

^{THE} GOD SIGHTINGS
of
OUR SAVIOR'S
and
ZION'S SAINTS
2018AD

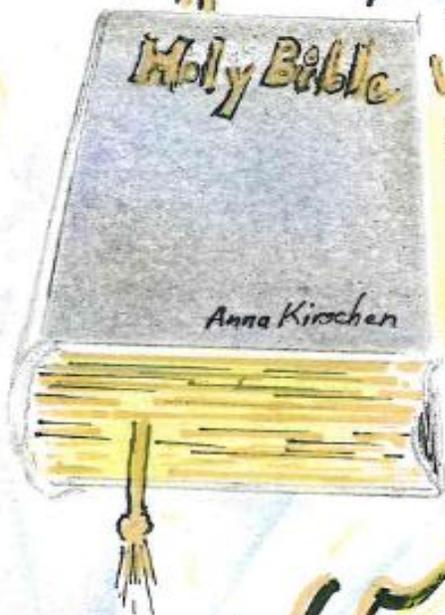
For
You

God's



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PURPOSEFUL!!!



Thy
Word
is
truth.
John 17:17

He
is
Risen!

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HEALING

Through

the
WORD + the Sacraments

*As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness;
I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.*

- Psalm 17:15

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

- Matthew 5:8

God Sightings, Lent 2018
Intentional, Purposeful Healing
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Freeland
Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Saginaw

Dear Zion and OSLC,

The only thing we have is Jesus, our life story, and how we relate those things together in faith. Our churches have the beautiful message that all are welcome, grace is a gift, and our life and faith are connected.

People will come join us in our ministries and mission as we tell them the story of Jesus. Thank you for sharing your stories here.

We will be on the move this Lent as our schedule indicates. You will have a chance to attend 4 different churches working together this season. Our Sunday worship schedule remains the same. I hope you will venture outside of your normal routine and comfort zone to participate with the theme of this Lenten season: Intentional, Purposeful Healing. Healing begins with worship.

Please continue in the prayer and discernment regarding our churches and how God has invited us into a path of new growth together.

In Christ,
Pr. Rob

Lent Worship Schedule 2018

Wed 2/14	Noon	Ash Wednesday service at OSLC
	7:00pm	Ash Wednesday service at Zion
Wed. 2/21	6:30pm	Community Tazie Prayer Service at St. Agnes, Freeland
		**No service at Zion tonight
Wed. 2/28	5:30pm	Lenten Meal at Zion
	7:00pm	Worship at Zion
Wed. 3/7	5:30pm	Lenten Meal at OSLC
	7:00pm	Worship at OSLC
Wed. 3/14	5:30pm	Lenten Meal at Zion
	7:00pm	Worship at Zion
Wed. 3/21	5:30pm	Lenten Meal at Zion
	7:00pm	Worship at Zion
Sun. 3/25	5:30pm	Pot-luck Mean at Freeland United Methodist Church
	7:00pm	Living Last Supper Play at Freeland United Methodist Church
Wed. 3/28	5:30pm	Lenten Meal at OSLC
	7:00pm	Worship at OSLC
Thurs. 3/29	7:00pm	Maundy Thursday Worship at Zion
Fri. 3/30	12-3pm	30 Minute Good Friday services at Zion
		*Worshippers are welcome enter/exit as necessary throughout the service.
	7:00pm	Community Tenebrae Service at Zion

Ash Wednesday, February 14

*As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.
-Psalm 103:13*

I now wish I would have done better visiting my parents these past years. It is difficult not living near loved ones when they are sick. The time will come when visiting is no longer possible because we will turn to dust.

Sharing communion, and remembering the church was a special part of my visits at home with my mom and dad. Ash Wednesday 2017 was one such visit. We gathered the old palms from the house and burned them outside. I was at the bottom of the steps as my parents stood at the top quietly watching the fire. I have a picture of the moment on my phone.

We then went into the house and had an Ash Wednesday service. There I was given the honor of placing ashes on the forehead of my mother and father. I reminded them that they are dust, and to dust they shall return.

It is one of the most humbling and emotional acts of liturgy there is for me, to share ashes. There are people I know who are sick, and I wonder will this be the last time ashes are placed upon this person before death?

What happened next was the beginning of an amazing gift God shared with me. My father had amazing moments of clarity and faith at times even though he had Alzheimer's. And those times were as if God was speaking to us through my dad's words.

My father took some ashes and made his speech, proclamation and words of love and faith in front of my mom and me. And then he placed a cross of ashes upon my head, reminding me of my own mortality. I will always remember how sacred that day was in my life. My father has returned to ashes. The few people who witnessed his speeches during our communion visits marvel at the clarity and faith he shared during those moments.

Pr. Rob Schmidt

Prayer: Dear God as we are reminded of our own mortality today, we remember those who are safe now in your care. Grow within us a sense of humility and faith that help us live in humble faith that both remembers and shares acts of kindness and love with others. Amen.

Thursday, February 15

Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.

For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.

-Psalm 37:8-9

It was Friday evening on Walleye Weekend 2016 in Freeland. Peggy and I were alone at home, when we received a phone call a bit after 10:00. It was our daughter, Kara. She had gone to the fireworks with a friend, and afterwards they were cruising around a bit in her car. It had stopped running, and now they were on the side of the road. I drove there to join her, called a tow truck, and had the car left at Burt Watson to be fixed.

Pretty rotten evening, right?

Nope. I saw God's presence many times that evening.

We (especially our children) often drive on familiar roads, but don't know their names or those of their cross roads. Somehow Kara and her friend had figured out they were on Pierce Road, near the corner of Garfield. Knowing where she was, in the dark, was the first God sighting.

Kara had driven the car all around this area over the previous month, sometimes an hour or more away. The break-down happened five minutes from my home. Another God sighting.

I was able to find them easily in the dark. God sighting number three.

When I called the tow service, they said they would be there in 45-60 minutes. The truck was there in less than 20 minutes. God sighting number four.

Burt Watson was less than two miles away, but their parking lot was full and blocked off because of Walleye Weekend. However, there were people supervising everything and let the tow truck and us in, and there was one open space to leave the disabled car. One of the supervisors held their flashlight while I filled in the "late drop off" form to drop through Burt Watson's slot. Multiple God sightings here.

Saturday I got a call from Burt Watson that they had diagnosed the problem. A faulty starter motor had crippled the charging circuit, leading to a dead battery which caused the car to stop running. I needed a new starter. The car would be fixed on Monday when they got one. Not the best news, but the problem was identified and solved quickly. Another God sighting.

Finally, less than four months later, this same daughter and car went off to college. The best God sighting is that the problem had happened while she was still at home and not alone, and I was able to easily help her.

Ilmars Dobulis, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God help us see in the midst of problems and interruptions that happen in our life and vehicles, you're still present and we have reason for gratitude. Amen.

Friday, February 16

Not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

-Hebrews 10:25

According to the Gospel of Luke, angels are emotional beings and they each have an individual personality. Scripture teaches us that they minister to us and sometimes bring answers to prayers. They strengthen and encourage us according to our needs.

I believe that angels have touched my life in many ways through the years. When I was on my knees in exhaustion and despair while caring for a precious friend who was dying of cancer, angels surely heard my prayers and helped strengthen me. When a co-worker realized that I was having a difficult day and took the time to write a note of encouragement to me, leaving it ‘anonymously’ on my desk, was that another angel in my life?

I was out of the country when I received word that my Father had died. He had been ill for some time, but his death still devastated me. My husband and I struggled with a difficult decision, should we immediately return home, or remain on vacation. After much prayer, and phone calls back to Michigan, we decided to stay. Christmas was only a few days away, the neighborhood was decorated, and the little white-washed stucco church was ready. On Christmas Eve, when the priest arrived, he rang the bells. We made our way to the church, the only Anglos present, and we were welcomed graciously. We were in the company of angels that evening, angels who did not speak a word of English, but nevertheless strengthened us and invited us into their company.

