AHH! MY BACK!! I was stiff and in pain. I took some medication and decided to lie down for awhile, but the pain was still there. I knew I needed God's help, and I knew I needed to pray. "Dear God, Please help my pain and get me through the day." God whispered, as I started to make my pies, "I will help you." The pain seemed to lessen, and as the day went on, God gave me the help I needed to get me through the day. "Thank you, Dear God," I prayed.

On Thursday --Thanksgiving Day -- we were thankful for our family and that we could be together, and thanking God, who is always with us and helping us through.

Judy Schimm

*Prayer: Lord, you know what pain is, and how difficult it is to fight and battle pain. Bless all those who suffer from any type of pain. Help us remember to lift our pain up in prayer. Help us pray for everyone in pain that they may find relief. Amen.*

Friday, March 25<sup>th</sup>

**Psalms 46:10** “He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

**Proverbs 18:14** “The human spirit can endure in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?”

Last January, I was having a conversation with friends about the ways God speaks to us. They had great answers . . . nature, children, through the priest at Mass, etc. I remember feeling so frustrated and even a little angry because I did not have an answer to this question. I kept thinking about this and finally decided that God must not be speaking to me.

A month later, I woke up one morning and could not speak properly. I ended up in the ER and a CAT scan showed I had suffered a stroke. This was shocking, as I am under 40 and in good health. I spent four days in the hospital and left there determined to recuperate quickly. I went home and immediately started speech therapy and was on the road to recovery. Three weeks later, I had a follow-up with my neurologist. I couldn't wait for him to hear how much my speech had improved and for him to say I was healed. Well, it turns out things had not improved in my brain. He scheduled me for brain surgery on Monday of the next week. I was stunned . . . this was not in my plans.

I cried for two days straight. The next day, I ran into Pastor Rob after a basketball game. After telling him about this, he grabbed my hand and asked me if he could come to the hospital to pray with me before surgery and sit with my husband during my surgery. I looked him in the eyes and at that moment, I knew I would be OK. I guess you would say I had a spiritual moment. In all of my planning and anxiety, I had forgotten that this was out of my hands. God had a plan for me and would take care of me. I spent the next several days praying and just being calm.

I am not a member of the Zion Lutheran family, but I remember Pastor Rob telling me that I was an adopted member and would be prayed for by all of you. I received cards and e-mails from so many people across the U.S. praying for me. Friends of friends were praying for me at their churches. People I did not know were praying for ME! This was so overwhelming to me and so appreciated.

I am doing great now. It turns out there was a malformation in my brain, something that could have been there my whole life. Why did it cause trouble now? Was this a message to me? In reflecting back on this chain of events, I can tell you I had grown lazy with my faith. I now know that all along God was speaking to me. He was speaking to me every day, BUT I was not listening. I am learning to be a better listener . . . to recognize God's message . . . sometimes in the most unexpected events and places.

Josie Lentz

*Prayer: Lord, you know what pain is, and how difficult it is to fight and battle pain. Bless all those who suffer from any type of pain. Help us remember to lift our pain up in prayer. Help us pray for everyone in pain that they may find relief. Amen.*

Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup>

**Psalm 139: 7, 9-10, 23-24** “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

#### GOD’S SENSE OF HUMOR

Every night before bed we take time to pray as a family. For the past few months, Matt and I have both been praying for patience. It seemed like little tests continued to come our way . . . Work became more challenging, Reed came to realize that he was two years old, a favorite glass dish was broken . . . just to name a few.

We came to realize after talking to others that it is best not to pray for patience because you WILL be tested! One night, we were at McDonald's for dinner. We gave thanks for our food, and in that prayer I stated, "God, we get it. We don't have to be tested on patience anymore." I went to open the little baggie of Happy Meal apples and WHOOSH, they flew across the table, onto the floor and anywhere else they could have landed. Matt and I looked at each other and just started to laugh. God was telling us, "You are done when I say you are done."

What a sense of humor.

Jodi Dahley

*Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the ability to laugh! Thank you for the many ways you guide and direct us. Help us grow in our ability to know how to pray "in your will." Help us remember that your love is always present for us in all times. Amen.*

Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup>

**2 Corinthians 9:12-13** “This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.”

Losing my job because of company downsizing was not something I was prepared for at 57 years old. Depressed at times, I did a lot of soul searching and wasn't finding many answers. I thought God was mad at me. I was given a novena to Saint Anthony from my wife and I said them every day before searching for work online and sending out resumes. As it goes, the days turned into weeks, then months. Seven months had passed and not even an interview. When out of state for a wedding, while parking the car, the cell phone rang. I was offered a contract job that looked promising. My wife and I immediately said a prayer of thanks. I started work the following Tuesday, but they soon ran out of projects and I only worked a few weeks. I went back to praying. Two months later, I sent a resume to another local company. I received an interview in a few days. I said a prayer of thanks then called my wife to tell her the news. I started a week later. After 45 days I asked the owner what his intentions were. He didn't have enough work for a permanent hire and we were soon out of work again. I went back to e-mailing more resumes. I also changed my prayer routine. Instead of praying for only myself, I included a prayer for others in similar circumstances. Then out of the blue, I received a phone call from the company I had contracted for. Business was picking up and they had a full time employee leaving the company. I've been back to work for several weeks now. Once again, things look promising.

This may be the way things are these days; starting and stopping, but I don't start and stop praying. I'm not the only one that needs God's help. In the times that I'm down, God's helping someone else that's in a little more need at that time. I just know He will get back to me when I keep praying.

Jerry Matu

*Prayer: Lord God, there is no greater call for us than to stay in prayer. Thank you for the love people have to not only bring their struggles to you, but to pray for others who may have similar trials. Teach us to remember others, Lord, when we bring our trials to you. Help us be persistent in prayer in all times, and generous as we pray for others. Bless all those who are looking for work. Amen.*

Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>

**John 13:34-35 (NRSV) “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

Impact. Do we have impact on those around us? Does our decision and willingness to be a part of the body of Christ, and actively participate in ministry affect those around us? Specifically, do our actions affect the youth and young adults around us?

A baccalaureate event has been a tradition for the graduating seniors at our local high school for a long time. In recent years, it has become less of a baccalaureate service, and more of a fun event for the students held in the school auditorium. Last spring, for the first time in many years, it was announced that the baccalaureate service was going to be held at a church. It would be a true baccalaureate service which would go back to the roots of the tradition at which the graduates would be recognized, celebrated and blessed.

