



God Sightings
A 2019 Lenten Devotional

Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Saginaw, MI
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Freeland, MI

Dear OSLC and Zion,

Please accept these gifts for your Lenten devotional as another encouragement to tell your story of faith. The church is the body of Christ, and we as the body of Christ need to develop a focus on relationships. Telling our story, inviting others into the church, and allowing that experience to transform people is our work.

Thank you to all contributors. I encourage you to engage them in conversation about their work. Continue the story.

Thank you Melissa Ernst for serving as our editor of this edition.
Thank you Carol Little for the cover art.

I hope you are inspired yet again by this gift.

Pastor Rob Schmidt

March 6, 2019 – Ash Wednesday

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

Sometimes I say I love God. Sometimes I say I hate God. But in His infinite goodness and mercy, He will always love me. How can I not at least try to love my neighbors? Please, Lord, help me.

I have trust issues, but mostly I can trust humans to be human and fallible. Wisdom from God has taught me to let others be responsible for their own shortcomings. Sometimes the best I can pull up is an I forgive you, I love you, I'll give you another chance. Thank you Lord for special people in my life who accept my forgiveness, my love and my second chance philosophy. Thank you Lord for your 24/7 love.

Vicki Lundstrom

Prayer: Dear God continue to work in us to find honesty in the way we talk to you, acceptance in what it means to be human, and strength to share the unconditional love and forgiveness you extend to us. Amen

March 7, 2019

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.
--Romans 12:4-5

I have recently joined the worship ministry. I didn't know all the duties for this group. I'm discovering the many things they do: plan services, music, banners, decorating, flowers, coffee supplies. I will probably learn more as time goes by. I don't always appreciate things that are done before I come to worship. "Elves" do things I don't think about. Do you know who removed all the pews for the new carpeting and who put them back? Do you know who folds the bulletins? Do you know the duties for each of our ministries? Do you know the time spent by our executive board and counsel? Do you know what Pastor does when he's not leading worship? I don't. I am so thankful for all those "elves" that keep our church running.

Jan Hennink

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit just as you are unified as one in the divine Trinity, unify our church into one through the many ways we work together to insure our worship and service to community is an expression of our gratitude for your grace given to us. Amen

March 8, 2019

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. --Corinthians 10:13

Many of my church family know that I underwent a double knee replacement a couple years ago, and had been putting off an unavoidable foot surgery. Last fall I decided that I'd put it off long enough and scheduled the surgery. The surgery required me to be non-weight bearing for 6 weeks, which meant I couldn't drive anywhere.

I was quite bitter about the whole thing, and found myself feeling sorry for myself quite often. Why me, I thought? Why can't I get a break? I'm sick of having to recover from surgery! Can't I just go a year without being laid up?

When Scott and I showed up for surgery, we were waiting for the elevator when it came to a stop on our floor, the doors slid open, and out came an amputee - on her one leg and just flying on those crutches. One of the men standing there said, "You're fast on those things!" and she said, "I've had lots of practice!" She had a big smile on her face and you could tell that she wasn't wallowing, although she certainly had a right to!

Scott and I looked at each other and we couldn't help but smile. We both knew that was a message from God to "get over myself" and remember that with the right attitude I would be just fine in time.

Tracy Miller

Prayer: God at times we are not ready to be grateful given our present circumstances but always grateful when we hear your word in the midst of our daily life in the joy and strength of others. Amen

March 9, 2019

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. --Hebrews 13:16

Last week I stopped into dollar general for a few things. I struggled with my arms full, not getting a basket, passed a gentleman that looked like life had been extremely hard on him. He was not that old but used a walker, struggled to talk clearly and had a hard time getting around. The check-out girl assisted him in the aisles with selecting his items and helping him get back to the register. As I got in line behind him I

wondered what his life challenges were, did he have a disease, a medical condition, was he born this way, had he suffered an accident? Lots of questions crossed my mind. As the man in front of him completed his purchase, he turned to the gentleman and handed him \$10 and said, I'd like to help with your purchase, smiled and walked out. My heart warmed. The man was so thankful, mentioning how there are still kind people out there. I don't know the name of the generous man offering \$10 but I do know it was Pam Miller's brother. God is good.

Sheryl Krenzke

Prayer: God you give us so much, but especially our ability to see the need of others and respond in kindness. Thank you for the many times we witness genuine love and sacrifice being shared in our midst. Help us do the same. Amen

March 10, 2019

That is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. --Romans 1:12

This past December, one of my Pampered Chef customers messaged me on Facebook. She shared the name of a friend of hers who was interested in a particular product so I sent this lady a friend request so that I could hopefully, make a new business connection and make a sale. She accepted my request and I messaged her several times but she never responded with interest. End of story, or so I thought. God had other plans. Since we were now Facebook "friends", I began seeing her posts and after a few weeks, I came to know that she is battling cancer and it is a tough battle. One day in January, I saw a post in which she seemed especially vulnerable and hurting. Though it was out of my comfort zone to do so with someone I really did not know, I felt compelled to reach out to her in a message. I told her I was praying for her and included a YouTube link to one of Pr. Rob's recent sermons that had struck a chord with me, hoping that she, too, might find some comfort in it. She acknowledged it with thanks and in the days and weeks since, we have shared Bible verses, inspiring videos, and words of encouragement. I have been blessed by her strength of Faith, displayed in her daily posts. I pray for her daily, that God will restore her to health. We may never meet, face to face, but I am grateful that, like the current T.V. show, God "friended" us and connected us through Facebook. I started out looking for a sale, but God is growing this into something so much more.

Mary Wegner

*Prayer: Holy Trinity, three in one, you draw us together in our life just as you are drawn together in relationship to one another. Work mysteriously in us to reach out and connect creating unity, strength and shared faith with one another in ways we may not at first understand.
Amen*

March 11, 2019

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. --John 14:26

I am continuously amazed that God shows up in ways only He can show up when He is needed the most.

God sent me two very important people. They have always been there to help me through hard times. Both of them were there to help me when my father died. Gere, who has a family of his own, insisted on staying with me at Dad's house in East Lansing the day he died. I had called him to let him know my Dad had died. He was at work and insisted on going to get my kids from school and bringing them to East Lansing. He then insisted on staying with me and helped me make all the arrangements. I am an only child and had recently been divorced, so all of this was up to me. One of the things I had to do at the funeral home was to identify my father. Gere told me I could not be in that room alone doing that. I am so thankful for his insight as I was not prepared to see my father in this state. It was like identifying someone at a morgue. The starkness and reality took my breath away. Gere was a Godsend.

My other friend, Janet, helped me for two days pack up my father's home. This was no small task in that my parents had been married for over 50 years and had many, many things that held emotional memories for me. At the time Janet and I had been friends for well over 20 years and she knew my parents well, so she understood the struggles I was going through. She and her husband have been there for me over the past 50 years of friendship. We still check in with each other at least once a week, if not more. Who knew that this friendship would continue for so many years?

I truly believe that these friends were brought into my life for the comfort and care that God wanted me to have. He showed up in these friends when care was most needed.

Melinda Klopfenstein

Prayer: Thank you Lord for the loving kindness and help of others when we are in need. Help us recognize the help that comes to us as another way your Holy Spirit is at work through the people that meet us in our deepest needs. Amen

March 12, 2019

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. --Colossians 3:15

To be honest I was having a hard time coming up with something this year. I would wonder around the house thinking there was nothing for me to say. Then it came to me. Shortly after Christmas when I was putting away all the decorations, in one of my many conversations I have with God every day; I simply said Thank you. Thank you for giving me the ability to do this. I thought about how many people couldn't do that both physically and mentally. And then I started thanking God for so much in my life.

So many things change in our lives over the years. Whether it is death or that an amazing family has come into our life. For me it's both, and I thank God for that.

But there are so many other things I thank God for. I'm thankful for my involvement at Zion over the short period of time with the worship ministry and executive council. I think my favorite part is Sunday morning worship. I can say over the last year while sitting in church God has moved me so much. There have been times when the sermon has moved me so much I can hardly hold back the tears. And times when I'm helping with communion I can hardly speak the words. And I thank God for that. He's telling me I have to be there. I thank God for the ability to share with friends and invite them to join us on a Sunday or Wednesday. And I'm glad so many of the people I've talked to have decided to visit us and worship with us. I thank God for my involvement to start the discussion for our church to be RIC recognized.

So all in all, I did have something to say. God gives us all something to say. Say just a simple thank you if you want. Continue the conversation with God. I do multiple times a day.