Linda Grindahl, *Our Saviour Lutheran Church*

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for the many acts of love, strength and encouragement you share with us through others. Amen.

Saturday, February 17

*For we are taking pains to do what is right,
not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.
-Corinthians 8:21*

Our family has recently had some different financial needs. I looked into a second job, and things moved fast and I had the position without even really accepting it. The more information I was given, the more I realized what a time commitment this would be and I had to decline. I would not be able to give the time needed with my family and my primary employment. I was very upset about this and felt irresponsible declining even though I hadn't even really officially accepted. I went to the business to decline the position in person as I did not want to do that over the phone or in an email. I was able to meet with one of the members of the panel for my interview. She was completely understanding, validated my concerns and was appreciative of how the communication was taking place. During this conversation, a different position was offered with a much more doable schedule for me, and it will help me in my current career also. So an anticipated, declined opportunity turned in to an immediate additional opportunity that is a much better fit for me and my family. I never would have known about the additional opportunity without the wrong one presenting itself first.

Susan Becker, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God help us think through the chances we have to work, travel and play as we seek to consider our decisions including you in the process. Amen.

Sunday, February 18

On Ash Wednesday the church began its journey toward baptismal immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. First Peter connects the way God saved Noah's family in the flood with the way God saves us through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

Monday, February 19

*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you invited me in.
-Matthew 25:35*

I had my first experience volunteering at the Saginaw Metro Ministries Food Pantry located at St. John's Church. I was so impressed with the organization of the food, helpers having carts ready, shopping bags ready, people signed in and a welcoming atmosphere for all.

We give financial support in our church budget, and Zion shares with the other churches in providing volunteers. But I was amazed to see some people do more than their share in organizing the whole program, stocking shelves, etc.

What a wonderful way to help families.

Jan Hennink, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Jesus help us follow your example of feeding the hungry and caring for those that have need of our help, labor, money and effort. Amen.

Tuesday, February 20

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

As a fully licensed counselor, I am used to giving advice, not getting it. I have always said that God has a way of slowing us down, whether we want it or not. Sounds good right? I thought so too, until I had to live by my own words...

In June, I sprained my ankle playing softball. While I would love to say it happened while I was sliding into home plate (which I would have done) to win the game, that is not the case. I was playing first base and I couldn't decide whether to field the ball or get to the base for a potential out. As I tried to get to the base for the out, my left ankle landed awkwardly on the corner of it and down I went. Instant agony! Oh, I tried so hard to get up, walk it off, shake it off...but it wasn't meant to be.

A trip to Urgent Care revealed that I had a really bad sprain – both sides of the ankle had been affected. One small aircast to support both sides of the ankle, wrapped in one ace bandage, and two crutches later, they sent me home. Sounds good right? Not exactly. I lived in a second story apartment! Crawling upstairs may be cute for a toddler – for a 54 year old member of AARP, not so much!

Two days later, I was back at Urgent Care. The swelling had gotten worse and the crutches were not a viable mode of transportation for me. This time I left the facility with a walking air-cast boot that went about half-way up my lower leg. It was heavy and uncomfortable, but it was so much easier than attempting to use those crutches.

When I went to see my family physician, she referred me to an orthopedic doctor. I called for an appointment and I was scheduled to see the nurse practitioner who also worked in the office. She confirmed that the sprain was severe and that once the swelling started to subside, I would be going to physical therapy.

Things were unfolding at work that I had no control over. I started second guessing my value in the department and in the company as a whole. The whispering, the dirty looks – it all seemed so juvenile to me. I was walking on eggshells, not knowing what to expect.

Meanwhile, the walls of that one bedroom apartment were closing in. There just wasn't enough space for two adults with their stuff and one cat with all of his toys. The lease didn't expire until November; however, we needed to evaluate our situation to see if moving to a bigger space was even an option.

In August, I started physical therapy. Even though there was still a significant amount of swelling, PT seemed to work and by Labor Day, I was out of the walking cast, wearing normal shoes! The nurse practitioner was concerned by the swelling but she was convinced in time it would heal.

At work, things were becoming more awkward and I was at a loss as to what to do about it. Since my boss hadn't informed me of any issues regarding my work, I kept plugging away, trying to do my best under a veil of confusion.

By October, the swelling had not improved. I went back to the Nurse Practitioner, who scheduled a consult with a podiatrist in the same office. The doctor took one look at my MRI and said, "Your ankle will never heal. You have torn ligaments and you need surgery." The G-rated version of my immediate thoughts were "are you flipping kidding me?" – the Nurse Practitioner had looked at the MRI six weeks ago and said everything looked fine.

I was at a breaking point. Every area of my life was consumed with anxiety. My job was incredibly stressful; my church in Clarkston was not fulfilling my spiritual needs anymore; my ankle needed surgery four months after the initial accident, and oh, did I mention that I was trying to buy a house too?

Remember my comment about being slowed down, even if you don't want to be? My plan was to return to work within a few days of the surgery; however, that was not a viable option for me. I ended up going out on short-term disability for seven weeks. God knew I needed time to slow down, to rest, to recuperate, to re-organize my thoughts and to get my life together!

One week after my surgery, I bought my house in Groveland Township. It truly is a sanctuary from the hustle, bustle, and rudeness of the city, (I work in Bloomfield Hills). My home is surrounded by state land, which means no close neighbors. My mom tells people that I live on a two track dirt road, which is true. If you meet a vehicle in certain spots, you do have to slow down or stop to make sure both vehicles pass safely.

Living in the forest is peaceful and serene. I look out and I see God's handiwork everyday – from the animal tracks in the snow in the yard; to the hints of sunrise peeking through the trees; to the bright shining stars at night. When life gets overwhelming, I slow down and I look out my windows. I see God's creation and I am reminded of his unconditional love for me, his grace for me, his mercy for me and his plan for me (even if I still am not sure what it is right now).

Proverbs 3 tells me to "trust in the Lord". Psalm 46 tells me to "Be still, and know that I am God". Philippians 4 tells me "not to be anxious" and Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells me that "there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens". And my response to these scriptures: a resounding AMEN!

Cindy Bell, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God, slow us down to the pace we need to seek you, speak with you, and most importantly listen to you. Teach us the way of discernment. Amen

Wednesday, February 21

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.
-John 14:27*

Our son Brandon was always dropping change, wherever he went. I would always give him a hard time. "Brandon, I just found \$1.25 in the driveway." He would smile and laugh it off. Brandon was a fishing guide in a very remote area, and he had a vista on the river he would always stop at with his guests to cook the days catch or just stop to show the view.

I kept the tradition going all season by always stopping by the same spot with guests to enjoy the view and have a drink. One day this fall I just had a different feeling hanging over me all day, I headed upriver with 2 fishing guests, it was a beautiful day. We stopped at the spot for some snacks and drinks as always and sat around the fire pit for a bit. One of the guest walked about 10' away for a better view, and said hey, look at the change on the ground. I couldn't believe it, 4 quarters, 1 dime, and 1 nickel laying right there on the ground. I had been there a minimum of 10 times prior to that during this season with many people and never seen it before. Nobody else ever stops there because it's very remote, let alone leaves change. It was a very spiritual feeling, for me to find that \$1.15.

Later that afternoon when I returned to camp I received a message from Pastor Rob, just asking what was up and how things were going? It was like he almost knew what had just happened to me.

It was a very touching, emotional, and spiritual afternoon "for sure".

Live Like Brandon!!!

Mike Scherzer, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God you are often found in the simplest things in life reaching out to share love and memories assuring us all is well, you are with us. Help us see the priceless value when our memories and your messages collide. Amen.

Thursday, February 22

*But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart;
consider what great things he has done for you.*

-1 Samuel 12:24

This year's God sighting will be short and sweet.

I'm thankful God has gotten me more involved in church, to be able to help and serve in whatever way possible.