So the event was announced and planned. The keynote speaker was chosen by the students; music and speeches were prepared. The only remaining question – who would attend? This was a completely voluntary event, separate from the school. Would the students and their families be willing to spend several hours of an afternoon of the busy week leading up to graduation at this event? Would only a handful show up? Did this graduation celebration before God even matter?

The happy result was this – 110 of the 152 graduates and their families were there in attendance. That's almost ¾ of the graduating class, a resounding majority. The church was packed, the service was joyous, and God was there in the midst of it all celebrating with us.

Impact. Do we have an impact on those around us? Absolutely! Our decision and willingness to make faith a priority in our lives matters. It matters to God, and it matters to those around us.

Jeff Schram

*Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us the opportunity and ability to love one another. Thank you for the ways in which we can see the result of our actions. Help us to keep you at the center of our lives in all that we do. Help us to keep our faith a priority, so that we can go forth as your disciples, and have an impact on those around us. Amen*

Tuesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>

**1 John 5:14-15 (New International Version, ©2010) “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”**

Answers to prayers in a two-week period:

- A friend lost the diamond out of her ring. Searching every logical place in the house and car, she called the physical therapy place she had attended. They found it on the floor by her machine. What are the odds?
- A friend got a badly needed job.
- A relative had successful surgery.

My simple prayer is always for safety, good health, and good decisions.

Jan Hennink

**Point to ponder: Does God ever answer prayer? How do you know when a prayer has been answered? How do you respond when a prayer is answered? How do you persevere if you do not notice or understand the answer to prayer?**

*Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for allowing us to pray for all things, in many ways at all times. Thank you for hearing our prayers which come out in so many ways. We especially thank you for the times we actually see and understand that our prayers are answered. We pray that our faith may continue to grow in all ways, and that we indeed can notice when our prayers are answered in any way. Amen.*

Wednesday, March 30<sup>th</sup>

**Matthew 25:21 (New International Version, ©2010) “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”**

It's late Friday evening. I went to the funeral home for visitation with Shirley Lonsway's family earlier in the day. Shirley had ALWAYS managed to share God's word with us in some way; be it by her unflinching faith and trust in God, by her example of humble Christianity, her joy and love for her family or simply by accepting without complaint the burdens our Lord placed on her as she battled cancer.

Today, I spent time with other Zion (family) members. We laughed, we chatted, we reminisced about Shirley as we prepared the fellowship hall for her memorial dinner. And lest I forget... WE HAD TO SET THE TABLEWARE PROPERLY!

One of Shirley's requests has always been to have her memorial luncheon be a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. As I sit here tonight, I realize that even in her passing, she is uniting us in fellowship. My small contribution to her luncheon is a pumpkin pie. The warm, homey smell of it as it baked will now forever bring Shirley to mind. And with that memory will come another, more precious memory - the way one beautiful, loving, faithful child of God will be with us all every time we celebrate Thanksgiving or cook whatever particular dish we made to share as we remember Shirley this last time.

How like Shirley to continue to lead us all gently to our Lord. My prayer is that she is now having a Thanksgiving unlike any she had ever experienced in her earthly life. She has run the race; she has shown us the way. How can we not follow her example?

Jackie Munger

*Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the many people that serve others, serve the world and serve us. Help us recognize the many people that in great and small ways serve our community, church and family, and remember to tell them "thanks" and share our love and gratitude with them. Help us be a faithful servant of all you entrust to our lives. Help us celebrate the love and service of all who have died and are now safe with you. Amen.*

Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup>

**2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (New International Version, ©2010) “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”**

#### GENEROSITY ENCOURAGED

Since 2005, I have belonged to a doll club consisting of mostly senior citizens. At one of our previous rummage sales, someone donated a Girl Scout Doll (Barbie size). As my girls were in Scouting and being a doll collector, I bought it.

I became friends with a lovely lady who was suffering from Parkinson’s disease and recently became a resident at Shattuck Manor. Last week, another doll club friend and I decided to visit her. I had previously learned that she and her late husband were both lifelong Scout leaders, so I decided to take her my Girl Scout Doll as a small gift. When I handed her the doll, she burst into tears and grabbed my hands. I was rather shocked. She said, “These are happy tears. I have 14 Scout dolls but not this one.” Of course, these are all still at her home, so now she has one for her room.

When we left, she cried again, and asked us to please come back, but as a visitor, not a patient and we laughed. Later, as I thought about our visit, I realized that I received just as much joy from that visit as she did, and it brought tears to my eyes also.

Gloria Aaron

*Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the gift of your son. Help us be directed by your Spirit when we think of giving to others. Help us give from our hearts, and make our gifts bless those who receive them. Thank you for the blessings we enjoy when we desire to bless and serve others. Amen.*

Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup>

**Luke 10:33-34 “But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.”**

I was home for the summer, working for a surveyor. We had so much work, that we were working 60 hours per week, from sunrise to sunset each day. I had little time to meet up with my friends or engage in any recreational activities. We had a hot spell with the weather, where the temperatures were in the nineties for several days. Everyone was heading for the beaches, every chance they got. I was anxious to do the same thing.

I got together with a bunch of my friends and was heading to Bay City, where we intended to go swimming at the Bay City State Park. It was early evening, approaching night fall. A car sped past us, nearly forcing us off the road. Then it went out of control and careened into the side of a third car that was ahead of us. It forced the third car off the road, causing it to rollover several times before it came to a stop. We rushed to see if we could offer any assistance.

The first car was okay. The second car contained three young people who were thrown from their vehicle during the rollover and were seriously injured.

I found a young girl lying in a grassy area beyond the roadway. I began to tend to her, not knowing what I would be able to do. The only medical training I ever received was Boy Scout first aid. I could not see very well in the darkness, but I could tell from all the blood and her moans and cries, that her injuries were serious. She felt limp and I hoped she would not die.

Whenever lights came our way, I could tell her shoulder was severely injured and bleeding profusely. Someone standing near me whispered in my ear, to stuff the cloth from her blouse into the wound and hold my hand over it as best I could to try and stop the bleeding. All I could do was hold her and compress her wound until help arrived.

I never saw her again after they lifted her into the ambulance and took her away. She was unconscious, but alive. I learned of her survival and recovery from the newspaper accounts where I was identified as a passing motorist.

My friends said I was a hero – that it was God or an Angel that came and told me what to do. I never knew. I was just thankful the young girl survived in spite of what I did.