Doug Harrington

Prayer: Jesus you have modeled for us gratitude and thanksgiving even facing your death, as you thanked God for the bread and wine you shared on the night you were betrayed. Help us always find reasons to be grateful no matter our circumstances. Amen

March 13, 2019

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

--Genesis 1:1

Our oldest daughter Samantha and her husband Zach moved to Fort Collins Colorado a little over 2 years ago and so I have had the great joy to embark on 3 trips there and a 4th one on the calendar. When I travel to Colorado God sightings are all around me from the air, mountains, sky, animals, and still small voices that surround me. I have traveled with different people each time I have gone and it is always amazing to watch other people experience the breath-taking views and fall in love with the state just as I have! I have gotten to move out of my comfort zone by pushing myself to climb/hike Horse Tooth two times and both experiences were amazing. The first time I was with Rob and it was an icy climb and several slips and falls happened, a few wrong turns as we watched a pack of deer cross our path, and check in points with our son-in-law so he knew we were still alive. It was an amazing feat for Rob and I to accomplish and we stood at the top overlooking the view and feeling like we could touch the clouds. It was so quiet and serene up on top of the mountain and then suddenly a huge bird flew over and I heard the sound of its wings in flight and it was the most amazing sound ever, it was surreal. I remember saying to Rob that we did not ever need to climb that mountain again because we had done it once! Than another trip lead to new people who wanted to take the climb and I was not happy thinking about the trek again however I went along spitting and sputtering in my head the first hour up but then my spirit rose and it was once again amazing and I was so happy I did it again.

When I am in Colorado I can take time to listen to prairie dogs "talk", pretend to be a rock climber in the Garden of the Gods, imagine what it would be like to praise God in the Red Rock amphitheater, experience what our USA Olympic team must go through to train for the Olympics at the training center, snowshoe for the first time ever and have my fears of falling taken over by the spectacular beauty of ice covered lakes and even have a small picnic on one of the lakes, experience artists masterpieces of art work at a local art co-op, and experience what every day life is like for our daughter and husband, Each time I have traveled to Colorado it has been a new experience and another piece of heaven. God sightings are galore on these trips as I can relax, listen, take a deep cleansing breath, laugh, talk, cry, and experience time with God and family.

I am super excited for my 4th trip that is scheduled in March with my parents, we did not know if this would ever be possible especially for my mom to make this trip but God willing it will! I cannot wait for my

parents to see Colorado and to experience the serenity and peace that we try to explain to them each time we get back to Michigan. I realize that when I can take time to reflect on what is around me, push myself beyond my limits, and just be silent for a moment that God floods my world with beauty, hope, peace, love, and serenity!

Sue Schmidt

Prayer: God thank you for the beauty of nature, staying connected with family, and the health and ability to participate in all these miracles. Amen

March 14, 2019

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. --2 Corinthians 1:3-4

My God sighting happened this morning at the early service. Pastor was given his sermon and became emotional. When he finished and returned to the back of the altar Noah Dishaw who was the acolyte came over to Pastor and spoke to him and was touching him in a way that he was trying to comfort him. Noah giving Pastor comfort when it is Pastor who gives comfort to so many. Thank you Noah for my god sighting.

Shirley Seitz

Prayer: God you work in many ways as your word is proclaimed and people respond. Thank you for the many ways we are touched or encouraged to reach out and touch others with nothing but pure love and grace. Amen

March 15, 2019

Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails. --Proverbs 19:21

It was a September Saturday, and my daughter was home from college for two days. Her car had been acting up for a month or two. When she pressed the brakes, the steering wheel and car both shook. Warped brake rotors. I wanted to fix the car before it got cold and the snow started flying. This was the day.

I had purchased the needed parts. I had the tools. I'd worked on brakes before, and watched a YouTube video for the specifics for a Pontiac G6,

so I thought I had the knowledge. I was all set and ready. Everything was planned and mapped out in my head. My only concern was rust, that the bolts might be rusted in, or that the parts might be welded together with rust.

I began working about 1:30, figuring to be done in an hour or so. The bolts unscrewed okay. The parts came apart easily. Yet, it was already 4:45 by the time I was done. What happened?

I couldn't take the wheels off like I had planned! This potential problem had never entered my mind as even a possibility. We had owned the car for about six months, and this was the first time I removed the center caps hiding the lug nuts on the after-market wheels. The nuts were also after-market, requiring a special tool to remove them. I had never seen nuts like these before, and didn't have the right tool.

I went to the car parts store in Freeland. They did not stock the tool. I ended up driving into Midland to a tire and wheel store, and they had the tool for less than \$10. I was all set. So, luckily it did not turn out to be a huge problem, but it was a big surprise, and it did cost me some time.

Why do I call this a God sighting? I read Jesus Calling as my daily devotional. This is an excerpt from that Saturday's devotion:

“You will not find My Peace by engaging in excessive planning: attempting to control what will happen to you in the future...Just when you think you have prepared for all possibilities, something unexpected pops up and throws things into confusion.”

I think that describes my day exactly. Coincidence?

Ilmars Dobulis

Prayer: Jesus we thank you that in our act of simple devotion, prayer and study we can and do hear you calling to speak to us about our day, our life and our plans. Amen

March 16, 2019

***Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. -
-Proverbs 4:23***

So, I was awakened this morning at about 4 AM, by God telling me to pray for Sue Foster, (my wife). Not knowing what He wanted me to pray for, I just started to pray that she gets over her cold before her surgery this Friday. He kept prompting me to pray for her safety, so I did. She left for work, and got hit by a suburban, as she was waiting in the turn

lane of M-20. As she was sitting waiting to turn, she seen this truck come up behind her, sideways. She just knew she was going to be in a serious accident, but all of a sudden, the suburban, straightened out, and slid up beside her on the driver's side, into oncoming traffic. His mirror hit her mirror, then he swerved back into the turn lane in front of her, missing the oncoming car by inches. She still can't believe she was saved from a serious accident, and is still pretty shook up. There are people who don't believe in God, but I'm telling you, He is real, and answers prayer all the time. Thank you Lord for sparing my wife this morning. You are an awesome God!

Darryl and Sue Foster, Midland, MI
(Sue is a former colleague of Patty Paisley)

Prayer: Holy Spirit you stir our hearts to think of others, remember them and often times pray for them. Give us the good sense to pray for the people whom you place in our hearts and lift them into your care immediately and often as you speak their needs through placing them in our hearts and minds. Amen

March 17, 2019

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. --Isaiah 41:10

I was in a bad snowmobile accident the morning of Feb. 8, 2014. Kirk and I were going on a ride with 4 friends to get lunch in Standish. I'm not sure what happened, but it was probably some sort of a failure on my part. We were going down the trail and my snowmobile veered into the woods; my snowmobile hit a tree and I flew over the handle bars and hit another tree. My husband and friends kept asking me if I could move my fingers and toes. Each time I confirmed that I could.

Originally a helicopter was called but they didn't think it was that bad so called it off. Two of the guys went to a main road to meet the ambulance to lead them to me. It probably took about 1 1/2 hours for the ambulance to come and send a stretcher to get me. Luckily I was lying on the snow so that probably helped me stay somewhat comfortable.

The ambulance took me to the hospital in Standish and then later to St. Mary's Trauma ICU. I broke 19 bones: 10 vertebrae, 6 ribs, both scapula, and my sternum.

I found out later that several churches prayed for me the next morning (including Zion in Freeland I believe), and I was on several prayer lists for months.

Those prayers were answered! I could easily have died or have been paralyzed. Instead, when I got out of St Mary's ICU, I went to Health Source for 2 weeks to teach me how to dress myself, walk, get into a car, etc.

I had fluid drained off my lungs twice but didn't have any surgeries as the result of my accident!

I was in a hard turtle shell through August and lost 3 inches of height, but I'm alive and doing quite well today! My posture isn't as good as before, but God healed me and my only restriction is not lifting more than 25-30 lbs. for life. I'm a firm believer that the outcome wouldn't have been near as good without all of the prayers! I am NOT in constant pain. God is SOOOO good (and no, I haven't gotten back on a snowmobile)!!!

Peggy Gerstacker

Prayer: Thank you God for the prayers that are offered for us in our times of need from people we may never meet. Help us be able to reflect upon the power of prayer offered for our own healing, and be moved to pray for others any time we see their need as well. Amen

March 18, 2019

"Come now, let us settle the matter," says the Lord.

"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

--Isaiah 1:18

When I am doing my Czech egg decorating, my hands become very stained from all of the dyes and the people in my classes are always worried that my hands will not come clean again. However, I know - that with the exception of a few areas, my hands will be completely clean by the next day. All I have to do is wash them. As I smile and think about all the times I have been asked, "Will your hands ever come clean?" or "How do you get your hands clean?" I am reminded of my faith. I know and I believe that my hands will come clean, that they will not be permanently stained no matter how much dye gets on them, just like I know and believe in God, even when I struggle, He is there for me. The stains remind me of my sins and that I am washed clean in the waters of Baptism and that no matter how far I fall short, through the water of baptism I know that I am a child of God and that His grace, love and

mercy for me endures forever.