The second thing is, I have a very small core group of special friends. I think God had brought us closer together. For that I feel blessed, and I am grateful.

Doug Harrington, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Thank you God for inviting us through others to grow in your service to the church and develop friendships which remind us of your great love and grace. Amen.

Friday, February 23

*Until now you have not asked for anything in my name.
Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.
-John 16:24*

My daughter is going to Florida with the Marching Band at school. I really wanted to go but it costs quite a bit of money for one person, let alone two. So I didn't sign up. This week I realized I had enough money saved that if there was an opportunity for me to go that I could now afford it. So I messaged her teacher and found out that there was one person who signed up to chaperone and was having second thoughts. So the teacher contacted that person and they still would prefer not to go. So with God's help, I am able to join my daughter in a once in a lifetime chance to watch her march in the Disney Parade in Florida. I know this is a small thing, but to me it is BIG. God is GREAT!!! I thank him every day for my daughter. He has worked many miracles in my life and this is just a small one I will share for now.

Andrea Muzer, Zion ELCA and Freeland United Methodist

Prayer: Thank you for the special chances we get to be with our family, and create memories that will last a lifetime. Help us find gratitude in our opportunities to spend times with the people we love. Amen.

Saturday, February 24

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,
for those who are called according to his purpose.*

-Romans 8:28

Some things in life happen all of a sudden. But most things happen slowly over time. The past few years I've noticed my father changing into an old man. I've always looked up to my father as an example of how to be. He had always been there when I was a kid to fix anything I had broken. Even into my twenties and thirties, he helped me when he could. He has always been the guy I look to for advice when I'm in a pickle.

The other day I was over at their house and had to grab a tool from his workshop that I was in need of. I looked around at all of the marvelous tools . . . specialty tools . . . hammers, screwdrivers, saws and wrenches. Each item had a place. Everything was very meticulously organized, just how my father wanted it. I stood there just thinking about all of the things we had accomplished together as a father and son using those tools. The time we spent together talking about anything and everything. The great laughs that only he and I have had together, and how those times are growing shorter. So I take a breath . . . A moment . . . Thinking about being. In. This. Moment. I began to well up and let all those memories of this workshop and my Dad's tools and skills come together as one great moment.

"Did you find what you're looking for?" said my Dad.

"Yeah, Pop! Got'em right here." I pulled myself together, and went to head up the stairs, but then we continued to talk a bit. He said to me,

"You know, the only way I learned to use all these was by doin'." My father could fix anything I broke, it seemed, when I was young. Getting older though? that was one fix that was just out of our reach.

So during this Lenten season, take a moment to breathe, To think about the Grace that only Christ brings and about the tools your Father has given you. Be thankful! Feel blessed! And know that all of us can work together to learn, grow old and do some fixin' in Faith that He needs!

Kris Lentner, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God thank you for the times in the midst of our daily life when we are struck with the sacred gift of the people presently in our life that mean so much to us. Amen.

Sunday, February 25

The second covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God's promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ.

Mark 8:31-38

Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Monday, February 26

*A good name is more desirable than great riches;
to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.
-Proverbs 22:1*

As I sit here at work today thinking of God sighting stories that I read every year, I realize I have never written one. I do have one I would like to share this year:

I am named after one of my Grandmothers (Louise). I am a lot like Louise, my family tells me, and I do remember her very fondly, as she lived with us for a short while. I can remember talks with her and fun shows we would watch on TV and painting our nails together. I was 12 when she passed away.

Several years later I was married on June 7th which happened to be my Grandmother Louise's birthday. It did not hold any significance the day of our wedding, nor did I even realize it was the day of her birth until later. I had kind of forgotten about my namesake.

But down the road, when we had given birth to our first son, on Dec 9th, my mother came into my room and said : "Oh your Grandmother Louise died on Dec 9th she must have sent this beautiful baby boy to us today as a gift to you"! As I sat in the hospital that night holding our new first born baby son and thinking of my grandmother, thinking how I was married on her birthday, and the day of her death she sends me this wonderful soul from heaven. To me, this is one of my God sightings reminding me that just because my grandmother is not here anymore, it's hard to forget someone who gave you so much to remember. I think of my Grandmother, my namesake often and I tell myself she will never be forgotten by me again as long as I am living, I will carry her with me. Those dates earlier in my life, were my reminder that she is always with ME.

Lynn Louise Anderson, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Thank you God for the names and memories of the people that have gone before us and are safe in your care. Bless us with their names to grow us in faith and love. Amen.

Tuesday, February 27

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

-1 Timothy 4:13

When will people realize the power given to them when all are assembled in church praising God for all the blessings freely given to them?

In 2009 when I spent three and a half months in Brittany Manor Rehab, I felt the loss of not attending a service. I welcomed the half hour an old minister came to sing hymns and give a short message in the dining room each Sunday. His favorite hymns were *There is a Mansion over the Hillside* and *Blessed Assurance*, which is also mine.

There are always changes happening, but God remains the same. I am thankful for this!

Phyllis Wetters, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God thank you for keeping us connected by electronic means, even when we are many miles apart. Help us use technology to share your word, and build faithful relationships. Amen.

Wednesday, February 28

*In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,
and do not give the devil a foothold.*

-Ephesians 4:26-27

I'm not sure if you read or not but my car was broken into while watching softball/baseball on Saturday. My purse was stolen and I felt so violated and on top of the recent struggles I have had I was beyond depressed. I even got mad at God thinking how could I possibly handle one more thing on my plate. I prayed in anger, but I prayed and continued to throughout the day on Sunday as I was preparing for everything I had to accomplish on Monday, (close out bank acct, new credit cards, call insurance company, go to Secretary of State), all the while thinking has "my" purse being stolen jeopardized my family now. The criminal who did this now knows so much about us: where we live, where we work, and Lord knows what else seeing that my purse was pretty cluttered. But come this morning I had a new attitude, I am still worried for my family, but I hit the day with ease and got most everything accomplished to start over fresh. The Lord was with me all along, I just don't know why it's so hard for me to remember that in the heat of the moment, but I will Continue to trust more in him as these trials come my way. He does provide, he does care, and we are always in his grand plans. Just have to remind myself in his time. Thought I would share with you.

Kate Savage, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Dear Lord, comfort us when the world has harmed us or the ones we love. Help us turn to you for peace and comfort that we may find your strength and peace. Amen.

Thursday, March 1

Not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

-Philippians 2:4

It has remained in my heart for years now, and it's time I share what the Lord did for me, as He does for everyone each day, though it sometimes goes unnoticed.

My son was deployed in Korea at the time and my husband was in the throws of dying. I was overwhelmed with all of these things at the time, and while at the dentist's office one day, he said I can't work on you today, as you are shaking and seem to be too nervous! He asked what the problem was, and I broke down and shared with him all of my worries that my son could be harmed, and my husband was dying, my daughter was newly married and I needed my son to help me, but he was deployed!! He listened patiently, and sent me home to make an appointment for another day.

After I returned home, I received a call from the dentist, and he explained that after I left a senator came into the office, and said that he was so surprised that he could get in early. The dentist explained to him why he was able to be treated early was because the last patient left early, which was myself!

The dentist asked me to please sit down, and told me that my son will be arriving home very, very soon- within days to help me!! I asked how could this be, and he said that the senator listened about my problem, and took it upon himself to make some calls and, through his help, my son arrived within the week. A few weeks later we buried my husband, his Dad. My son was a great help to me, and was a comfort to his father in the end, which was a blessing. He often tells me that he was stationed in the Wurstmuth Base after that, and the only action he saw was birds and trees!!

The moral of my story is that nothing is by chance. Each moment, and each encounter, is preordained by God Himself!! I will always be grateful for God's help, and will keep this in my heart until I meet Him at heaven's gate.

Marilou Brown, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God thank you for the people that have heard our stories and then go into action helping us, caring for us, and taking our needs and stories as their own. Amen.