Frank Roenicke

*Prayer: Thank you God for the good people that stop to offer help and aid to others when they see a need. Keep all people safe as they offer to help those in need. Help us recognize the places and ways we can help others in very simple or even dramatic ways. Amen.*

Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Luke 22:19-20** “And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. “

Pastor Schmidt,

I wanted to thank you for a blessing that transpired yesterday for my daughter and that was inspired by you. I think it's important to acknowledge the little things that end up making such an impact in people's lives, especially young people. During yesterday's service, after you gave my daughter, Destiny a blessing, she turned to me in our seats and said, “Daddy, why couldn't I have a snack . . ? Everyone else got one.” While this was one of those moments as parents you just try your hardest not to laugh at your children, it opened up a real opportunity for me to share God's message of grace to my daughter. She just turned five last April --so it was a kindergarten version -- but I think I ended up getting the message across. Anyhow, at the end of that little talk she said, "WOW! Jesus is like a super hero then, right Daddy?" I said, "Yes, he is." She then replied, "So God sent his son Jesus, and he died so that my mistakes would be forgiven?" I said, "You've got it, kiddo." She then asked if next time she could participate in communion. I cherished that conversation and it was the first real opportunity to explain God's grace to her.

The real point of this story is that later yesterday, when I was driving her back to her Mom's for the next week, she said, “So Dad . . . , do you think I could walk to your church when I'm with Mommy? I said, "It might be an awful long walk, so why don't you ask your Mom to bring you if you want to come?" I thought it was pretty cool that a five year old made a point of asking to go to church . . . VERY COOL!

Thank you for inspiring that in her.

Chris Engelhardt

*Prayer: Lord, we thank you for the gift of your body and blood we celebrate each time we receive communion. Help us grow in our understanding of this gift as we pray and meditate upon the significance of this gift. Help us have the joy and excitement of a child realizing how special this moment really is, and the desire to come and be a part of worship. Drive away the evil that tries to convince us communion is just another ritual. By faith, help us remember the meaning of communion EVERY TIME we say 'Amen' as we receive you into our lives. Amen*

Sunday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Luke 4:1-13** “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’” The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus answered, “It is

**written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.' The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'** Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time."

Most of my "God Sightings" have been through other Christian friends. I have a friend who has lost both her sons in accidents a few years apart. In spite of the devastating grief and loss, she spends most of her life doing for others. She prepares the funeral dinners for her church, is active in the woman's group and is always there for her friends and anyone who needs a helping hand. She jokes each time she is introduced at a shower or party that she is the guest of honor's "best friend". In a way this is true because she has always had a wonderful God-given gift for compassion and shares it with everyone whose life she touches.

Diane Dahley

*Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, you have faced the devil and all his evil schemes and ways, and through your faith and knowledge of scripture, drove the devil away. Help us be strong to see the power of your Holy Spirit in others who battle the difficult times in life and through faith and service to others, share your love and grace in the midst of great trials. Help us do battle to temptations in our life that we too might serve others and grow their faith. Thank you for your battles won for us, Jesus. Amen.*

Monday, April 4<sup>th</sup>

**Genesis 28:16 "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."**

#### EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

Life is all about choices. I can choose to wake up and be depressed and disappointed seeing only all the ugly negative things in my life. My old house that's falling down around me; my old rusting car, the pile of bills on my desk and my empty checkbook, and say, "Oh, poor me". Or, I can wake up and be grateful for all the beauty that surrounds me; the bright sun in the sky that warms me, the white fluffy clouds, the wind, the birds that serenade me, the trees that give protection to the birds, the flowers that brighten my day, my granddaughters precious smiles and hugs that warms my heart, and say, "I am so richly blessed".

Could I create any of these wonders? I think not. These miracles of life are always around me, ready to be celebrated, ready to be welcomed into my life, and they are all given to me freely from my God for me to enjoy every day.

No matter how many lemons life hands us, God is always present ready to help us make lemonade.

I see my God every day in every way.

Connie Hoverman

*Prayer: Lord God, thank you for giving us the love to allow us freedom to choose so many things. Thank you for the gift of free will. Guide us in our thoughts and attitudes that we may remember to choose love and faith to be a part of every day. Help us remember we are not defined by emotions, circumstances or worldly values. Help us remember we are defined by love. Amen.*

Tuesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>

**John 15:15 (New International Version, ©2010) "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."**

I know this may seem odd to many people, but I feel God's presence when I am at home with my cat Pepper. When I get home, Pepper tends to be lurking behind the scenes but is always there with me. Unlike our dog Ginger, Pepper tends to be discreet, not "in my face" begging for my attention, but there when and if I need her. She tends to stay with me all night, quietly hanging by my side. Her presence calms me and relaxes me at the end of a long day, and just knowing she's there next to me makes me feel at peace. It's often when I'm sensing this calmness and peace that I realize God is with me just like Pepper. Always at my side, there to calm and relax me, and bring peace to my world.

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I recently experienced the presence of God through a very difficult decision that I had to make regarding a person who works for me who is also a close friend. Her continued friendship, understanding and love during a time when from a work perspective I turned her world upside down, has been truly humbling. She has truly embodied what I believe God is all about - understanding instead of angry, caring instead of bitter, loving instead of hating. I honestly feel she has been sent from God to me as an example of what true friendship and love is all about.

Cindy Frazier

*Dear God, thank you for the friends we experience in this world. We thank you for the love and friendship of pets, and the warmth and nurture they offer us. We thank you for the example of friends that demonstrate faith and love. Bless all those who are looking for and need a friend today. Thank you for our friends. Amen.*

Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>

**Philippians 4:4-7 "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**

In January, we visited some friends in the Tucson area just shortly after the senseless shootings that injured and claimed innocent lives. Our friends, Jim and Peggy suggested we take a ride and he drove us past the shooter's home. We continued to the hospital that the victims were taken to and parked about two blocks away. From there, we walked in silence to the front of the hospital where a memorial was taking place. The closer we got to that memorial, the quieter it got. There were people of all colors, faiths and ethnic backgrounds. It was awesome. There was no talking, just respectable silence.

As we walked among the many notes, balloons, flowers, candles, etc. I could feel God's presence. I know that God was there, touching each and every one of us with his love and grace. Everyone that I looked at smiled back through his or her tears.

Bonni Vasold

Our God sighting occurred in Tucson, when we had the horrific shootings not far from where we live. We witnessed the wonderful way good came from tragedy when the community, let alone the whole city and the world, came together. We experienced the enormous memorials and donation fund-raisers for the victims in the city. The remarkable recovery and strength of all those that survived. We also said prayers for the killers family as they are living as prisoners in their own home and lives. We feel very blessed that we weren't there, as we have gone there for Art Fairs before.