Sandy Schwan

Prayer: Dear Lord, Thank you for washing us clean from sin through the waters of Baptism. Help us remember that there is no stain that Your grace, love and mercy cannot remove. Amen

March 19, 2019

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

Bible study has frustrated me for many years. But then, I'm only 85 years old, so I've got plenty of time to figure it out

Search the scriptures and you will find eternal life, says our Lord and Savior. I've only recently learned that seeking our Lord through studying with your brain that is, trying to "figure it out" logically, might not be the answer.

I have, more recently tried looking with my heart, instead of my mind. But I'm an engineer, and am not good at this heart stuff. I observe emotional people, and they seem to have something that I don't. Tearing up is an outward confirmation that something or someone has touched you, in a way that cannot be logically analyzed. I keep trying, and pray for Gods help.

And, one more thing: do we find Jesus, or is it the other way around?

I'll keep trying for as long as God thinks it ok!

Roger (the Old Buckeye) Koppenhofer

Prayer: God help us remember you are always seek to know us in new and exciting ways that often require us to understand we can find you outside our normal habits that force us out of our comfort and into your Holy Spirit. Amen

March 20, 2019

A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. --Ecclesiastes 3:4

I have a dear friend that was a hospice volunteer, and she shared this story with me, which took place as she would visit people at a hospice

home for the dying three days a week. One of the wonderful people was a lady that had never married, and now was dying of cancer. Having no one to stay with her, I decided to spend whatever time that was needed, because no-one should die alone.

She went into her sleep coma, and I sat by her bed for hours. When she opened her eyes, I was so surprised, but leaned over to her and she said, "I need to go" and I said "I know, but it's all in God's hands. He will take you home in His time!" She kept repeating that she needed to go, and after about a half hour the nurse asked her, "do you need to go to the bathroom?" and she answered "Yes!!"

I couldn't believe how I had totally misunderstood what she was saying!! After she relieved herself, she thanked us, and slowly slipped into her soft, sleep coma that took her to our Lord, which I knew, she arrived with a smile and an empty bladder!!!

Marilou Brown

Prayer: God help us remember there is indeed a time for all things and help us be blessed with laughter, even in times of difficulty. Give us the blessing of a belly hurting laugh in the midst of our life and to be grateful for such gifts. Amen

March 21, 2019

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. --John 11:43-44

Well it began with a pain in my left leg, and I could not get out of my chair to go to bed. So she called EMS to get me to emergency at Covenant, while there they decided I should stay overnight so they found me a room. They got me hooked up and settled in and my heart stopped for eight seconds. Boy did they get excited, so it was decided that I needed a pace maker. I ran a fever so they could not put the pace maker in for a week, when they did I developed fluid around my heart and my heart stopped for another nine seconds so they put in a drain tube and window to keep track of it. After this they put me on a ventilator because I could not breathe on my own for about four days and I developed pneumonia. This was all in ICU, then they took out the ventilator and put me in CCU, from there they moved me to a regular room. While in this room I became unresponsive three different times, it was found I had too much co2 on my brain. After treating me for a week they decided I was ready for rehab. I went to rehab for about three weeks before going home. I was 29 days in the hospital and 3 weeks in rehab plus rehab at

home. I tell you this because if anyone needed the Lord it was me and he was with me every day holding my hand to make sure I was ok after all I went through. Thanks to Pastor Rob, and my wife and my oldest son and his wife who were with me all the time.

Fred Bartlett, Zion ELCA

Prayer: God thank you for modern medicine that often brings people from death to life allowing more time to live in love and faith. Thank you for all those that help hearts beat again. Bless all those whose heart no longer beats but they dwell with you now. Amen

March 22, 2019

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. --Isaiah 55:9

Most of you know me as the bossy guy at the SMM Food Pantry. I have worn many different hats in my life. Before I moved to Michigan, I ran fire and rescue and I could tell you stories for hours of when I had my mind made up how something was going to go, and God showed me I was not the boss. I've had crash and fire victims that I had marked ok die on me and patience that I did not think had a chance pull thru and are now as good as new. That was God's way of showing me I don't make plans, I'm just there to carry out his plan. For the last 13 years I have been one of the co-directors of the SMM Food Pantry. Now, I have told most pastors that I feel giveaways God has been with us. When I leave my home and it's pouring rain with 100% chance of rain all day, and a half hour before the food truck pulls up it stops raining and the clouds clear to a sunny sky. Just as soon as we finished cleaning up it clouds over and begins to rain. No one can ever convince me that wasn't the hand of God. This happened more times than I can count. I feel God is present with us at every food pantry session. It's humbling to pull in the parking lot and see 70 people lined up in a not so well lit parking lot waiting to get their name on the sheet to get food in rain and snow, hot and very cold. No matter the weather they will stand there and wait because they or their families are hungry. I talk to people. I hear stories. One way that I know God is present there is because we have never had a problem. It's 6:30 AM, dark and I can get out and talk to folks I know, and I am not scared. I feel very safe because I know I am in the presence of God. As grandparents are raising their grandchildren and tell me how much this pantry means to them and how it helps them make ends meet. I feel a bit of accomplishment. I get a hug and a thank you as they leave and you can't help but feel God's presence touching me and I feel him telling me well done, my good and faithful servant. I feel like Angela and

I am serving God in our own life and we are blessed every month, in some way simply because we have done what God wants us to do. I can say I have never seen God, but I do know when he is present and working through me directing the SMM Food Pantry.

Dewey Burke

Prayer: God so often we think we know, and then something else happens. Often times you may be reminding us that our thoughts and ways do not always align. Help us always to be willing to seek your presence in all our plans and service to others. Amen

March 23, 2019

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

--1 Peter 4:10

I have been a patient at Covenant Hospitals and at Health Source. The kindness and care from the staff was wonderful. During my stay I would see many volunteers doing various kinds of jobs, I thought maybe I could help in some way too. I took a few minutes, and talked to God, would this be a way I could give back and help others? I knew I really wanted to do this.

I spoke to a volunteer director, set up orientation, and I have now been volunteering for five years, and recently a new volunteer at Health Source. I love what I do and truly enjoy helping wherever I can.

Judy Schimm

Prayer: God even in our illness and difficulty your love, care and healing inspires us to use our gifts to care for others. Help us share the grace and love we get from you with others according to your promptings within us in obedience and gratitude. Amen

March 24, 2019

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."

--John 6:12

I was watching CBS's "Sunday Morning" about a year and a half ago when they aired a concept taking place in San Francisco called the Repair Café. Repair Cafes are quite simply free meeting places where people can come together to repair things like clothes, furniture, small

appliances, bicycles, toys, et al; things which otherwise might be thrown away.

Repair Café originated in 2009 in Amsterdam, Netherlands and quickly spread throughout Europe and eventually the United States. Repair Café reaches out to bring people together, see their possessions in a new light and gain a greater appreciation for their value.

After watching this segment and thinking about it afterwards, I thought we should try this at Our Savior. I contacted the Repair Café folks in Marquette for their start-up suggestions which proved very helpful. Our Savior held its first Repair Café in April, 2018 and received very positive feedback.

We at Our Savior hope this program continues to grow as we reach out to the community, get people involved, and remember to be good stewards of God's gifts.

Bob Long, Our Saviour Lutheran Church

Prayer: God help us never tire of collecting all that is good and using it for the sake of preservation, fixing what is broken or in need of repair, in both material things and our relationships with one another and faith. Help us understand what "Let nothing be wasted" can really mean for us. Amen

March 25, 2019

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. --1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

My beloved Grandmother passed away in August 2016. She was my person - the person that knew me better than anybody else. She knew my heart and was also my biggest fan. When I think of her I think of only happiness, love and laughter. The week she was in hospice, I sat by her side and played her some of her favorite hymns as I held her hand. One of her favorites was "Amazing Grace, My Chains are Gone." My heart broke when she passed, but I also knew that she was safe in Jesus' arms, and that she had looked forward to that time with faith.

In October 2018, my Grandpa, Gram's spouse of 70 years had a stroke and we knew his time was near. I went to church on 10/21/18, knowing that I could get a call at any time. Towards the end of service, Sara

launched into song, and it was the song. "Amazing Grace, My Chains are Gone" and I couldn't believe it. I felt like my Gram was telling me, "it's okay, we've got him." I felt that as sure as she was standing there telling me in person. After the song, I sat down with my family and peeked at my phone. I had a voicemail from my mom, and I knew.

My grandfather had just passed away. But I know he's okay. He's with my Gram and God now; free of pain, and full of joy and love.