Friday, March 2

*When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby,
he said to her, "Woman, here is your son,"
-John 19:26*

Meeting God in the face of an infant is a special miracle. That miracle happened for me when I first held each of our children. We adopted each of them when they were just a few weeks old. They were precious gifts from God, made possible for my husband and me through the love of two very young mothers who each found herself in a circumstance she could not deal with by herself. Each showed love for her child by allowing the baby to be born and then making a loving and heart wrenching decision to release her baby to help a childless family. It took acts of faith on their parts and left empty spots in their hearts that they couldn't be sure would ever be filled.

Our children are now 42 and 39, and each has been on a journey to search and reconnect with their birth mothers. Creative sleuthing, DNA testing, social media, and luck all figured into the mix. The year 2017 was the year of success. Our daughter has not only found information about her birth parents, but she has traveled to meet them. Our son has made contact and will soon travel to meet his birth mother and spend his 2018 birthday with her.

From the time I first held each baby, I have wished to be able to meet and thank the special person who made it all possible. Just a few months ago my husband and I were able to meet our daughter's birth mother. When she and I embraced we simultaneously said "thank you"-- I grateful for the chance to be the mother of her beautiful child, and she grateful to me for caring for the child she was not able to care for--a God moment for sure.

I hope one day to be able to meet our son's birth mother and thank her. I know that will be another God moment, and I await that opportunity eagerly.

Jane Werner, *Our Saviour Lutheran Church*

Prayer: Dear God thank you for the love that exists in the process of adoption as families are formed through great love and care. Help us follow your example Lord of sharing family when preserving love and community. Amen.

Saturday, March 3

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.
-Ecclesiastes 3:1*

“To everything there is a season” and “God works in mysterious ways” are two phrases I’ve heard countless times throughout my life, but that wisdom has never stopped me from assuming that something I love will remain a constant throughout my life. And when that assumption proves to be untrue, it hurts.

I’ve been enchanted with camp since I was a young child and was sent to summer camp for the first time, at the ripe old age of 7. As a shy child, I often felt obligated to live up to other’s expectations of me even when those expectations were limiting, but going someplace new allowed me to reinvent myself. I wouldn’t have been able to verbalize it at such a young age, but on some level I realized I had been given a great opportunity.

Fast forward to my teenage years, and I once again rediscovered this amazing opportunity for self-discovery and exploration. This time as I was growing and discovering myself, I was also helping others along their journey as a counselor and confidant. During these years I met and formed relationships with people who powerfully impacted my life, and I think I was able to have an important impact on the lives of a few others.

Move forward a few more years and I’m a busy college student who never spends enough time with her family. That is, until my mother is diagnosed with cancer. The day after my mom called to tell me about her diagnoses, we were scheduled to attend a retreat at camp. It was the first time we were going and I had been nervous, but now I was thankful. I had the entire weekend to spend with my mom, to process what was happening, and to reassure her (and be reassured myself) that everything would be okay. I was grateful to experience all of that someplace I already felt safe and close to God. Once again, camp provided a life changing and sacred space for me.

This past year my sacred space, the place where I always felt nearest to God, where I learned who I was, where I learned and relearned life’s lessons, was closed and sold. I was (and still am) devastated. At first it was difficult to process through the anger and pain of my loss, but eventually I realized that there were still lessons to learn.

First and foremost, the sudden loss of something that I thought would be in my life forever taught me to cherish the special things I currently have. My grief, one that is shared by many others, forced me to be vulnerable and to allow others to comfort me. Living through a painfully long goodbye (one that lasted for months while the details of the closure and sale were slowly being released and realized) showed me the importance of accepting the things I cannot change. Grieving in community, with others who felt the same, allowed me to relive memories I had long forgotten and to make new ones which I will always cherish. Most importantly, refusing to let pain ruin the time I had left to enjoy my sacred space, helped me to connect with God.

After my initial emotional reaction of shock and sadness subsided, I remembered to turn to God. I asked the Lord for comfort, peace, and acceptance. I thanked God for creating the place that gave me so much. I celebrated the hills and the forests, the dirt and the rocks, the weather and wildlife, and even the mosquitos and poison ivy--all parts of the Lord's creation. I made an intentional choice to rely on the Lord during this difficult time and in doing so a subtle change started to occur. I was communicating with the Lord more, in good times and bad, about camp and everything else in life.

Over the years I didn't always realize I was seeing God while living in the moment. In fact, it wasn't until my earthly vision was obscured by tears that I was able to better see the divine. Now I understand that to everything there is a season, and the Lord does indeed work in mysterious ways, and always for our good.

Allison Dakos, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Thank you for the gift of grief and tears that help focus upon understanding and love that meets us in those sacred spaces of our life. Help us grow in the mysteries of life which we do not yet understand, trusting in you always. Amen

Sunday, March 4

The third covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the central one of Israel's history: the gift of the law to those God freed from slavery. The ten commandments are one of the chief parts of Luther's catechism, a core piece of baptismal instruction. They begin with the statement that because God alone has freed us from the powers that oppressed us, we are to let nothing else claim first place in our lives. When Jesus throws the merchants out of the temple, he is defending the worship of God alone and rejecting the ways commerce and profit-making can become our gods.

John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Monday, March 5

*“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.*

-Luke 11:9

My most profound God sighting happened some time ago, during the initial days my child was dating. My child had been seeing someone for a few years. I had some concerns about their relationship, and I knew that if they stayed together they may believe that God intended them to be together. My family would make comments to me because they knew I did not approve, but I was never mean and was very careful with my words when speaking about them to anyone. I was a good Christian. I prayed and prayed that someone would come into my child's life and they would see perhaps God had another plan. I have never prayed so hard in my life for something. One day, they broke up. It was devastating and painful to watch. But soon, another plan appeared, and this relationship was sent by God. They are a happy couple, laughing and full of joy and acceptance of one another. This may not seem like a big deal to most, but as I reflect back upon that time, there is no doubt in my mind that God answered my prayers.

Anonymous

Prayer: God teach us to pray in all circumstances and help us be willing to accept however you answer those prayers for the good of your purpose in our lives and world. Thank you for listening. Amen.

Tuesday, March 6

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,
just as Christ God forgave you.
-Ephesians 4:32*

We have wavered in our faith. We have prayed and prayed and wondered why and how one person can pull a family apart. Wondered how God could let a family that was once so close be torn apart. We've wondered what kind of test we needed to pass before he helped mend our family. What would it take?

Well, it takes a lot! A lot of strength, praying, crying, and family members who are willing to stick with it.

Our son, who hasn't spoken to us in a year and a half, reached out to allow us to meet our granddaughter. We got to meet her today and hold her. She is one day old, born Jan. 27, 2018.

It takes lots of praying and baby steps to heal a broken family. I can't say that we can forget what that one person did to our family, and we are not ready to forgive. But we are ready to be our son's mom and dad again and our granddaughter's Gramma and Grampa!!

God gave us this step toward healing. We've asked for a sign, our granddaughter is pure love and innocence and beauty. A true "Gift From God"!!

Rod and Carrie Wale, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God grow us through the gift of new life that can restore and bond a family together again. Teach us to be loving and forgiving for the sake of those that know nothing but innocence and need our love and support as they grow. Amen.

Wednesday, March 7

*The Lord is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?
-Psalm 27:1*

*"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
-John 8:12*

There are many facets of our faith in God. Facets show up in so many ways. Days when you're feeling blue and you look at the beautiful sunset that looks like God painted just for you. The morning when you wake up and the trees are frosted with glittering snow. God sends you a smile or a hug just when you need them. The prayers you say when you are troubled, and then you experience peace. The feeling of being nudged in a new direction and knowing that God is with you in the endeavor.

There is always going to be a facet that is dim, but if we did not have those then the brilliance of the brightest facets would not shine through.

God shines the brightest of them all.