We thank God for our wonderful life together for 49 years today.

Jim and Peggy Ignatowski

*Prayer: Holy Spirit, send your power into this world where there is evil, pain and sin. Send your power into the terror of crime. Lord, fill us with the power of prayer and love to care for the victims of crime, poverty, oppression and all other pain inflicted upon others. May the power of your love and grace present in all who have faith, overcome the sin of this world to bring a new calm, peace and understanding. Help us remember to be a powerful, prayerful presence wherever it is needed. Amen.*

Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>

**John 15:16 (New International Version, ©2010) “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit - fruit that will last - and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”**

I was sitting alone in the sanctuary one Thursday morning. This was during the time set aside for prayer. Knowing that no one else would be joining me, I began to question my purpose for being there. Who am I to try to encourage and lead this prayer ministry? Just then I looked up at the statue of Christ and was drawn to the eyes. It was as if those eyes came alive and I was in his presence. At once, I knew that this was where I was supposed to be. I came away from that experience with renewed courage and strength.

Now when I feel uncomfortable or unworthy, as I am leading prayer or calling on someone, I am reminded of that experience. I know I am not alone. Christ is with me.

William Bell

*Prayer: Dear God, sometimes it feels lonely in the midst of our attempts to serve the church and others, and we wonder does it really matter? Strengthen us with your Holy Spirit that we may accept and understand that we may not always see the fruit of our work, but we are encouraged to continue to cast seeds of faith, pray and remain confident that all things are in your care. Amen.*

Friday, April 8<sup>th</sup>

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (New International Version, ©2010) “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”**

About four years ago when we started visiting Zion, Pastor Rob said several times, "Thank you for spending your time with us today. Just your presence may motivate someone else." The engineer in my head didn't totally accept the concept at the time, but that was okay.

Recently, a lady stopped to talk on her way out of church after the service. She said "We have visited here more than a few times and you are always here with a smile on your face. You must be a happy man." I said that I had a lot to be happy about and am glad to be here.

Maybe Pastor Rob was right after all!

Bob Dahley

*Prayer: Thank you for the many people you have placed into our lives to share kindness and love with us. Help us realize what a blessing simple acts of kindness and love can mean to others. Help us learn to be generous with our sharing of kindness with people around us in a world that just often seems to be too busy to care. Thank you for strengthening us with the Holy Spirit, Jesus and the many people that share our life journey. Amen.*

Saturday, April 9<sup>th</sup>

**Psalm 24: 1-2 “Of David. A psalm. The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.”**

Michigan is a much different State from the other 49. You have to marvel at its beauty and magnificence. It is without a doubt, the result of God’s creativeness. If I recall correctly, the State of Michigan is referred to as a great peninsula. When I read the newspaper about the salt mines of Detroit and the Lake Superior shoreline, I was reminded of that fact. To have salt mines 1200 feet below the City of Detroit, created millions of years ago from the evaporation of ocean water, is mind boggling. These massive mines are still yielding tons of salt to be used on our roads during winter.

Then there is the news story out of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula that scientists from Northern Michigan University completed a study of the Lake Superior shoreline. They hoped to bring into sharper focus, a history of thousands of years of human activity in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Using satellite imagery, they identified distinct land forms created by wave action. They found that the water level of Lake Superior was 30 – 40 feet higher than it is today. Their research defined the shoreline as it existed 4500 years ago, and is providing information that can be used in guiding archaeological digs. At a dig site at the Pictured Rocks National Park in Munising, a treasure trove of human activity was discovered, confirming the results of the satellite study.

It is amazing to consider that God’s handiwork has been progressing for millions and millions of years. His creativeness has never ended. I guess I should have known that, when we confess that “God has created me and everything that exists...” Each new day is a new creation.

Anonymous

*Prayer: Dear God, the world of creation contains such beauty, wonder and mystery. Help us appreciate this world, care for it and sense your Holy presence in all of creation. Amen.*

Sunday, April 10<sup>th</sup>

**Matthew 19:14 “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”**

PREACHER CHRISTY

Recently, I was home alone with Christy and Cate. The girls were playing in the living room while I was busy in another room. All of a sudden, I heard Christy talking very loudly, but couldn’t quite make out what she was saying. I thought to myself, ‘Well, here we go again’ and was sure that another sibling argument had ensued. As I listened to see if it was escalating, I didn’t hear Cate yelling back. In fact, all I could hear was Christy talking very emphatically to someone about something. As I went into the living room to investigate, I saw Christy had some toys and winter decorations lined up in front of the fireplace and was telling them all about Jesus. Cate was in the ‘congregation’ as well. Christy just kept repeating very loudly “Jesus loves you”, “Jesus wants you to be good”, “Jesus says be nice to each other” and the like. When I asked her why she was talking so loud, she turned to me in a very exasperated 3 year old way and said, “Mom, I’m just excited to talk about Jesus!” That happens to be exactly what we tell her when Pastor Rob starts speaking in a loud voice at church.

Out of the mouths of babes...

Adrienne Cole

*Prayer: Dear God, help us understand that children have so much to teach us. Help us value them, love them and learn from them. Lord, teach us to be open, to learn from all people, especially the ones we feel so often it is our job to teach. Let the words, actions, wisdom and honesty of children remind us we should always be ready to learn from others, just as we hope they learn from what they see in our lives. Remind us, Lord, little eyes are always watching us. Amen*

Monday, April 11<sup>th</sup>

**Psalm 121:1-2; 7-8** “I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. The LORD will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

Today was becoming a particularly hard day for me. Sad thoughts, internal struggles, infinite questions....can I do all I needed to do? I do not believe I can. As I sat behind a car at a stop light, lost in my own thoughts and feeling all alone, I noticed a bumper sticker that said "Family Radio 99.7". Having nothing to lose, I turned on the radio and listened. Nothing earth shattering was on, but it did ease my mind just a bit. As I listened to a song singing about God's love, his infinite love, his unending love, I said to myself (deep, deep in my dark brain)...really? Me? He loves me with all my faults? NO sooner did I think this, I noticed another car at the stop light with a front license plate that read "BELIEVE". Those two little things helped me turn a dark moment around and believe, YES I CAN!...at least for today.