Tracy Miller

Prayer: Jesus you understand our life, and death, more than we and certainly have felt both the sorrow and reality of death. But thanks be to God through your resurrection we know that by faith we shall be together with all the faithful. Let songs of comfort and joy proclaim this truth in our worship services. Amen

March 26, 2019

Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
--Acts 20:32

I see God at work all of the time in my daily life. Whether I pass an accident, and notice I would have been in that same spot, if it wasn't for being delayed at home because of another issue. Maybe one of the kids spilled their breakfast on their clothes and had to go searching for a new outfit, or maybe I had to stay behind to sign a permission slip. Small hassles at home that kept me safe from the morning that could have happened.

I saw God at work, when there was a fire at my church growing up, and the Bible was not destroyed. It just had sooty pages.

I see God at work, when I move to a new state, and when I go to find a church home, the Pastor that confirmed me 10 years earlier is the Pastor at the church.

I see God at work, when I am having a bad day with my relationship/disciplining of my kids, and one of them reaches over and gives me a hug and says I Love You.

I see God at work, when I see neighbors pull together to make a donation to a local shelter when a close family's favorite pet dies suddenly.

I see God at work, when I pull into the drive thru to grab a bite to eat, and the generous person in front of me pays for my bill.

The older I get, I realize more and more, that I am not in control of my life and that I am being guided by a higher power. If only when we are know-it-alls and young – we could realize that things will work out and the Big Guy is in our court!

Heather Smith

Prayer: God we celebrate the challenge to grow by connecting our life and faith in all things. Thank you for wisdom and experience that brings clarity. Bless all growing into these gifts with strength and endurance. Amen

March 27, 2019

I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. --Joshua 1:3

We moved to Midland two years ago while trying to downsize, eliminate clutter, stress and confusion, simplify life, and get back to basics. We sold our house and had 30 days to find another. I saw a house for sale on FB on Sunday, we looked Monday and bought Tuesday. We immediately clicked with Pat and Sandy. Sandy was selling her home, about to marry Pat and they had bought a home together, just one mile away. Becoming friends immediately, lots in common, became boating and motorcycle buddies. They have become very good friends to us, sharing lots of fun times, helping each other out when needed. God led us to some wonderful people.

Sheryl Krenzke

Prayer: Holy Spirit you are always on the move in and around us, helping us accomplish what needs to get done, providing us chances to meet new people, settle our lives and share friendship as we move from place to place. Thank you for the homes we have and the friends we make. Amen

March 28, 2019

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” --Joshua 24:15

Honestly, I'm not sure where to begin. The more I've thought about getting this on paper, the more I have realized that many sightings have intertwined to bring me and my family to where we are today . . . members of the Freeland Community (me, for the second time), members of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church; and us - a closer, stronger family once again.

For sake of clarity and time, I will break this up into three short stories. The first, how we came to be members of the Freeland Community. I must share that I grew up in Freeland and graduated from Freeland High School . . . just a few years ago. ;) About two years ago, my husband and I were sitting in our living room at the time with our son, Alex. Out of the blue, Alex says we should move! Of course, our reaction; "oh okay, what are you thinking?" (My husband and I seem to make bigger, life changing decisions on the spur of the moment and dwell on the small things.) So in this conversation we learned that my boys (my husband, William and my son, Alex) wanted more property. More property to play on, four wheelers, snow mobiles, etc. So of course the only thing we could do was to start looking at property and houses. We looked at lots of property and lots of houses and weren't finding anything that matched what we were looking for – me, a house without potential, move in ready; the boys, lots of property. One day, I suggested looking in Freeland, as I grew up there. We happened to be in the subdivision, we now live, looking around and saw an open house for a new home. So, we stopped. This is where we met Charlie Pistro; the home wasn't exactly what we wanted . . . but Charlie built us what we wanted. Our beautiful new home we have been in for ~7 months. I believe God had a hand in this as he brought me home to Freeland and some wonderful friends I grew up with and some fabulous new ones.

Melissa J. Ernst

Prayer: Dear God help us serve God in all that we do in the places we call home. Use our growth and circumstances to settle into new places and understandings as we dwell in our place called home. Amen

March 29, 2019

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” --Matthew 11:28

The second part of my story happened (intertwined) with the previous. Our family was going through a difficult time. I had spent many days/nights crying and pleading with God to help. Praying for him to help someone close to me to find their way; and praying for the strength

and knowledge to be able to help that someone. I must confess that I (we) had not been a family that belonged to a church. My children were baptized at the Messiah Lutheran Church, however, we did not attend. In my prayers I pleaded for help and in return I promised I would go back to the church. As mentioned in my previous story, we were selling our home in Midland and building a new home in Freeland. While sitting at my desk one day, I had the need to see what Lutheran churches were close to where we were building. I googled Lutheran churches in / near Freeland. That is when I found Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church; and there it was . . . a Wednesday "Come As You Are" service! This was perfect, especially being that it was Wednesday! It was an opportunity for me to attend as a guest and to not feel so awkward or out of place. I went home and told my husband that I was going to go church that evening even if I had to go alone. I attended that evening along with my Uncle. Several months have passed and my family are now members of the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church family.

Melissa J. Ernst

Prayer: God we ask you continue to use Zion and OSLC as communities of faith that welcome all, serve our world and grow in our membership for the sake of what we can accomplish as the living presence of your son Jesus in our world. Amen

March 30, 2019

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

The third and final sighting again is an extension of the previous. As I previously mentioned a member of our family was lost and he / we were in need of friendship, understanding, and support. It was definitely the work of God that we ended up in Freeland, at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church and Pastor Rob. In short, Pastor was a God send. Here is one example. We had been attending Zion for several weeks at the time. We were standing in line to give our regards to Pastor on the way out and his daughter Ashley came up to us and asked our son if he wanted to go on the ELCA National Youth Gathering, which was the following week. Our son told Ashley yes and she said that she would talk to her dad. Although we were hesitant to let him attend for several reasons, we thought it might be a great opportunity for him. The bad news was that it was the following week and all the arrangements had already been made; ELCA tickets received, plane tickets bought, hotel reservations made, etc. However, Pastor Rob said that he would see what he could do. To

sum it up, our son was able to go on the trip. It was nothing short of a miracle. He was meant to be on that trip! It was a wonderful experience for him, although I am not sure he has seen or understands the extent of it as of yet. A special thanks to Pastor Rob, Allison, and the chaperones!!! It took many phone calls and shuffling of plans to make it work. We can't tell you grateful we are for our new church family.

Melissa J. Ernst

Prayer: Dear God there are times when the impossible becomes possible and our efforts, ideas and work are a part of that process. Give us the inspiration of your Holy Spirit to always do our best to be the church. Thank you when in the end possibility comes to reality and we are blessed with Growth. Amen

March 31, 2019

Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you. --Exodus 23:25

My god sighting involves a serious health issue I had a few years ago. Every year since then I have to go in for a CT of my lungs. This year I went in and it turned out OK again, but another issue was found by the scan. I am lucky since this was found early enough to correct. Without this annual scan, this issue would not have been found as I feel fine and it would have never shown up on a routine physical. I thank God for once again watching over me.

Mike Becker

Prayer: God we are grateful for medicine, doctors and follow up care! Bless all those that have no medical attention, and thank you for our care givers. Amen

April 1, 2019

"...but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm." --Proverbs 1:33

After spending a few days babysitting our little grandson in Detroit, I was ready to head home to Saginaw. It had started to snow but I was confident in my Ford Explorer and driving ability. I was in the heavier traffic area of I-75 near Great Lakes Crossing and was waiting for an opportunity to pull ahead of the traffic jam. By this time darkness had set in and visibility was more limited. When the traffic had decreased I saw

my chance and decided to move into the left passing lane. Upon doing so I hit an icy spot and began to skid sideways. All I could think of was turn the wheel in the direction of the skid-- and with doing this I was again facing forward! There directly in front of me was the billboard of the picture of Christ with this question at the bottom-- Are you on the right road? Needless to say, I said a prayer, thankful that I had avoided a crash and no one was injured. It was a very tense trip home but I made it safe and sound and was very happy when my garage door opened and I pulled in as usual.

Sharon Long, Our Saviour Lutheran Church

Prayer: Dear God thank you for safety when we get into close calls. Give us good reflexes and abilities to react well when needed and always know you're watching and guiding us. Amen

April 2, 2019

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

--Thessalonians 5:16-18

For 8 years I was blessed to be mom to my daughter, Rachel. Rachel and her twin brother Jeff were my first born children and they arrived a day after my 37th birthday. But what started out as indescribable joy, soon turned to indescribable heartache. I knew a few weeks after birth that something was not right with Rachel. I questioned the pediatrician but got no good answers. Finally, after about 3 months and a new pediatrician, the answer came. Rachel had been born with an extremely rare genetic disorder that would cause her to be severely physically and cognitively disabled and that she would most likely die within 2 years. I cannot even begin to describe what it felt like hearing that news. In that moment, a dream died.