Karen Manry, *Our Saviour Lutheran Church*

Prayer: Dear God, Please help us with all facets of our lives and our faith in you. Be with us in all of our endeavors and show us your brilliance. Amen.

Thursday, March 8

*I will sing to the LORD all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
-Psalm 104:33*

*“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us,
and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and
his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”
-Psalm 100:1-5*

Church and Sunday school involvement made a lasting impact on me. One impressionable time for me was when I was in the third grade. Someone read Psalm 100:1-5. I was intrigued, so I read those verses myself. Looking back at that experience, those verses helped satisfy a longing and yearning within me, for a greater sense of who I was in Christ. Psalm 100 became very much a part of me. I felt compelled to make these verses a reality. It was a call to be part of the music ministry, to worship and praise God through song and to rejoice in him.

Singing praises to God released the power of the Holy Spirit within me. It drew me into the presence of God. I felt I was a privileged kid, allowed to curl up in his lap. He wrapped his arms around me, enveloped and filled me with the most wonderful, incredible kind of love. Everything was O.K. I felt like I truly belonged, that I was really his. His countenance was upon me.

Praying to God was not always easy for me. My thoughts got thoroughly confused and the words just would not come out right. My heart felt left out when my mind bogged down, trying to find the right words. I started singing prayers and praises to God. The Holy Spirit within me joined in and interceded for me. He made up for my confusion and words that fell short of what I needed to say to God. The songs of prayer and praise flowed and my spirit soared. Again, I felt lifted up into the presence of God.

I continue to share the love of God and for God through song. I pray that you will always have a joyful song in your heart to the Lord. If for some reason you do not feel like singing, make joyful noise to the Lord.

Kurt Kramer, Our Saviour Lutheran Church

Prayer: Holy Spirit, thank you for giving life to the music in our body and souls that brings life, hope and faith to our brothers and sisters as we share your sacred gift. Amen.

Friday, March 9

*Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed;
save me and I will be saved,
for you are the one I praise.
-Jeremiah 17:14*

While going through cancer treatment I saw GOD in my spiritual healing, not just by my amazing doctors who chose to pay my enormous bill, but by those I had never met. All over the world people of faith prayed for me; From Switzerland to India, and here in the States. Those I knew and those I had never met. Gifts of money, food, and other items were left at my door while going through the nightmare that was now my life, but my faith in GOD, and the strong and beautiful faith of those around me was a beautiful Christian dream.

Karol Lou Witting

Prayer: Father God, thank you for the healing powers of medicine, and the love of others that provides for us in ways known and unknown. Bless all that are waiting for healing today. Amen.

Saturday, March 10

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

-2 Timothy 1:7

When I was in college, I did a lot of babysitting jobs to earn money. One Saturday afternoon, as was typical, I was working for one of my regular families. I had the kids in the yard playing. Six year old Taylor was riding her bicycle and her dad informed me before he left to keep a close eye on her because her training wheels had been removed only the day before. She was riding on her blacktop driveway and I made a suggestion for her to ride in the grass, because then if she fell over it would be a softer landing. She said, "No that's okay, because I am a child of God and I have nothing to fear."

I told her that sometimes even children of God fall down and get hurt, and that she should still be careful. To which she replied,

"Even if I fall down and get hurt, it's still okay, because God will fix me." She never stopped pedaling. I was speechless (which is unusual in itself), and I could only stand there and watch her ride her bike round and around on the blacktop. She never wavered, not even once. No fear, only confidence.

Sara Glynn-Dishaw, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Dear God defeat fear in our lives. Help us live in your abundant promises of light, love and grace. Amen.

Sunday, March 11

The fourth of the Old Testament promises providing a baptismal lens this Lent is the promise God makes to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. In today's gospel Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like the serpent, so that those who look to him in faith will live. When we receive the sign of the cross in baptism, that cross becomes the sign we can look to in faith, for healing, for restored relationship to God, for hope when we are dying.

John 3:14-21

Jesus said: “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

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

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Monday, March 12

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

-James 1:17

God shows me that he loves me all the time and in lots of different ways. I've been having a tough time in school. I have lots of good friends, and we look out for each other. But there is one boy in my class who has been really mean to me since the second grade. Things had gotten pretty bad lately, and I was scared to go to school. I was feeling pretty badly about it. Then, out of the blue, Mrs. Schmidt had a surprise for me! It made me feel so much better! I asked my mom how Mrs. Schmidt could possibly have known that I needed to be lifted up? Well, I know how, God spoke to her, and she reached out to me. Thank you, Mrs. Schmidt!

Drew Osterbrock, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God thank you for the ways you work in the kind and loving hearts of people to share love and support when your children are in need. Bless your holy workers for their kindness. Amen.

Tuesday, March 13

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

-Philippians 4:12-13

I see God's greatness in the majestic landscapes He has created all around us. In photos I have seen from all around the world, the grandeur of mountains, valleys and fields, seas and land formations, painted with an artist's palette, leave me in great awe of His creative designs. I feel the same when I look at the beautiful coat of a leopard, or even the colorful skin of a miniature frog living thousands of miles away in a rainforest. God is so great and He is the Creator of All!

I also see God's loving kindness in the smile of a young child, their joy at the simplest things of life, remind me that I should look at our world, through the eyes of a child, and appreciate each moment I am given.

I have felt God's loving arms wrapped around me at times of greatest sorrow, and miraculously, I feel His Peace, which surpasses all understanding, comfort me, and give me strength.

I feel God's blessings on me when I look at my family, and know that I am the richest of all!

All that is good comes from God, and I give Him Glory, thanks and praise!

Laura Biggins, *Our Saviour Lutheran Church*

Prayer: Thank you God for those that lead us in understanding and experiencing God in all of creation and circumstances. Guide us in our growth to do the same. Amen.

Wednesday, March 14

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

-Philippians 4:6

A few years ago I injured myself during a hunting accident. I was putting my tree stand up in the pitch black and it came loose from the tree, started to twist and fall. I was compelled to jump rather than riding the tree stand down to the ground, and to make a long story shorter, I landed on my feet like a cat after falling 20 feet. I remember thinking that the fall was much longer than expected and in that moment, I prayed to myself and said, “God, I guess I’m in your hands now.”

I was able to get up and walk away from that accident, thinking I had be lucky to escape injury save some knee pain and weakness immediately after. Little did I know, over the next few years the effect of that accident would become more and more of a hindrance in what I wanted to do in my daily life. After a year, I was dealing with pain daily and relied on anti-inflammatories and Tylenol regularly. My activity level began to reduce, and I started gaining weight more quickly as each month passed.

Much of my struggle throughout my life has been about letting go of my stubbornness and drive to push through hardships that lead to trying to live life my way. In the words I wrote above, it is obvious to me that theme still permeates my thoughts and actions. Much of my struggle is that the grit that I’ve developed by this behavior is desirable and has often served me well, but it has also compounded many problems maybe more than it has helped. It is with this injury and pain that God has been able to show me how I can be tough, and also follow His will rather than my own.

Recently, I had settled into trusting that God has a plan for the healing, and that even though the scheduling of tests, appointments and surgeries was not what I desired, He would be able to use that suffering to speak to me. Every month, the pain multiplied and despite only being able to take over-the-counter medication, every day I would reaffirm my trust in Him. However, I also put my trust in my grit – hedging my bets, so to speak – and remembered that the worst pain I felt was when I burnt my legs as an adolescent with 3rd degree burns. Surely, I could handle this as well. Around Christmas, the pain surpassed this level and I now fought every day to keep from screaming from the excruciating pain. Surely, I had to do something about this!

So in a moment of weakness, I took it back and went in to speak to my doctor. I explained that I needed a consult for chronic pain management and finally let the doctor see the pain in full glory. Unfortunately, the first appointment available wasn’t for months and I went home angry, frustrated, and defeated. In the minutes after, I realized what I had done; I had rescinded the faith that I put in God and took everything on myself to ‘fix it’ my way. Quickly, I confessed my mistake to God and asked for forgiveness. I was honest in every feeling I had

and how weak I felt every day – that I couldn't imagine how I was going to get through the next months. I put my life back in His hands and admitted that I needed Him to be in charge of my life.