Anonymous

*Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the many small ways you encourage us and remind us we are not alone. We can always count on your love and grace. Help us be ready to accept that you are always trying to break into our lives in the most subtle ways. Help us believe that you are present in dramatic ways. Help us remember our lives seem to get better the more we count on you Lord, and the less we rely on ourselves. Amen.*

Tuesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>

**Galatians 6:10** “So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all.”

It wasn't until I was an adult that I realized what it meant "to minister". I thought that term was reserved only for the ordained. One day, as an adult, I had the opportunity to meet a cousin I had never met. I knew he was a singer, but he lived in another state and I wasn't familiar with his music. I saw one of his CDs in a store and decided to check it out. I was amazed! The next time he performed in Michigan, we decided to go. We were able to meet John and his band, and I learned that day of the impact of Christian music in our society. John and his band, Petra, have traveled all over the world "ministering" their music to millions of fans. My eyes have opened to all the people who minister, or serve God thru serving their church. Whether it's music, gardening, cutting grass, counting money, bible study, preparing funeral luncheons, or preaching, all are forms of ministering. All are God Sightings. May God bless all who serve Him in whatever way they can.

Sharon Frank

*Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the many ways you invite us to grow in this world through ministering to others. Thank you for allowing us to reach out and share your love with those in need in so many ways. Lord, help us see in our daily life and actions many opportunities to serve the people around us in our families, organizations, schools, jobs, neighborhoods and church. Amen.*

Wednesday, April 13<sup>th</sup>

**Proverbs 16:9 (New International Version, ©2010)** “In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.”

**Proverbs 3:5 (New International Version, ©2010)** “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.”

**John 10:27 (New International Version, ©2010)** “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

I was reflecting on my life, wondering how many times I experienced God Sightings and was too consumed with myself, others or the moment to even realize it. I came up with this interesting sequence of events.

Event #1 - Almost 20 years ago, I was driving from Buffalo, NY to Rochester, NY to take my New York State Paramedic on-site exam. The test was serious business for me. I was currently working as an EMT and spent the last year studying hard to become a paramedic. I needed to be on time. The test was not given often since it was a proctored exam. As I was driving on the New York State Thruway, I saw a very bad accident with no help on scene yet. What should I do? Help must be on the way, right? I have to admit that my first thought was to keep going. I did need to be on time to be admitted into the exam. I had money and time invested in this exam including a significant pay raise when I passed. The next thought was the right thought. What would the point be in taking the exam if I couldn't help someone out with my knowledge. I did stop and it was a very bad accident involving two people who needed to be airlifted to Buffalo's trauma center. My friend and I were able to call Mercy Flight and issue care until help arrived. Since I was able to communicate with my employer regarding the condition of the patients and the need for a helicopter, our medical director who "just happened" to be in the area was able to come to the scene and intubate the worst of the two patients. I had no equipment with me at the time.

Event #2 - I was working as a paramedic in Brooklyn, NY while going to nursing school. It was a quiet, sunny day in Brooklyn and instead of staying parked during our down time, we decided to cruise up and down Hamilton Parkway. Hamilton Parkway is a pretty big street in Brooklyn with some spots that have park-like areas between the main street and the houses. I remember how sunny and pretty the day was, when I noticed a girl sitting on the park bench with her head lowered just a bit. Something told me that she was in trouble and I parked the ambulance with no warning to my partner, jumped out and approached her. She was sitting in the hot sun with both her wrists slit open, bleeding onto her black jeans from a razor blade she was still holding in her palm. She just looked up at me with such sadness in her eyes; my heart broke at that moment. We told her we needed to transport her to the hospital to get her the help she needed. She never spoke a word to either of us, but I do hope that we were her God Sighting that afternoon.

Event #3 - Noel and I had just married almost a month before we moved to Pittsburgh, PA for his EMS fellowship at Allegheny General Hospital. It was the fourth of July and we had been unpacking all day long. We decided to get some ice cream. We lived in a beautiful secluded area known as Sewickley Heights. As I was enjoying the drive back home, I began to think of my Grandmother. Before she married my grandfather, she was married with three little boys. She lost her first husband to sudden cardiac death at the age of 37 or 39. It was during a Fourth of July family picnic softball game. I was thinking of how hard that must have been for her when I noticed a car parked on the other side of the road. As I looked back, I saw a woman crying over her husband who was down on the ground. I told Noel to turn the car around. Per the wife, this man had nursed a wild squirrel back to health and was setting it free when she noticed he fell down behind the car. He was in cardiac arrest. Noel and I started CPR and the only equipment we had was a simple face mask. Noel struggled with the face mask and resorted to mouth the mouth. He had no symptoms; no complaints of anything wrong prior to collapsing.

Event #4 - It was this past fall and I was planning on going to Target to get some holiday cake decorating supplies to make cake balls. It would have been so much easier to go in the morning when I had only one child home with me. I decided against the easier way because I heard a voice in my head say, "Stay and play with your little one. She never gets alone time with you and the time is passing too quickly." I stayed and played and was very glad I did. It was now time to pick up my preschooler and head to Target. My preschooler begged me for "lunch at Target" which is a treat we sometimes do while running errands. Again, this was something not planned but enjoyed nonetheless. Shopping was done and it was running into nap time. I was anxious to get home. As I drove out of the parking lot, I turned away from the usual exit I take to get on Tittabawassee Road. I can not explain why I turned the way I did but I was very annoyed with myself. I needed to get these babies down for naps before the bigger kids got home from school and demanded my attention. It was like someone else was directing my route. At this point, I was exiting out on Bay Rd and needed to make a left against the oncoming traffic to head home. Being a paramedic, married to an ER/EMS Physician, I decided that was not a risk I was willing to take with my family in the car. I took a right instead and at the nearest side street, turned left to make my way back onto Tittabawassee. This particular route was almost ridiculous because I turned down the street next to Qdobas that leads into the movie theatre parking lot. Using a parking lot to avoid driving in the street is not really the most legal thing to do but at this point, I felt I was not even the one making the decisions anymore. SO I slowed down, looked at the movies playing, made a mental note to maybe take the kids to see Nanny McPhee, justified this bizarre route home and headed towards the exit near Meijers. That is when I realized that I had been led this way for a very special reason. A man crashed his car into the pole moments before I arrived and before I even got out of my minivan, I knew he was in cardiac arrest. I trusted that my babies belted in their car seats would be ok and shut down my car. To make a long story short, I did what I was trained to do and with the help of bystanders, pulled the man out of the car and started CPR. I did have an ambu bag in my car this time (learned that lesson back in PA). Last I checked, he is alive, spending time with his family because time passes too quickly!

I was originally going to write up only the last event. But after thinking about things, I realized that God has had me in the right place at the right time, many times over. Meeting my husband, meeting my friends, helping others, helping myself. This can not be coincidence, fate or luck. It has to be the work of God. I am just so glad to finally realize it 20 years later and share it with you. Better late than never as they say.