I was angry with God. Why had He done this to me? In the weeks and months ahead, I withdrew from people and often wondered “Where is God?” “Why has He abandoned me?” I couldn’t see Him in the midst of my exhaustion and emotional pain. But I knew I needed to keep going. I had two babies that needed me and I needed to be better. So one day, I picked up my Bible, looking for some message of hope and I knew that God directed me to just the message I needed to hear in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” Slowly, as the days and months and years passed, I began to see and understand that God was not absent from me and this journey but that

His Grace was a part of the journey. I experienced that Grace from a hospital Chaplain who spent time with me every day during one of Rachel's long hospital stays. I found that Grace in two wonderful women who helped care for Rachel, Jeff, and my third child, Brian, when I went back to work. I saw my young son, Jeff, offer Grace to his "Sissy" each time he sat beside her and gently tried to comfort her during one of her seizures. And on the day she died, just a few days short of her 8th birthday, through the sorrow there was rejoicing that my sweet girl had been released from all that had bound her on Earth. In the 20+ years since, I am grateful that God chose me as the mother of this precious child and that she will forever be in God's care as the perfect angel she had always been created to be.

Mary Wegner

Prayer: God our creator, creations is broken, illness abounds, and yet you ask us to have faith in all circumstances. Bless all parents that have children with unique needs and challenges that they may feel your love, strength and presence in their family. Amen

April 3, 2019

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. -- Jeremiah 29:13

November 3rd 2018 was a normal day for me. I woke up so excited to go see a movie with my two best friends later that night. Many hours passed, it was now dark and me and my two friends were getting in the car to head home. We were laughing and talking like everything was normal. When we arrived back to my house, the three of us were approached by my dad. Dad had been a firefighter and EMT for too many years to count, and when he asked the three of us to sit down I instantly knew that something was wrong. We sat down and my friends were instantly confused, they didn't know what this had meant or what was about to be said.

As time has gone by I have continued to piece this part together as I was immediately in shock when he said the words that would change everything. The three of us became concerned and were put in to a little bit of shock when my dad said that there has been a car accident. Immediately after that was said I start yelling at him asking who it was. The name was one I knew way to well. Someone who I had made plans with for the week ahead. Hearing the name made me ask one more question as I tried to process the whole situation. Was she ok or not. Hearing the words she passed away tore me apart.

Suddenly my heads buried in my two best friends shoulders as we all cry and try to process everything. That night we talked about our favorite memories with our angel and tried lay low and watch movies. As we were getting ready to go to sleep, I knew I had to do one thing. I had to pray to God. As we sat wrapped up in our blankets I led us in prayer.

Praying for her family and the whole community as we all grieve.

Monday, November 5th was a hard one for me. My sister was gone, my parents were at work, and the whole community was silent as we didn't have school. I remember sitting in the living room with my bible in front of me. I was trying to figure out why this had happen, why did God allow this to happen to such an amazing person who was the light in so many people's lives. I decided that I needed to pray, I knew that it would be one of the only ways that I could get answers.

I asked God to give me the answers that I needed and to help me find the closure that I will need to get through this tough time. Later that night as I lay in bed after a community gathering with all of the freshmen at the school, I finally found my answers. I felt what seemed to be someone hugging me as I think about the previous events. I suddenly knew whose arms were wrapped around me. It was our angel, and I knew that God was standing at the edge of my bed answering my prayer. As I laid in bed I felt a huge weight lifted of my heart and shoulders. I knew that it was God taking my pain away.

As it is now over 3 months since we lost our angel, I know that God is always there for me. Ever since that night whenever I pray I know that God is there with me, and so is Bailee. She is their comforting me and everyone else in the pain that we feel, and so is God. He is lifting the weight of our shoulders and giving us the peace that we have been searching for.

In my time of darkness I continued to believe that God was with me, and that he cares and is weeping with me. Never forget that even though it gets tough and you doubt that God is there, know that he is and is working to bring you happiness that is coming in the future. Know I know to always remember to Live Like Bailee.

Abigail Diechman

Prayer: God help us know when and how to turn to you in difficult times. Bless everyone in our community that has lost family or friends to death through accidents. Amen

April 4, 2019

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. --2 Timothy 2:15

We have a new club at Zion, a book club. It meets the 4th Tuesday of the month, except during summer. We even go to lunch after, as it runs about 60-90 minutes, starting mid-morning. (Vicki Lundstrom will help you out if you forget your purse, without charging payday loan interest rates.) We take turns choosing a book to read. Not being a fiction reader myself, this has widened my reading habits and strengthened my appreciation for that genre. The long-time members make every new member feel welcome. Everyone should consider joining if you have the 4th Tuesday available at 10:30 AM.

I believe regarding salvation; my will is bound. Christ does the calling through one absolution, word, and sacrament. Baptism is where I entered eternal life. I was buried with Christ, and as he rose three days later, so shall I. While in this world, I live in the Simul, which means I am fully saint (saved) and yet fully sinner (damned.) During my earthly life, I certainly have free will in earthly matters. I can choose whether I avail myself to church attendance with its absolution preaching and sacraments. I can even vote for Trump if I so desire. The devil and my own sinful self certainly are very, very strong swimmers.

Carol Little

Prayer: God thank you that we can gather, study and grow together as we discuss faith and life through our church groups and humility to know we are saved by grace alone. Amen

April 5, 2019

The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him. -- Psalm 28:7

It is amazing how God uses struggle and resettlement for a future goodness in our lives. And at times we are impacted directly, as a community or even as a nation because of faithful people and actions.

My sister-in-law Dzintra Eiden Dahley is part of our family, but her story is most amazing based upon her parents fleeing from WWII. I recently read a devotional her mother Irma Eidins wrote for her home church which was a Methodist church. It appeared in their 1995 edition of their Lenten devotional.

Irma recounted using psalm 28:7 how God was their family's strength and shield. She described the 9 day journey over the Atlantic Ocean and memories of the first views of America, freedom and the escape from communism and war. She and her husband Edward were kept safe through war in Latvia, Germany and displaced persons camps along the way. And they were given a welcome and new beginning in America.

A new culture and language needed to be learned. They were supported by a Methodist church along with their two daughters, one who would become my sister-in-law. Edward would become a Methodist pastor. Irma not only learned English, but sang hymns and music that ministered to many on special occasions.

Many of us are born into the safety of a country like the USA. Others fled here, and they still do, seeking safety, freedom and a chance to contribute to our countries and communities. I gained a sister-in-law, our country a pastor in the Methodist church and a voice of an angel. We all gained the perspective of a refugee family fleeing violence and war sharing a testimony about the sovereignty of God having no nation or borders.

Irma died at 99 years old this past summer. My God sighting is a reflection upon the story of the Eidins family and how my family, people served by Pr. Eidins, their communities and our country have been enriched by this family's faith and story.

Diane Dahley

Prayer: Dear God as our country struggles with what it means to welcome refugees and maintain safe boarders help us look to the stories of our families and community to see how many refugees among us have added to our life through their courage and faith. Amen

April 6, 2019

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. --Colossians 3:21

It's incredible how the love of a child, especially a grandchild, changes a person. Something about their innocence, curiosity, and purity of emotion sparks an authenticity in adults that over the years we've been taught to hide. No grown person would sit alone in their kitchen and have a phone conversation while talking into a banana, but you can bet when a small child hands you a banana phone, any adult will "answer" it. While I don't have children of my own to fully experience this change first-

hand, I can feel a change within myself when around children, and have seen this change in others many times.

As I was going about my day, a gentleman came in to take care of some business. This gentleman is someone who is often around the church, caring for many of the details that keep Zion up and running. He is someone with a truly good heart. He cares deeply about the things he does, and always has a plan, which he explains in a clear and concise manner. The way he communicates is effective, but isn't always appreciated by others who are used to a softer tone.

I've grown used to this gentleman being around the building, the way he works, and the tone he uses. I know the sound of his voice, and could likely pick him out of a crowd by listening alone. Today he sounded different.

Unlike most other days, today he had his granddaughter with him, a beautiful young lady who I'd guess is about 10 years old. She followed him around as he worked, exploring the new building, and asking questions as they went. As I listened to him patiently answer her questions and respond to her comments, my heart was happy. The tone of voice he used was one I've never heard before. It was saturated with genuine love and kindness. There wasn't even a drop of impatience or condescension, as he explained every simple little detail. The love of a parent was crystal clear in his voice today (a grand love, from a grandparent!)