The phone immediately rang: the generic healthcare number. Having finished praying, I took a deep breath and answered. My first surgery was being rescheduled for mere days away instead of months due to a cancellation! God was working in my life in ways I couldn't imagine and rewarded me even though I didn't deserve it. He had suddenly given me strength and peace that I didn't think possible.

Eric La Voie, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Dear God help us always share our pain and struggles with you, and call out for your help when we have had enough and can no longer function alone and trust you will call in some way we need. Amen.

Thursday, March 15

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

-Romans 1:16

Do you ever wonder when God is talking to you? A great way to know that God is talking to you is through the One-Minute prayer. Knowing that hundreds of people are receiving what God is speaking to them and praying about it is truly an awesome feeling.

I have given the One-Minute prayer text number to several of my friend's so they can experience God speaking to them every day also. My coworkers know that if I receive the One-minute prayer during my work day that I am going to share it with whomever is in my office, or I will take it to them at their workstations. It never fails that when the text comes in, God knew that I needed to hear those words at that moment.

Recently, my dad was diagnosed with an aggressive form of prostate cancer. As we were learning of the diagnosis and what was to come, the One-Minute prayer came in as: "God bless those being tested today during exams, life and relationships. Help us understand testing is part of measuring understanding. Amen" Who knew? God knew! If you ever wonder what to say to someone who may be struggling with life for whatever reason, give them the One-Minute prayer number (text @1minuteprayer to 81010).

Let them know that God speaks to everyone during good times and not so good times. However, you just might share with someone who needs the word of God right at that moment.

Lord, thank you for speaking to us at all times of the day. Thank you for the daily gift of the One-Minute prayer which meets us where we are in our life. Thank you for all of the people that have texted and also hear your words of hope and promise every day.

Jennifer Grasso, Zion ELCA

Prayer: God give us the courage and ability to share faith in simple ways, to tell our stories of life and faith, to invite and welcome people to worship. Amen.

Friday, March 16

*For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."
-Galatians 5:14*

Tim and I bought the home of my dreams in 2005, just two months after we were married. It was a beautifully renovated farmhouse on two acres and had gorgeous woodwork, original floors, along with the character of an older home. I fell in love with it before we even walked through the door. I'm not sure Tim did, but he loved me and that was enough. That house was where we celebrated our first Christmas as a married couple, where our daughters took their first steps, and where I thought we would grow old together.

Fast forward ten years... the girls are older and want neighbors to play with, Tim is missing the feel of a neighborhood, and driving the girls back and forth to school each day was getting old. So, in the spring of 2016, we purchased our second home in the Whisper Ridge subdivision. It was the worst house on the block, but after a lot of work, we quickly settled into our new home.

That fall, we were busy... Cate was in gymnastics, Christy was participating in Girls on the Run, Tim was in his first year as a teacher at Carrollton, and I was balancing a split position between SVSU and Dow Chemical. It was a typically busy week day when I received a text message from one of our neighbors, Nicole. She said that Cate (who was supposed to be at gymnastics) had ridden the bus home and surprise! No one was at our house. Tim and I were at work, and Christy was with the running club. Luckily, Nicole has a doorbell with a camera that connects to her phone, so even though she wasn't home, she was able to see Cate on the porch and talk to her. After talking with Cate, she told her to go to Scott and Tracy Miller's house down the street where she knew Tracy would be home with her kids. Nicole texted me to tell me what was happening and I called Tracy to make sure Cate had arrived safely. I left work immediately and picked up Cate from Tracy's house.

As I was leaving her driveway, I realized how truly blessed we were to have an entire neighborhood full of friends, ready to help whenever it was needed. And that kind of blessing is worth giving up my "dream home" any day.

Adrienne M. Cole, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Jesus you teach us to love our neighbor as ourself. Thank you for the neighbors that do this for us. Thank you for our community of faith and our church. Amen.

Saturday, March 17

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

-Galatians 5:14

My daughter and her family just moved from California to Kalamazoo, Michigan. Dave and I were there this weekend to help them unpack all their stuff. After the movers had placed all the boxes where they needed to be in the house and left, I asked Brooke where she wanted me to start. There were over 300 boxes to unpack and I knew that it was going to be a very long day.

Brooke asked me to start in the kitchen, and I thought that was the best start too. She has everything you can image for kitchen: gadgets and appliances, dishes and glassware. I have always teased her about this. I said, thank goodness that she has such a large kitchen now to place everything in cupboards.

I went to open up the first box. I took out the packing material from the top. The first item that I unpacked was not a kitchen supply, but it was a garden item. I could not believe it. I unpacked the ceramic duck that I gave her with flowers in it when she had her baby.

I lifted that duck and just could not believe my eyes. It brought such love to my eyes. It made me think of my grandchildren in how very special they are from God and also how special my children are to me.

Who would ever think that this was the very first thing that would be unpacked with all the boxes in the home. What a blessing and how it warmed all of our hearts.

I have always loved this duck. When the flowers were no longer alive, I bought her a succulent plant to grow in it in California. It grew like feathers. Yes, there is not a plant in it now, but you can be sure that I will get her one to plant in the duck.

Peggy Smith, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Dear God, Thank you for the small gifts and the large gifts in life. Thank you for your love and blessings with grandchildren and the memories that are shared. Thank you for bring a calm to the day with special things. Love to all the children in the world. Amen.

Sunday, March 18

God promises Jeremiah that a “new covenant” will be made in the future: a covenant that will allow all the people to know God by heart. The church sees this promise fulfilled in Christ, who draws all people to himself when he is lifted up on the cross. Our baptismal covenant draws us to God’s heart through Christ and draws God’s light and truth into our hearts. We see God’s heart most clearly in the way Jesus shares human suffering, in an agony both the John and Hebrews readings describe.

John 12:20-33

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Monday, March 19

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

-Revelation 21:4

On this cloudy, warm day in June 2006, I was standing in my mom's dining room which now was where her hospital bed stood. My siblings, children, nieces and nephews, and myself stood in a half circle around her as she lay in her final days as her Ovarian Cancer consumed her. I had been playing my spiritual music for her the few weeks before this moment. Music had always been the connection, my closest contact with Jesus my Savior. As the soft music played in the background on my CD player, the Spirit moved me to singing and praising God, feeling his ever presence strongly. My siblings soon joined me to sing "Be Not Afraid" and "Here I am Lord". My mother began telling us all how she has loved us, keep in mind, our family didn't express feelings other than anger.

We knew mom loved us, my nine siblings and myself, because that's what mom's do, love their children. But to hear my mom tell us in her sincere way how much she has always loved us was Big, Real Big for us kids.

We continued to sing, some of us raising our arms as we continued to praise God. Which again was something Catholics just didn't do. I knew the Spirit was ever present at this point, ya can just feel it! Our tears flowed freely. One of my sisters had gone outside to have a cigarette, coming in shortly exclaiming there was a rainbow! We followed her back outside and sure enough was the most beautiful, vivid, rainbow arching over the skyline. Oh. Wow. A wonderful sign from God telling us all through this "bridge", which represents His higher levels of love and hope, the Divine transcending the physical to experience the spiritual promises and connection to something Greater than ourselves. God telling us all that His union with us will be attained again (Genesis 9; 8-15). I felt such comfort and hope at this moment. I knew my mom would no longer be with me here on this earth, but I now strongly believed I would see her again in heaven!

My mom died four days later. I sense my mom at times when I least expect it. My spiritual journey continues to grow more than I ever imagined. Each time I visit her grave I am reminded of God's promise through the message on her and my father's grave stone which reads, "Till we meet again".