Sarah Wagner

*Prayer: Dear God help us to remember you daily in our life, to pray regularly, and trust that you do direct our path and our ways. Thank you for the work of the Holy Spirit that directs us in our daily life. Thank you for the special blessing to recognize your direction in our life before, during or after events. Amen.*

Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup>

**Matthew 6:9-13** “**This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’**”

I was in the “word business” a long time, serving as a sports writer/copy editor for all three daily newspapers in the Tri-Cities over a span of 23 years. It was a fun way to make a good living, and I was always thankful for the opportunity. There is a box in the basement full of plaques and certificates telling me people liked my work, but none of that mattered when both the local economy and the newspaper industry collapsed in tandem recently. Consequently, I lost not only my job in 2009, but most likely my profession. The local economy will recover. Newspapers – even through their Web sites – will never reclaim their old stature.

It’s a scary feeling, thinking you are skilled at something, but suddenly finding the market for that skill is gone. This must have been what a blacksmith faced 100 years ago as he watched his horseshoe business dwindle in the wake of the paved road and the automobile. So, I was probably enduring another day of not feeling very good about myself back in early-February when the monthly Zion newsletter arrived in the mail, and within it, a request from Pastor Rob for volunteers to help edit the God Sightings book now in your hands. I took all of about three seconds to fire off a reply, offering my services. Finally, pay or no pay, at least someone could use my skills. That was a nice feeling.

And Pastor Rob quickly replied that he already had lined up someone to edit the God Sightings book. You realize your career has probably hit rock bottom when you can’t GIVE AWAY your services!! I’m still laughing over that one.

But it all worked out for the best. Pastor gave my name to Kathy Smith (the very competent editor of this fine book), who began sending me “God Sighting” offerings to edit. Selfishly, this project restored in me a bit of self worth; I turned the editing of these God Sightings into a bit of a game, seeing how quickly – and accurately -- I could “turn them around” back to Kathy, fully edited and ready for publication. For awhile, it was just like the old days, writing a dozen high school football stories on a Friday night as the clock ticked closer to deadline. But more importantly, it taught me a few things. I learned that this congregation includes some very good writers, people who are adept at putting their feelings into words – something easier said than done. I also was reminded through the stories I read that God certainly is with us every step of the way, when things are going good, and especially so when all seems lost. Finally, this project taught me to better recognize when God is tapping us on the shoulder. Having an opportunity to take part in such a project as this certainly qualifies as my own God Sighting.

Jon McQuinn

*Prayer: Dear God, your plans for us may not always be known, and roadblocks are thrown in the way, but through faith and trusting others, thy will be done. Thank you for the ways in which you help us laugh, grow and serve one another. Thank you for the gift of those who have made this God Sighting booklet possible. Amen*

Friday, April 15<sup>th</sup>

**John 1:14** “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”**

#### NOT JUST GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

Have you ever noticed in worship that when Pastor raises the Host over his head, it disappears for a few seconds? Now I know it is an optical illusion based on color and light, however, it still fascinates me even though for quite awhile I could not put it into words. Recently, however, I came to understand how this phenomenon truly related to my faith.

When the Host is raised, representing our Father in Heaven, like Him – it is invisible. Through faith we know that He is there even when we cannot see Him, just like I know that Pastor is holding the Host even when I cannot see it. The Host only becomes visible again as Pastor lowers it in front of him. We were able to see God only when He came down from Heaven and became flesh in the form of Jesus our Savior.

I realize this may seem simple, however, for me it was a “Wow” revelation that brought me a deeper understanding of my faith and has made worship, especially communion, more meaningful to me.

Sandy Schwan

*Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for always being with us even though we cannot always see you and for enabling us through faith to believe without needing to see. Thank you for sending your Son to live among us and to sacrifice His own life so that we might be saved. And thank you, Dear Lord for continuing to deepen my faith by helping me to find greater understanding in the simple things. Amen*

Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup>

**Psalm 145:5-6 “They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty - and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They tell of the power of your awesome works - and I will proclaim your great deeds.”**

I was reading in my daughter’s seventh grade science text book regarding how we hear sound. It described the flow of sound energy: going into our ear canal; striking our ear drum; vibrating the smallest bones in our body (the hammer, anvil and stirrup in our middle ear); then being passed on to the inner ear with our cochlea containing hair cells which then provide impulses to the auditory nerve which tells our brain, “Hey, there’s sound!”

The process is pretty impressive. Then I remembered how life begins: a single cell. It then divides. And divides again. And again. And again.

To me, it seems like all the divisions should end up like a bowl of Jello (or maybe like *The Blob* from the old science fiction horror film). Every cell should be a duplicate of the original. But that is not the case. Some cells become the ear drum. Others, the tiny middle ear bones. Yet others become heart valves, heart muscle, Achilles tendons, femurs, brain, lungs, skin, etc. Some become teeth, first one set of baby teeth, and then somehow, later, one set of adult teeth.

Every single cell in our body is a descendent of the original single cell from which our life began. Scientists tell us every cell has the complete roadmap to be whatever cell exists in the body. But how does a new cell created after the division of an existing cell decide to be different than its “parent”? How does it decide to be a heart valve rather than a toe nail, even if it contains the instructions to be either? How do the cells decide to make ten toes rather than two or thirty? Even after the cells have somehow divided up their roles, how do they know when to grow their piece larger and when to stop? Babies have the same the biological pieces as adults, but on a much smaller scale. Somehow cells in the pieces cause them to grow, slow down some, grow some more, and then finally stop growing.

This whole process is replicated in millions of people and has gone on for a long time. Science might be able to explain how the process of becoming one type of cell rather than a different type of cell works, but not how the cells make these decisions on their own. I believe that God’s hand designed this. The ongoing complexities and working relationships between cells, between our organs, and the reproducibility of the process with every new birth, eliminate the possibility that this was evolutionary random chance.

One cell results in a human being. God is amazing.

Ilmars Dobulis

*Prayer: God, it is beyond our understanding the power of nature, the story of creation, and the fragility of life. Help us remember to look around and be grateful for the wonder and beauty of life and creation. Help us remember that you are the author and creator. Give strength to all those that have illness and difficulty within their bodies. Bless all those who work to maintain the health of others. Help us accept that all of creation has suffered, but your love and grace for us will forever be present through the gift of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Sunday, April 17<sup>th</sup>

**Ruth 1:16-18 “But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.”**

I received my first bible in 1945 from my parents following my baptism. It was the Springwells Baptist Church, and my baptism was by immersion. I was ten years old at that time. It was my mother’s practice to have bible in hand anytime we attended church services. Our bibles were often referenced and we were even allowed to make notations in the selvage to help us with our lessons if that was needed. We were taught to, among other things, recite the books of the bible and had many drills regarding lessons learned in Sunday School and/or Wednesday night prayer meetings. In later life I drifted from the church, and my bible sat on the shelf not often used.