When I listen for the voice of God in my life, I hear the sound of a parent's love, patiently helping me through every seemingly simple question I'm struggling to answer.

Allison Dakos

Prayer: Thank you God for being present in our children to teach us the ways of mercy and love. Bless all who care for children. Give all children the great blessing of loving care. Amen

April 7, 2019

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. -Luke 2:19

Has a simple act or event ever triggered a memory, reminding you of your faith journey and how God works in your life? Last fall as I was putting flannel sheets on our bed and smoothing out the wrinkles of the light blue fabric, I was reminded of similar fabric from my childhood. As a child, I did not have a church family, but instead - on my own -

attended many different churches within walking distance of my home, searching for the right fit. One of my fondest memories during that time was attending Sunday school at the Methodist Church in my neighborhood. The stories of the Bible were told using cut-out figures that were attached to a large blue flannel board as the story unfolded. I cherish that time and I realize how important it was in laying the foundation for my faith as well as passing it on to my children.

Elaine Schwan

Prayer: Thank you Dear Lord for reminding us through the simple things of how you have and continue to work in our lives. Thank you God for bringing the treasures of our heart to life again in our memories of faith, hope and love. Bless all those seeking to find a church and faith today. Bring them to us. Amen

April 8, 2019

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. --Romans 12:2

As I greet each new day I am amazed to realize how God has been at work in my life. As I look back over yesterdays and the struggles that were major to me I see how God has guided me through what I thought were major road blocks in my life. I see where God has provided a way through my difficulties. God answered prayer and I didn't realize it.

I think all of us experience situations in our lives when this happens. We fail to acknowledge God at work in our life. At some point in my life God reached out and claimed me. He has carried me over the rough waters and provided a way. Heavenly Father I give you thanks for this life. Amen

Bill Bell

Prayer: Dear God as we consider our life, and the growth and changes that have happened, thank you for being a part of it all and giving us the ability to discern our growth through our faith. Amen

April 9, 2019

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. --Luke 2:19

There's been a few experiences recently which have made me recall certain things in my life long gone. I was rinsing out my bathing suit in the shower earlier this week and then hung it there to dry. The smell of the chlorine and the action of doing this took me back to when I was a child visiting my aunt and uncle in NJ. They had a big beautiful pool and we would go to NY/NJ every summer or more to visit my grandma and aunt in NY and my aunt and uncle in NJ. We would swim every day and then I would rinse out my suit in the smaller of the bathrooms upstairs and hang it in the shower. After this, happy hour ensued which consisted of liquor for the adults, cheese, and crackers, chips and dip, and all that kind of stuff. My mom, brother, grandma and aunt, and my Aunt Florrie and Uncle John were all together. That went on for a few hours, then dinner either made by my aunt Florrie or out for dinner around 8 or 9 o'clock. When I was quite young we waited every night for my uncle to come home from work as he was a pediatrician and had to finish hospital rounds. Every day we were there was like this for the most part and I didn't realize it then, but they are some of my happiest memories of childhood. All from hanging up my bathing suit.

Then today we were in the car and I had my window rolled down with my arm out. We were waiting at a light and when it changed, there were two larger work trucks whose exhaust was released upon moving with the familiar engine rumbling of larger vehicles. This immediately took me back to riding in my grandma's old Chevy Malibu in Flushing NY during the blistering hot summers. It did not have air conditioning and the seats were black leather causing 3rd degree burns every day for my brother and me in the back seats, so we always had the windows down. There was constant congested traffic and many large trucks. So today between the sound and the smell of the exhaust, I was taken back to the old 110 degree Chevy Malibu tooling around Flushing in the summer. In the evenings it was everyone out in the yard to visit with the neighbors who I can still hear saying in the familiar accent, "Cill and the kiddies are here!" Some of my grandma's neighbors are family to us and I have known my entire life. It's amazing what a sound and a smell can take you back to. Such happy, simpler times which of course at the time and young age, you have no idea about how very lucky you are. This prompted me today to call my mom and ask what kind of hotbox car that was that grandma had, and call my brother and remind him of our times walking to the Vanilla Gorilla store and the stationery store in Flushing to get the latest movie cards- ET was the big one if I recall. Good stuff. What a blessed life I have had and continue to have. I was able to turn to my husband and share some of these things with him too, I would love to take him and the kids to NY someday to see some of the times which defined happiness to me as a child and still today.

I also met a man today who knew my dad well whom I have never met. He shook my hand and said "sorry about your dad I didn't know he passed. He still owes me a beer!" How typical. I could hear my dad's response plain as could be. Anna came out and I told her this man knew her grandpa and she said "Is he our new grandpa?" What a sweet little girl she is, so innocent. I pray for guidance to be a stronger influence on my children than the world the way it is now. I wish they could experience a childhood without cell phones and iPads and selfies, and just rinse out their suit and come down for happy hour.

Susan Becker

Prayer: God thank you for the treasure of our hearts in terms of our memories and how we can recall them through smells, sights, sound, taste and touch. Thank you for both the gifts to perceive the world around us and the ability to remember our cherished memories. Help us embrace them, and then reach out to others to share and act upon them sharing that love. Amen

April 10, 2019

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. --John 10:11

I have a pair of ducks that I love dearly. They have been co-existing among my chicken flock for months with no issues whatsoever. However recently, this has not been the case.

Due to a variety of factors, flock behaviors began to shift a bit, and these two ducks were getting mistreated by the chickens, who outnumber the ducks by quite a bit.

The roosters were targeting the duck hen. When she called out in distress and the drake would attempt to defend her, they attacked him too. Eventually the chickens were attacking both ducks frequently enough that the ducks were not allowed access to the food/water, nor were they able to enter the coop at night because the chickens chased them out. When I saw that they had spent one cold night huddled together in the attached run instead of inside the warm coop, I knew they had to be separated from the chickens in order to have a chance of surviving the winter. They were already under a great deal of stress and they needed to have their own safe living quarters.

So, I decided to move them into our shed for the remainder of this winter. I figured this would be the best location because it's dry, enclosed, has good ventilation, ample square footage, and even

though we are storing a couple fishing boats in there, ducks don't perch like chickens do, and so they'll keep to the floor and won't make a mess in the boats. I set up a corner of the shed for them with straw, a water tub, and a food dish.

Then it was time to move the ducks. They were so skittish in their stressed state that I could not catch them. I decided to walk them to the shed. I took a rake to use as an extension of my arms, and began to guide them away from the chicken coop and towards the shed.

At first they didn't want to leave because the coop is what they knew as familiar, in spite of the stressful environment that they had endured there. Eventually I got them to walk away. Next they veered off into the forest, because they didn't know where to go. I followed them into the woods and continued to move them in the right direction. They went waddling along, across the yard, around the pole barn, and then to the shed, almost.

That's when they spotted the lilac bush, and though it is currently dormant, it is a significant area of twiggy branches and stumps. Exhausted from their trek in the snow, they settled in there to rest and preen their feathers.

Though the lilac bush may have been a perfect spot to catch their breath, this was not a safe spot for them to permanently stay. There was no food or water there, it was not optimal shelter from the weather elements, they had no protection against predators, they could not stay there. They needed to get into the shed to be safe enough to live and be sustained.

And there stood the nearby shed, with ample food and water, a bale of straw, lots of space, a warm place for them to go, away from the chickens who were harming them. The shed door was open, and all they had to do was walk inside.

But they didn't go into the shed. They were near the shed but not at a place where they could see what awaited them inside. We spent about another 45 minutes in a recurring cycle of me pushing my way through lilac branches to steer them out, the ducks frantically running around scared, then as I made my way out of the lilacs they would run straight back into the lilac bush.

As we were in this holding pattern, I began to think about how I had raised this drake since he was an egg. I had watched in awe as I candled the duck eggs last summer and saw blood vessels along the interior of the shell, then eventually movement inside. When he was the only duckling who hatched alive, and when the mother duck rejected

and neglected him, I was the one who kept him under a heat lamp, finger fed him baby parrot food, kept him safe, made sure he splashed and swam in water, and even though he imprinted on me, I gave him daily opportunities to integrate into the flock because I knew that would be best for him in the long run. I thought about how I have video recordings of this baby duck following my feet around the yard while I watered my garden each evening.

Why wouldn't he just follow me now? If only he would, then the duck hen would come with him, and they would be warm and safe in their new home.

I know exactly why he doesn't follow me anymore. It's because I let him go live as a duck in the flock instead of as a duck thinking it's a human. I had released him to be in his natural state...and as a result he had lost his instinct -and will- to follow me.