Melanie S. Kade, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God of creation thank you for the promises of your heavenly paradise for the faithful, and the many ways you remind us upon death, you will bring all of us to your paradise and safety. Amen.

Tuesday, March 20

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

-2 Timothy 4:1-5

On Easter Sunday in 1972 or 1973 I took my two sons to Zion's Sunday School. All the classes were to go into the sanctuary for a short Easter movie. The film was about a pastor consoling a group of Teenagers who had been in a car cash, in which one of their peers was killed. My kids were too young to understand the plot, so it very much surprised me when my younger son who seemed least aware turned to me and said, "That man is saying the nicest things!" He must have sensed that something very sad had happened, but good news had burst in lightening the teenager's burden through "that man." [By "that man," he meant the Pastor in the film.]

On Sunday, July 9, 2017 that same son was installed as a pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church in Covington, becoming like "that man." The words on the front of the installation bulletin that day were, "The will of God will never take you where the Grace of God will not protect you." The reading was 2 Timothy 4:1-5. I know that day as the greatest day in my son's life.

The Holy Spirit brought Dick to that place through various churches, Army Chaplin's, and Pastors, including Pastor Rob; His instructors at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota; His family that moved from Oklahoma to the U.P. to support him; but most importantly by the Glory of God who used all these things to guide my son to fulfill His will.

Carol Little, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Thank you God for all of the people in our lives who support us, and help up to do your will. Amen.

Wednesday, March 21

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

-Colossians 3:2

I recently had a stress test that was abnormal. The doctor wanted me to have a heart cath within the next week. I had the test, which determined I needed open heart surgery. I was hoping a stent would be all I needed, but the doctor said the stent wouldn't work because of a 90% blockage. The nurse said she would call with the surgery date.

Bob and I went home, we were worried and afraid. Would I be ok? What about the recovery? What about my family? I prayed "Dear Lord, please give me strength and guidance."

We talked with our family and they were very supportive with their love and prayers. They assured me I was in good hands, GOD'S HANDS.

I was scheduled for surgery the following week. It was a long and worrying time, but I knew God will be right there helping through.

The surgery went well, I needed to rest and be able to breathe on my own before I could see my family. The next few days I was in I.C.U. and had complication with A-fib. I was again scared of what was happening and wondered if all this would happen again.

Pastor was on duty for his shift at Covenant, and visited that night. I again gave my fear to God. I wasn't afraid anymore, I prayed, I knew God would take care of me, within a couple hours my heart rate was normal. I needed to rest a few days more, then I was moved to rehab for about a week.

The days seemed to run together, then I realized it was Holy Week and Pastor came in with communion for me on Maundy Thursday. We prayed together.

I am so blessed to be alive, and thankful for God's loving hands with strength and guidance.

Judy Schimm, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God help us look to you in our fears, illness and recovery trusting you can and will help us in due time in both known and unknown ways. Amen.

Thursday, March 22

*Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

-Psalm 23:6

As a nurse on a busy medical unit in a local hospital, I cared for patients at different levels of disease. Often times, I cared for those with a terminal illness.

One patient in particular will always stay with me. She was in a private room with windows facing the East. Bright sunshine filled the room. She did not have family with her. As my assistant gathered the supplies we would need, it was clear she didn't have much time left.

As we gently bathed her, turned her and prepared to change the bed, her breathing changed. The assistant quickly returned to her back. At that point a brilliant flash of light filled the room, her scabbed lips were healed and on her face was the most beautiful smile. Then, in an instant, it was gone. Her lips were still scabbed, but her suffering was over and she was gone from this life.

Tears flowed from my eyes and I will never be the same. On that day I saw God's smile and was reassured that Heaven exists and Our Lord and Savior is waiting with open arms to receive us.

Sharon Long, *Our Saviour Lutheran Church*

Prayer: God we thank you that even in death we can see your life, love and promises. And in death we can even see the face and smile of God. Amen.

Friday, March 23

*Jesus looked at them and said,
“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
-Matthew 19:26*

One of my very best friends who I've been friends with for 35 years, recently lost her father. In December 2016, their whole family spent the holidays in the Florida Keys, and then her parents (because they had recently retired) stayed through January. They had a beautiful time, enjoying all that is there- beaches, charter fishing, scuba diving, everything they wanted to do. The only setback was that her father had developed a gall stone, but after seeing a doctor and consulting his regular doctor back home, he was told that it wasn't severe and if he chose to he could take care of it the following month upon returning home.

Unfortunately, within a couple weeks, that gall stone shifted and blocked the duct into his pancreas causing his pancreas ruptured, releasing enzymes into his blood stream. He was hospitalized and spent the next several weeks in critical condition and in a great deal of miserable pain. He soon died. Of course his family was devastated, and they still are. It hasn't quite been a year since this happened.

His funeral was in March, and among all the flowers and plants sent to his funeral was a particular plant that my friend brought home with her. She and her husband and kids have spent the past several months tending it and nurturing it. It has stayed generally healthy, but there were no flowers on it, until one day this winter when one single bloom appeared. She lives in Florida, so it's not too surprising, given the milder climate, except that the very day the bloom appeared was her father's birthday.

Sara Glynn-Dishaw, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Thank you for the blooms of love and messages of assurance that are found in the beauty of your creation God. Amen.

Saturday, March 24

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

-Matthew 11:25

My husband's parents have been deceased for years now. They pre-deceased my children's births. My son who is 5 told my husband he talked to his grandpa. My husband elicited some more details from him. My son said his grandpa talked to him about heaven. He said how nice it was and he loved living there. He said we could come too (hopefully not too soon though.) My husband asked him if he was sure if it was this particular grandpa whom he had never met, and my son pointed to a picture of my husband's father and said it was him. My son is adamant this was the person who spoke to him.

This provided comfort to my husband who misses his parents terribly still to this day.

Susan Becker, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Help us listen to the wisdom and faith that comes through the voice of our children. Teach us to speak as honest as a child hiding nothing from you God. Amen.

Palm Sunday, March 25

The first and second readings and psalm are the same this Sunday every year: Christ emptying himself of divine power and protection, willingly becoming vulnerable to those who struck him and put him to death. With Christ we lament his suffering and all human suffering, but expect God's final vindication. Mark's passion story begins with an unnamed woman anointing his head, perhaps to proclaim him Messiah, and Jesus saying she has anointed him beforehand for burial. Mark's Easter story will begin with women going to anoint Jesus for burial, only to find that he has been raised, God's living Anointed One.

Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Holy Monday, March 26

“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

-Luke 8:39

I had my Prayer Shawl with me when I was in Covenant Hospital for two weeks. I kept the shawl on the top of my bed covers. At night, I would bring the shawl up and around my neck. I felt protected, calm and visualized healing entering my body.

Many hospital staff, during every shift, would ask me about the pastel multi-colored shell-stitched shawl. I explained it was a prayers shawl I received from Zion Lutheran Church and when the shawl was being created beautiful thoughts and prayers and healing were crouched into the shawl. I shared with staff that on many occasion when I was sad, tired or having discomfort, I would cuddle with the shawl. I

don't know how it works, but comfort, peace, and contentment always follows.

During these short discussions I received undivided attention while telling my stories. Many questions were asked and little discussions occurred. The question of how does this work was asked and I just said, "I don't know, it is just the magic of God, which caused eyes to sparkle and definitely lots of smiles. Thanks to my prayer shawl, everyone felt happy!

Sarah Alton, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: God thank you for the ministry of our prayer shawl group. Continue to bless their ministry that it impacts others. Help those who have been blessed by your gifts and healing to tell their stories of faith, and our church ministries. Amen.

Holy Tuesday, March 27

*Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you,
I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

-Isaiah 41:10

I was extremely close to my grandparents. I would stay the summer with them because my mother needed to work to support us, being that my father bailed on us when I was two.

I am now 45 and I still do not know him, but he is not the story my grandparents are.