At an invitation from Vicki Lundstrom, my daughter Melani and I attended the Christmas Eve service of her church with her and her daughter Tara in 2009. The pastor, the message and the congregation that night made such an impression on me that I started attending services there on a semi-regular basis. Today, I am happy to be a member of the church family of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Freeland. My bible is once again being used on a regular basis. It’s pretty worn and tattered in some parts, but the message is still as fresh and true as it ever was. The year 2009 had been such a difficult year for the Egbert family that I would never have imagined one evening could have had as much of an impact as it did. God’s love is like an umbrella and it just takes some folks longer to “come in out of the rain,” I guess. I’m in out of the rain now. Praise God.

Barbara Egbert

*Prayer: Thank you Lord God, for the people in our lives who stand by us in difficult times, and then invite us into their faith. Help us to find all the people out there who are looking for support and love, and then invite them to our church with us. Bless our church, members and leaders as we spread our efforts to welcome others into our family. Amen.*

Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup>

**James 5:13-16 “Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”**

Did you ever say, "I'm going to pray for you tonight; God will help you resolve this issue"? Several of you have said similar things to me before my surgery, and you can't believe how comforting it is that somebody cares. It is especially meaningful when people don't even know you, and it is a beautiful way to spread God's love.

Bob Dahley

*Prayer: Dear God, through the power of the Holy Spirit we are comforted by the prayers of others, and for this we say thanks. Help us remember our prayers are powerful, and do help others, because it demonstrates our love and care for them. Strengthen our prayer life so we may learn a way to be in communication with you all day and night. Thank you for the prayers of others. Bless and be with all those in need at this very moment. Amen*

Tuesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>

**Genesis 1:25-26 (New International Version, ©2010) “God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”**

I struggle to share just one God sighting because I am blessed by God every day. When I wake up in the morning, I am blessed with a snoring dog who thinks the world of me. I am blessed with a healthy and happy family. I am blessed with a nice house and a safe and friendly community.

On my way to work in the morning, instead of driving like a zombie staring at the road, I like to look around and enjoy the beautiful world God has created for us. How can you not feel blessed when looking at the sky and taking in the colors? And it changes every day!

When I get home from work, I am greeted at the door by my dog who dances around so excitedly to have me home. Once everyone gets home from a long day at school or work, I have to give hugs so there is no doubt in their mind that they are loved and blessed. I am also blessed to have such a wonderful congregation where I feel welcome. When I'm down, they lift me up and remind me how blessed I am. I am blessed with my family and my husband's family who make me feel like I have always been a part of their family.

I really don't have a specific God sighting to share because there are so many. This is just a glimpse at my daily God sightings.

Anonymous

*Prayer: Lord, thank you for creating all things and being in all things. Help us remember there is always a little piece of your being in all of creation, including us. Thank you for allowing us to see these things. Thank you for the unconditional love of our pets, too! Amen.*

Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>

**1 John 4:16-18 “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”**

#### AN EASTER BLESSING

Many of you see our daughters, Christy and Cate each week passing the peace, participating in the children's sermon and enjoying church in general. What many of you don't realize is that I am incredibly thankful everyday for two wonderful, healthy daughters. While my pregnancy with Christy was normal in every way, labor and delivery were difficult, resulting in a cesarean section after 25 hours of labor. Because she was in the birth canal for so long, Christy spent 2 days in the neonatal ICU unit at Covenant Hospital for a suspected lung infection. We were so grateful when doctors told us we could bring her home and would not have to leave her at the hospital after I was discharged.

My pregnancy with Cate was a much different story. In November 2008 (prior to birth), we found out that she was missing an artery in her umbilical cord. While that is not necessarily a serious issue on its own, it has been linked to many birth defects including a cleft palate, kidney problems, heart problems, genetic disorders and premature birth. Tim, of course, wanted to be as educated as possible about the problems we could be facing and began searching the internet for information. Various online sources told us that our baby may not even survive past birth due to major chromosomal abnormalities. I finally made Tim promise me that he would stop telling me everything he learned. As a biology teacher, I understood the ramifications of genetic mutations, but as a mother, I could not understand why God would allow me to become pregnant and then take that baby from me so soon. Needless to say, I had a hard time finding something to be thankful for that year.

Early December that year, we received good news during an appointment with a doctor who specializes in identifying prenatal birth defects. She did not see any abnormalities with facial structure or internal organs in an ultrasound and we declined further testing, including an amniocentesis. We could not have hoped for better news! While my doctor continued to monitor the pregnancy closely, premature birth was definitely NOT an issue.

Catherine Elizabeth was born on April 7, 2009, three days after her original due date and just five days before Easter that year. While we were all extremely exhausted that Sunday morning, both Tim and I felt it was important to still attend church with our entire family and thank God for our new little blessing.

Adrienne Cole

*Prayer: Lord God, help us look to your love when we are in fear. Help us understand that no matter what happens in our lives, your love will never change. Drive away our fears, that we may live in your love. Thank you for the many ways you love us, guide us, and care for our needs. May your love be powerful for all those that struggle with any form of illness, fear and anxiety in their mind body and souls. Amen*

Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup>

**Jeremiah 18:1-6** “This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.”

On a crisp fall day in October 2009, I received a frantic phone call from my sister. She told me that our brother, in his mid 50’s, was cutting down a mature tree in his daughter’s yard. He was about to finish cutting a large limb when he heard a “SNAP!” The limb was not breaking the way he had intended and was abruptly coming toward him. With no time to calculate his next move, he made a split-second decision to jump 25 feet from the ladder. Thankfully, his soon-to-be son-in-law was there and ran to his side. My brother had landed on his back, chainsaw on top of his chest. He was quickly transported to the hospital where a trauma team was waiting. The days that followed revealed he had suffered eight broken ribs, a fractured pelvis, and blood clots in both lungs as well as both legs. He remained in ICU for nine days. It seemed like an eternity until we were told that “the worst was over.” He was moved to a private room where he remained for another week or so until he was released. At home, he eventually recovered over the next several months and was able to return to work.