Finally, I was able to guide them from the lilac bush, and over to the open door of the shed, just enough for them to catch a glimpse of their food and water setting there waiting for them....it was then that they eagerly entered the shed on their own and began to gulp down some food and water, seemingly unaware that it all had been there for the past hour while they were wandering all over the place.

It made me think of the references to Jesus as a shepherd. I had everything prepared for them in the warm and safe shed. I knew about it, but they had no way of knowing about it. The only way to get there was for them to trust me, but this was difficult, perhaps impossible, for them to do, for various reasons.

How often do we do the same thing as my ducks had? Our shepherd prepares a place for us to be, safe from harm, providing our needs, and yet we continue to resist having faith enough to follow, perhaps due to our own ignorance, stubbornness, fear.

And yet, when my ducks finally found their way inside the shed, I did not banish them or say that they had taken too long to get there. They were still brought in, and were given everything that had been offered all along. Just like how God does with us, through His grace.

Sara Glynn-Dishaw

*Prayer: Thank you Jesus for leading the way, help us be good followers.
Amen*

April 11, 2019

For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. --2 Peter 1:21

Dimes, dimes, dimes--why are you showing up in my life? Just about 4-6 weeks ago I started finding dimes in the washing machine, couch, counter top, floor, coat pocket, exact change back from purchases, parking lots, etc. At first, I thought it was just a coincidence that I was finding them, especially in the washing machine and the couch cushions, but then week after week I started to realize just when they would appear. These dimes were appearing just when I needed a sign, reassurance, comfort, or a swift kick in the behind. I also noticed that it was only dimes, not quarters, pennies, or any other form of change, just a single dime. So, I started to share with others around me about these findings and no one had an explanation of why I might be finding these single dimes. So, as we are in the 20th century I decided to look it up on Google and the explanation was that someone or something was trying to channel me and that the circle shape meant that something was going to come full circle. That made me stop and try to figure out who was channeling me and what was going to come full circle, would it be happy or not so happy? So, I went about day by day and the dimes kept appearing and then every time I found a dime I would stop and say a prayer for the comfort it gave me at that moment.

Just over a year ago my father-in-law passed away and I know that he has channeled many moments in our family's life since he has died and has been a bold guardian angel, so I believe he may have something to do with these dimes. I also believe that a family best friend whose husband died 3 years ago and I never met may play a part in these dimes, grandparents, our beloved friends Jackie and Jeff Glawe's daughter, Jordan, people that have gone before us that we do not even know. It made me once again stop and pray about so many things that were just passing me by--God has a plan and I need to take notice. So, I am blessed for all the dimes that have fallen in my path these past months and the curiosity to stop and wonder what they mean and why they have shown up at a particular moment. I no longer look at finding a dime as just a coincidence, but as a blessing from above from the people that have gone before me!

God is good! I am thankful for all the dimes in my life and my journey!

Sue Schmidt

Prayer: Dear God help us notice in whatever way we can to notice perhaps you are speaking to us in our life and circumstances to offer comfort, peace and guidance. Amen

April 12, 2019

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

Have you ever had a person come into your life that you truly felt had been brought by God? That He was determined for the two of you to meet? For me that person was Kepka, and although most people knew her as Betty Belton, for me she will always be Kepka; the wonderful, laughing and talented woman who taught me the beautiful art of Kraslice (Czech egg decorating) and so much more. By some standards our 16 or so years of friendship may seem rather brief, but I can tell you that it was as full and as cherished as any of my 25, 30 or 40 plus year friendships. What makes this friendship even more special to me is that there were so many times when it might never have had a chance to grow if not for God's persistence working in our lives.

So many obstacles were placed in our way as God worked to lay the foundation of our friendship; including a missed opportunity for a first meeting, years and months in between meetings, a cancelled post office box, a snow storm, a graduation and a death. But God never gave up trying to bring us together and, in the summer of 2003,, Kepka took me on as her apprentice and our friendship began. Throughout the years we worked together, learned together, laughed together, and even cried together and although we did not see that much of each other over the last several years, the bond of our friendship remained until the very end, when God granted our friendship one final blessing.

I received word late on the evening of February 3rd that she was not doing well. On Monday I learned that it was possible to visit her and I was determined to go, despite a very dark and extremely foggy night - yet another obstacle to overcome. Ironically, I recalled later that most of the time when we worked on eggs together it was on Monday nights, and now God granted us one more Monday night together. The next morning I was notified that she had passed away. Although she is no longer here, she will be a part of me forever and for that I am truly grateful and blessed.

Sandy Schwan

Prayer: Thank you Dear Lord for your determination in our lives. Please help us to be as determined to accept and welcome the opportunities you place before us, even when there are obstacles to overcome in order to obtain them.

April 13, 2019

He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. -- Matthew 8:26

I am part of the group of people from Our Saviour, Zion and the community who meet weekly to make quilts for Lutheran World Relief. The group has existed since 1991. In that time we have created many quilts that have gone around the world to warm people in need. We use materials donated to us by people who decide they want to downsize their fabric stash and bless us with their excess. Recently we have discussed the fact that our supply of fabrics is dwindling making it more challenging to produce attractive quilts. Why do we worry about our supply of materials? After many months, I dare say at least a year and a half, of no donations other than whatever those of us who do the quilting have given, we were blessed in one day with significant donations of fabrics from four different people. Once again we chastise ourselves with, “Oh, ye of little faith.” After all, this group is approaching four decades of work in this ministry and God has provided everything we need. Why would we think he would fail us now?

Jane Werner, Our Saviour Lutheran Church

Prayer: God, bless the donors, the quilt makers and most of all those who receive the quilts. Wherever they may be, make their lives just a bit more comfortable because of the love put into the quilts we make. Amen

April 14, 2019 – Palm Sunday

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. --Philippians 1:3-5

The beginning of Paul’s letter to the Philippians is a reminder of how the gift of the Body of Christ lives across congregations, cities, and borders. There is something about sharing in the gospel across space and time that brings the Spirit alive among us.

I serve as the pastor at Salem Lutheran Church in Orlando, Florida. On June 12, 2016 I was sleeping on the floor of an ELCA congregation in South Carolina. We were on our way to summer camp, which we share with several congregations. As we woke we began to get the early news of the shooting at the Pulse night club. When we finally got to camp that evening we shared with the kids what was happening back home. We spent a week together as church.

As the weeks after the tragedy unfolded it was amazing to see the church come alive. We received a box of paper doves, lovingly cut out and assembled by a congregation out west. We received cards of encouragement and support from other congregations around the country. We did not suffer the deepest and most direct impacts of the shooting, yet people around the country found a way to reach out and encourage our work in the gospel. Our conference congregations joined together to talk about inclusive church and how we could collectively respond to the tragedy.

As powerful as these connections were, it is the day-to-day sharing we do that continues to inspire me. Each week for several years now I have joined you in worship by watching Pastor Rob's sermons, usually on Tuesday night. This year our Pastoral Intern, Nicole Eastwood, has joined those conversations. We join in a call on Wednesdays to talk about our sermons, but we also talk about the work we share. Our council prays for the ministry Zion and Our Saviour share in your community. Your council prays for our work in the gospel. Allison has visited and Pastor Rob joined me for a tag team sermon last year. I look forward to joining you again sometime in the near future. (I preached at Zion on August 9, 2009 when I was a seminary student and we were visiting the Schmidts).

Sometimes God's grace is evident in the extraordinary and miraculous happenings of life. Other times it is just as miraculous that we can come together around a common table, share in the Body of Christ, and work to serve the gospel together side-by-side, even if all that sharing is from a distance.

Let us pray: we thank you for the particular work you call your particular gatherings of people to do in their particular communities. We also thank you for the ways those particulars become part of a whole that lives in your grace and brings transformation to the world. Amen.

Pastor Derek Hoven, Salem Lutheran, Orlando, FL.

April 15, 2019

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. –3 John 4:1

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. All it took was the celebration of one person's birthday to gather many in the Lord's house! One man...his wife...his 6 children and step-children, each with their spouses...his 15 grandchildren, 1 with a spouse...his 3 great-grandchildren...and lastly, his four siblings and their spouses! Four generations and forty-one people taking up 4 pews in church! What a wonderful day it was; and what a wonderful way to celebrate!

Dad knew us kids would be up to something to celebrate his 80th birthday 😊 so he made sure we knew he just wanted to keep things simple this year: his family and church.

Invitations were created using pictures of Dad and were mailed out. The restaurant reservation was made so we could enjoy a meal together. A picture board of all sorts of pictures of Dad was created and was shared at the restaurant. And a photographer was scheduled to be at the church for family pictures right after the church service.