My grandpa was everything to me. He taught me how to fish, hunt, and be a good man, among many other valuable lessons. He passed away unexpectedly in 1990 when I was 18, I had just graduated high school, I was becoming an adult and I didn't have him to help me. I was broken, angry, and confused. He wasn't old in my opinion, he was healthy, he was my hero, and he was gone.

I am certain God sightings were there to help me but I failed to see them because I was bitter and hurt.

Move forward to 2007 my grandma had been battling dementia for a couple years and she went to be with the Lord and my grandpa in October. I was walking out to my deer hunting blind when my mother called to tell me she passed. I broke down in tears, regathered myself, and moved forward to hunt that night.

As I sat in my stand that evening I thought about the memories, and how great life was with them. Ironically, one of the things we would do often was drive the country roads looking for deer. This particular night as I sat there and thought, deer after deer kept coming through. After about 12 my sorrow turned into joy as I knew this was a God sighting. My grandparents were both with me and we were watching deer again, together.

I ended up seeing 22 deer that evening which on average would be 3-6. I didn't get a deer that night, but I got so much more.

If that wasn't enough it gets better! The day of my grandmother's funeral I was heading to Sebewaing and it was a partly cloudy day with scattered showers. As we were driving a beautiful bright rainbow emerged. I have been told you cannot find the end of a rainbow, but I am here to tell you that you can and I did. It lit up this field like what I expect the gates of Heaven to be like.

We arrive at the funeral home and go inside. I grabbed the memorial card and on the cover was a rainbow. That was no coincidence, the thousands of card covers that it could have been it was a rainbow, and the fact of seeing one on my way there was simply a higher power. It was God and my grandparents telling me all is good. God sightings are all around, but sometimes they need to be spelled out for us.

Rob Thomas, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Dear Lord, Thank you for never giving up on us and for spelling out your love in ways that the blind can see. I see your work every day in one fashion or another now that I can see. I am truly blessed and I know we will meet again. Amen.

Holy Wednesday, March 28

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
-Matthew 11:28-29*

It was a tough day last Monday. I found out at 9:30 in the morning that I had an email from the previous Friday that I had not received on my phone, asking me to come to Detroit to work at a dental clinic for low income patients. Since it was already 9:30 and I was to be there by 10:00, it was not going to happen. Bummer. That was a car payment that wouldn't be received next month.

Then, another job presented itself locally, a day early. Thank you God for another opportunity!

Since I do month end paperwork for this person I thought it would be a relatively easy day. Not so. It is year end and that means extra paperwork, but everything has to balance before it can be sent to the government, and it didn't balance. I spent several frustrating hours trying to figure out what had happened. Finally, I found it, it was time to print everything. I got to the very last report and the paper jammed in the printer. Unfortunately, it was a government form that cannot be sent in on a copy. It has to be sent in on the government issued form.

With some work, we got the crumpled form to go through the printer. I was exhausted, but I still had one more thing to do that day, go serve communion to a shut-in.

It ended up being a good and emotional experience for both of us. God was with me when I needed Him. I am sure He was with me the whole day, but He made his presence known in the bread and the wine that day. Thanks be to God.

Melinda Klopfenstein, *Our Saviour Lutheran Church*

Prayer: Thank you for the persistence to move forward through challenges to overcome the obstacles of this world to finally sit and share time truly in your presence Lord as we share your sacred story and communion with others. Amen.

Maundy Thursday, March 29

*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message,
and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*

-Romans 10:17

I am thankful Pastor Rob's sermons are closed captioned. I know other people that post sermons and none that I've seen have had CC. I know everyone uses the phrase "Hearing the Word," but there comes a time when 'Seeing the Word' also helps spread the Gospel message.

Phyllis Wetters, *Zion ELCA*

Prayer: Thank you for the gift of sharing your word with one another. God we thank you for people that express their gratitude and thanks to us for our efforts in sharing faith. Amen.

Good Friday, March 30

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

-Matthew 4:23

My mom fell 1 year and 8 months ago, breaking her back in two places. After the surgery to repair her back, the wound would not close up.

As of 9am this morning, we went to the wound clinic and the incision is totally healed. To God be the glory! God is GREAT, Amazing, the mighty healer.

Andrea Muzar, Zion and Freeland United Methodist

Prayer: God you are the mighty healer in our lives and world. Thank you for the healings that take place within and around us. Amen.

Holy Saturday, March 31

Resurrection of our Lord: Vigil of Easter

This is the night! This is our Passover with Christ from darkness to light, from bondage to freedom, from death to life. Tonight is the heart of our celebration of the Three Days and the pinnacle of the church's year. The resurrection of Christ is proclaimed in word and sign, and we gather around a pillar of fire, hear ancient stories of our faith, welcome new sisters and brothers at the font, and share the food and drink of the promised land. Raised with Christ, we go forth into the world, aflame with the good news of the resurrection.

If you are unable to attend an Easter Vigil tonight, worship the Lord by reading the following scriptures. As you read, reflect on all that the Lord has done for you, and the many ways God is revealed to us every day.

Readings

- Genesis 1:1--2:4a, *Creation*
- Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26, *God's mercy endures forever.*
- Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13, *Flood*
- Psalm 46, *The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.*
- Genesis 22:1-18, *Testing of Abraham*
- Psalm 16, *You will show me the path of life.*
- Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21, *Deliverance at the Red Sea*
- Isaiah 55:1-11, *Salvation freely offered to all*
- Isaiah 12:2-6, *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*
- Proverbs 8:1-8, 19-21; 9:4b-6, *The wisdom of God*
- Psalm 19, *The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart.*
- Ezekiel 36:24-28, *A new heart and a new spirit*
- Ezekiel 37:1-14, *Valley of the dry bones*
- Psalm 143, *Revive me, O Lord, for your name's sake.*
- Zephaniah 3:14-20, *The gathering of God's people*
- Psalm 98, *Lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.*
- Jonah 1:1--2:1, *The deliverance of Jonah*
- Jonah 2:2-3 [4-6] 7-9, *Deliverance belongs to the Lord.*
- Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11, *Clothed in the garments of salvation*
- Daniel 3:1-29, *Deliverance from the fiery furnace*
- Romans 6:3-11, *Dying and rising with Christ*
- John 20:1-18, *Seeing the risen Christ*

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The Valley of the dry bones.

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord."

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord."

Easter Sunday, April 1

The Resurrection of our Lord: Easter Day

This year may be the one in which John's resurrection account is likely to be chosen over Mark's, perhaps because Mark's gospel ends so abruptly, with astonishment and fear rather than joyful proclamation. Yet Mark may speak to our experience more directly than the other gospels. Corinthians and Acts fill out the story by telling of appearances of the risen Christ. Peter says we "ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead." And so do we, in a foretaste of the mountaintop feast where death will be no more.

Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint [Jesus' body]. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

*I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
-Philippians 4:13*

As a cancer survivor of 25 years, a recent diagnosis came as a shock. In February of 2017, I was diagnosed with Cholangiocarcinoma (Bile Duct Cancer). The cancer had spread to the liver, and the only slight chance of survival was a liver resection. I was truly blessed to have been a candidate (so few are).

In April of 2017, I had one third of my liver removed, followed by five high dose radiation treatments with follow ups every three months. In November of 2017, testing confirmed the statistics that I have read many times: The cancer is back. This time it had spread, giving me a poor prognosis.

Scared? You betchya, but not of the prognosis, because I know what my reward is when my time on earth is done. No, my fear is pain, nausea, and the unknowns with treatment. I have had my first chemo treatment, and for the most part, by the Grace of God, have tolerated it well. Today I feel good, and focus on the now. I remind myself daily of God's promises and find comfort that He is by my side through it all.

Carey Reardon, *Our Saviour Lutheran Church*

Prayer: Thank you God for the courage and faith that you have given us in our weakness and struggles. Thank you for the blessing and wisdom that comes from the faithful as they praise your name and share faith through their story. Amen.