Prior to his accident, my brother didn’t actively practice his faith. He was mad at God. I believe that God sent him a message in the days that followed his fall. I am happy to say that I believe His message was received by all of us. I am grateful that God was there to watch over my brother that day and spared his life. To this day, he lives a very full and active life. Praise be to God!

Sharon Frank

*Prayer: Lord God, shape us, mold us, and keep us always in your hands as we go through life. Shape us in times of joy and pain, fear and confidence, confidence and doubt, rich and poor, employed and unemployed, broken and whole. Ease our hearts and minds that through faith we are always being molded into something new. Amen.*

Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>

**Jeremiah 29:11** “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

### A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE

At the age of 8, I learned I was adopted. Although I wasn't entirely sure what that meant, my parents assured my brother & I that we were special because we were chosen. As the years went by, adoption was rarely an issue for us. We were a family. Period.

In 1996 at the age of 32, I decided to search for my birth mother. My adopted parents were deceased for many years. I began my search by filing a standard form in probate court. I could never have prepared myself for what I was about to find. My birth mother had passed away long ago. I would have been 15. She and my birth father were married for years and had 7 children together. He was abusive both verbally & physically to her for many years. In 1960, after giving birth for the 7th time, my mother learned that he was unfaithful to her & was having a child with another woman. This "woman" was the 16 yr old girl that babysat my brothers & sisters. It was at this point that she felt she had no choice but to leave him and raise her 7 kids without him. After 4 years of struggling to make ends meet with little child support, he returned for a visit and raped her. After some time, she learned she was pregnant with her 8th child, me.

I would give anything to be able to see my birth mother face to face and tell her how much I admire her strength and appreciate the sacrifice she made for me. I wish she could have known the wonderful parents that I'm proud to call my family. I could never repay these 2 extraordinary women for their sacrifice and dedication to me. I dedicate this God Sighting to them.

May they both rest in God's peace.

Anonymous

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, God of love, God of all things known and unknown, thank you for the love we experience through those living in and around the decisions of adoption. Help parents, adoptive parents, guardians and foster parents always love children with the same unconditional love shown us. We are adopted by you in our baptism as your own children. Help us always remember you have chosen us through baptism as your own. Bless all children that they may grow in confidence and understanding as the author of this story. Amen.*

Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>

### **John 11:35 "Jesus wept."**

I came from a generation that was taught, "Men don't cry." I saw firsthand how many men I knew would struggle through this common belief and try to live up to its expectations. I learned fast that it wasn't going to be easy. When I was a newsboy during World War II, I saw mothers, joined by their husbands in deep grief upon the arrival of sad news from the War. Then there was the death of a playmate that caused me great pain. When President Franklin Roosevelt died, I observed grown men in deep expressions of grief who cried. It was always a problem for me, but somehow I managed to get through periods of grief without crying. It was a battle, but I was determined to prove I was a man.

There came a day in my life when everything changed. My son had become deathly ill, and as I left the hospital and was driving away, I began to pray to God to help me. Suddenly, without explanation, I was crying. Real tears ran down my face and I could not stop them. I had to pull off the road and gather my composure as I could not see to drive. At that moment, I decided I had every right to cry, and I sat there and cried as if my tears were meant to last a lifetime. Since that day, I have not tried to conceal the fact that I cry at times. I do, however, try to avoid situations where I might cry. But I observe that crying is becoming more commonplace, and it is happening more and more in public.

If my wife begins to cry, over anything, even if they might be tears of joy, I will join her in crying. I can't explain why; it just happens with me. Or when I am out at the airport and I see the service people being greeted by their families, tears unexplainably come to my eyes. So many tears are being shed.

You must forgive those of us who cry. It is something we would like to avoid, but for some reason it is not possible. There are many examples of crying, weeping and being wept over in the Bible. It would be easy to attach a theological explanation, but I don't think it is necessary.

Crying is an emotional response, and part of our human condition. It gives us identity. It may be a gift from God and something we need to accept as part of life. We need to be at peace with ourselves and follow the impulses of our hearts.

Anonymous

*Prayer: God, thank you for the gift of tears. Help us grow in faith, hope and love from our tears. Comfort those who weep alone or in sorrow and pain. Thank you for tears of joy. Thank you for giving us your son, who also cried, teaching us that tears are indeed Holy and Sacred. Amen.*

Easter Sunday, April 24<sup>th</sup>

**Matthew 28:5-7** “The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

I was born severe-profoundly Deaf and received a cochlear implant at age nine. With my cochlear implant, I hear and speak very well, however there are times when I still struggle understanding others. My hearing loss definitely does not stop me from going to church, however it is often a struggle to understand everything that is being said.

On Easter Day in 2010, my family, my boyfriend and I went to the 10:30 church service. The choir went to the front of the church and performed as part of Pastor Rob's sermon. They did not sing like they usually do; instead, music played in the background while choir members held up poster boards that had the words they wanted to be sent out to everyone that was there that morning. I was baffled! I thought it was so cool. I looked at my family and my boyfriend and they automatically knew I understood everything. They just smiled.

After the church service, I went up to Pastor Rob and said to him, "That was the first time I completely understood the choir!" It was like having subtitles that I use while watching TV or an interpreter that I have with me in my classes. It was like God was 'interpreting' the message being sent that morning. It was awesome, period.

Kelly Laatsch

*Prayer: God of power and Glory, we thank you for surprising us with great and exciting ways to worship and praise you. Help us understand the story of Jesus in a new and exciting way as if we have heard the story for the first time and in a new way. Keep us from taking our own hearing of the good news for granted and to remember how powerful your story is. May we, like Kelly, be determined to come and worship, and excited to 'hear' the powerful good news that "He is risen". Amen*

### **A Note from the Artist**

I prayed before I did the artwork for the cover. I got suggestions from my son. I wanted a sad mood as Lent is a time of reflection and introspection. As we are New Testament people, I wanted a hint of the upcoming joy and hope of Easter. Hidden in the picture are two photos of Zion's stained glass windows and an Easter lily to try to achieve this.

The back cover is my attempt at a tribute to the deceased members of our church. The empty pew and the stained glass window in the lower right corner signifies their being with God and away from us.

On the inside cover pages, I have two sketches of hands. For one, I used my hands as my model and for the one hand holding the communion cup, I used a sketch from the Lutheran magazine. They are previous bulletin covers I had made, but I felt they were appropriate.

I enjoy reading all the God sightings and I know you will have many more in the future. Thank you for allowing me to be your illustrator. What success I have is my God Sighting.

Carol A. Little