I must say, even with keeping it simple, the day was still a whirlwind of activity so it was hard to stay focused. It started with us all arriving at the church together, sharing hugs as we met. The Gospel Group was the scheduled music for the day and they were able to squeeze in some of Dad's favorite hymns. We all sat together in the front four (4) rows of the sanctuary. Dad was blessed to be a participant in the Children's Sermon 😊. My heart was full as Braelyn, Brystal, Bryar and I sang the Lord's Prayer up front with the Gospel Group. Dad and I had the pleasure of serving communion together which was a first for us (together). It's probably good that I didn't have to serve it to him as I don't know that I could have done so without choking up due to my emotions running high that day.

Afterwards, we had family photos taken outside in front of the sanctuary. It was a wonderful opportunity to be able to create such keepsakes of celebrating the day – especially the shot with the whole family!

We all gathered for lunch together and enjoyed food and each other's company. Dad's sister, Linda, blessed the food and all of us who were gathered, thanking God for all we were blessed with.

It all started with one man...and his faith in God. And will be a day we'll all remember for a long time. Perhaps this is a tradition we can all start with our own families.

Patty (Fitzgerald) Paisley

Prayer: God thank you for the testimony of faith that our parents give, help us understand we are called to share such teaching and honor with all those we live. Help us live to share faith. Amen

April 16, 2019

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

In September my daughter Shannon contracted Legionnaires that also had the complications of ARDS (respiratory complications). She went into the hospital on Saturday afternoon, by Sunday afternoon she was in ICU on a ventilator. During this time there were lots of prayers and concerns. My special moment was going in to the chapel at the hospital and sitting there in the quiet and praying. A sense of calmness and peace came over me. I knew that things were pretty bad, but she would be alright. Slow at healing, but not going to die. Sometimes we need the quiet to hear God's voice. To remember that we are not alone in our struggles and accomplishments.

Karen Manry, OSLC

Prayer: God there are times we just need to sit in prayer and meditation and realize you are speaking, and our job is to slow down into a quiet space and listen. Thank you for healing. Be with all those that have a different story or outcome. Amen

April 17, 2019

All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace. --Isaiah 54:13

My god sighting occurs every time I look at my children. The look of pride and accomplishment shows on their face while they say the Lord's Prayer. At 4 & 7 years old their understanding of the meaning of communion is amazing. To be able to see the look on their face when my wife and I are communion assistants, and deliver the sacrament to them, with them knowing this is a gift Jesus intended to share with them is indescribable. Becoming a father as late in life as I have, and then

to see them beginning to understand God's love for them is definitely a God Sighting.

Mike Becker

Prayer: Thank you God that we have children that are with us when we worship. Help us understand they are a gift, and we are a part of shaping and educating them into your church of the future. Thank you for the life lessons they share with us. Amen

April 18, 2019 – Maundy Thursday

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

Two weeks ago my friend Sandy's son Dylan was involved in a serious car accident just two miles from home. He ran a red light. He was airlifted to U-M and continues to fight for his life. Traumatic brain injury, broken ribs, internal bleeding, lacerated spleen, broken pelvis, blood clots and now infection. He fights daily, still in ICU, on a vent and feeding tube. Sandy has not left his side as any parent would stay with their child. We've set up a go fund me page to help the family. So where does the god sighting come in? How could there be anything good among this mess? Sandy had the chance to meet the bystander, savior, angel that kept her son alive until Paramedics arrived. She kept him breathing, conscious, and airway clear, while pinned in the car. She saved his life. Had she not been there, or not stepped in to help, the outcome may have been worse. The family will forever be thankful that Dylan has a chance, that she had the courage to jump in and help this poor boy. God is good and forever present among us. Amen.

Sheryl Krenzke

Prayer: Dear God accidents pose for us such a challenge in our lives from a deep emotional and visceral place in our life. Thank you for good Samaritans and first response rescuers that help. Bless all families that have been affected by the trauma of accidents with a strong measure of your presence and grace in all outcomes and circumstances. Amen

April 19, 2019 – Good Friday

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. --Matthew 5:7

In November, I and another man was witness to a serious car accident, right in front of us. We both jumped out of our cars, and ran to see if

anyone was hurt. The gentleman called the police, and I took care of a baby and the people who were hurt. I went to my car and got rubber gloves, because they were bleeding quite a bit. I got a towel, and when I brought it to the car, the lady kept saying “My baby’s dead!” I went and got her baby out of the car seat and said “Look! You’re baby’s okay!”

A nurse stopped, and said she’d take care of the baby, and told me to take care of the other lady. I had another towel, and when I went to give it to the woman, she grabbed my hand and said “please pray with me,” so we said the Lord’s Prayer together. Then the little boy and grandma got out of the other car, and I had a blanket for them to sit on. When the police came, I asked them if I could go get the little boy a Slurpee, and the boy perked up and said “blue please!”

After the police had the scene under control, one commented to me that they wished more bystanders would get involved when they see an accident like this.

We all have difficult times in life, and hope that there is a bystander willing to jump in with blankets, towels, Slurpees, and prayers. God loves us all.

Ann Lash

Prayer: Thank you God that at time we can be in a place that needs love, mercy and prayer. Give us the courage to stop and help anywhere we see a need, at any time. Amen

April 20, 2019

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. - Hebrews 6:10

A few days ago I took a piece of art to my favorite Print Shop in order to have greeting cards made from the design. While talking about the quantity and the size of the cards I needed, I mentioned the Bowling for Backpacks event and asked if the Print Shop ever gave gift certificates or donations for fund raisers. The employee said she would talk with the owner and let me know when I came back to get my order. After receiving a call that my cards were done, I returned to the store this morning. Imagine my surprise when the owner of the Print Shop came out of his office and handed me a gift certificate for the fundraiser! He wanted to know more about the Backpack Program, and the bowling event scheduled for March 3.

We talked for some time about the Weiss School program of providing nonperishable food for 24 youngsters each week-end, the cost involved, and the volunteer participation that made it happen. After he listened to my explanation about the ministry, he returned to his office. While I was paying for my greeting cards, he called out from his office, “How much would it cost to support one youngster?” I responded, “The cost for one person to bowl is \$14”. His reply was “I don’t want to sponsor a bowler, I want to support a youngster for a year”. Now here is when I knew that something special was happening. This kind and generous business man handed me a check for \$100. He explained that his daughter is a teacher in a southern state and has witnessed children climbing into dumpsters looking for food. He thought of that as I described the Backpack Program at Weiss.

I was truly overwhelmed, needless to say. After thanking Ben for his gift, I went on my way, knowing that I had witnessed a ‘God sighting’.

Linda Grindahl, OSLC

Prayer: Lord thank you for the kindness others respond with when we ask for help. Thank you for the tenderness of heart that is moved to care for others. Amen

April 21, 2019 – Easter Sunday

He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. --Matthew 28:6

In January 2019 I had the opportunity to spend 10 days in Israel and Palestine, this place which 3 faiths call “The Holy Land.” It was one of my final classes in Seminary, and an incredible opportunity to meld the things I have learned, the scriptures I have read, the places where they happened, with the faith of my heart.

One of the spiritual highlights of this trip was our visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is a large church that contains (according to centuries old tradition) the site of both Jesus’ crucifixion and the tomb where Jesus’ body was laid.

It seemed impossible to me that both of these sites could be so close in proximity that they could reside under the same modern roof. However, one of the benefits of a trip to the Holy Land is the understanding that this is a very small place. Modern day Israel is about the size of New Jersey. Approximately 1/3 of the land is desert, which makes the inhabited space that much smaller. I soon realized that it is entirely

possible that Jesus' crucifixion and burial tomb could be close in proximity – everything in the Holy Land is close in proximity!

Another benefit of my Holy Land pilgrimage is that I gained an even greater sense of our connectedness with Christians all over the world and all through the millennia. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was first erected in the 4th century, and believers have made their way to this site for over 1,600 years. Before I began my trip, it seemed unrealistic that 2,000 years after Jesus' crucifixion we could know where the women first discovered that he is risen. As I awaited my turn to step into the shrine which now encases the tomb of Christ, I realized that it isn't about an "exact spot," it was about joining with centuries of pilgrims in our spiritual journeys.

I entered the tomb, got my knees, and touched the stone where our Lord's body had been laid. The stone had been worn smooth by the touch of millions of pilgrims. I was overcome by this prayer: HE IS NOT HERE. In the end, it doesn't matter if this is the "exact" place where our Lord was laid. What matters is that he really did suffer and die on the cross. His body was broken and really placed in a tomb. The tomb was sealed, and Jesus was dead. What really matters is that he is not here.

Nicole Eastwood, Intern Pastor, Salem Lutheran Church, Orlando, FL.

*Prayer: God as we celebrate the resurrection of your Son Jesus, help us remember it is the birth, life, death and most importantly the resurrection of Him that makes all things possible for us to live in Grace, and Love.
Amen*

