



TRUSTING  
GOD'S CALL  
FORWARD WITH  
FAITH!

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## *Appeal Devotions*

Faith Lutheran Church,  
Coon Rapids, MN

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## ***Prayer Partners***

As you turn the pages of this booklet, we invite you to pray for a Faith Lutheran Church household as a spiritual practice throughout the seven weeks of the ***TRUSTING GOD'S CALL—FORWARD WITH FAITH!*** Appeal. This daily prayer will not only engage the congregation in prayer on each other's behalf, but will also remind you that you, too, are part of a church in which someone is praying for you.

Here are a few suggestions for your prayers:

- That the people you are praying for may be assured daily of God's love for them
- That God would strengthen the fabric of their faith and provide them with all their daily needs
- That as they face life's problems, their first move would be to God for the faith, hope, and love that God alone offers
- That they may be strengthened and renewed by the faith stories contained in this booklet
- That they would find greater support, deeper joy, and stronger connections to the people and ministries of Faith Lutheran Church
- That a renewed appreciation of God's abundant blessings would unfold for every single member of the church

***Your Prayer Partner for the weeks ahead is:***

We invite you, as you see fit, to call your Prayer Partners to get acquainted and to ask them about any special prayer requests they may have.

*According to the grace of God given to me,  
like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation,  
and someone else is building on it.  
each builder must choose with care how to build it...  
that foundation is Jesus Christ.*

*1 Corinthians 3:10-11*

## *Welcome to Faith Stories!*

As Co-Directors of the Spiritual Life Team, we are delighted to present the following 42 Faith Stories, written by fellow members of our congregation. We firmly believe that as you read them, take them to heart, and pray the prayer on each page, you will be blessed in a great and gracious way. We further believe that the exciting appeal we have undertaken as a congregation will thrive to the degree that our faith is challenged and stretched.

We want to invite you to use this booklet each day as a springboard for personal time with God, taking time to ponder the meaning of scripture for your life today. The following are suggestions to use with each day's devotional and Bible verse:

Begin with prayer asking God to guide your thoughts and heart. Read the devotional and scripture. Read the surrounding scripture verses from your own Bible. For example, if Philippians 4:13 is used for that day's devotional you might read Philippians 4:10-13 (the surrounding paragraph). Then ask yourself 3 questions and write down or think about your answers to those questions.

**Content:** What is this passage about? (The facts: Who? What? Where? When?)

**Lesson:** What do I learn from this passage? (What's the main lesson or principle?)

**Application:** How can I apply this to my life? (Ask yourself a question based on the passage and the devotional reading that demands an answer and live that out in your life that day).

Pray, asking God to help you apply what you're learning that day. Look for His answers in your daily life. These lessons and applications on a daily basis may not be huge revelations but just small things that help shape and focus your mind that day. But added together over 42 days these little things will, with God's help, make for a changed and transformed life!

Finally, two other suggestions to go even deeper:

Using the 3 questions above, study Jesus' death and resurrection in small sections (5-10 verses) or by headings from one of the gospels such as Mark 14-16 or Matthew 26-28. Study a small book in the New Testament such as 1 John or Galatians or another favorite using this same method.

Know that the prayers of our Spiritual Life Team accompany you as you begin your journey through these thoughtful and personal Faith Stories. May your faith grow as you read them, just as we pray Faith grows through our collective efforts!

Becky and Ron Tungseth, Birdie Steele  
Co-Directors

Sunday, March 22

## **“Trusting God’s Call – Forward With Faith!”**

*Scripture: According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation and someone else is building on it...that foundation is Jesus Christ.*

I Corinthians 3:10-11

I’ve been reflecting a lot on our Capital Appeal Theme, Logo and scripture verse as we have been preparing for this Kick-Off Sunday. Every time I see them, it reminds me of the journey that I am on in my vocation as a Pastor. It, of course, is never me alone, as each congregational Call to Ministry that I’ve accepted has been with Mary and our kid(s) being a part of the new journey. Each Call to Ministry has been a time of prayer and discernment for “me” to know that I have been called as Pastor and for “us” to know that the new congregation and community we would join was of God’s leading. We literally “Trusted God’s Call” and then we moved “Forward With Faith.”

I see the Capital Appeal much in the same way. We are in a time of prayer and discernment on how much we give financially to the appeal that is above our current tithe to our general ministry giving. It is both an individual and a family time of reflection. Faith Lutheran has become our “church home” with our oldest daughter Alisha’s wedding, Erica having taught Sunday School before going off to college and Isaac being a part of Sunday School, church camps and now confirmation with Mary teaching each year along the way.

We as a family have been blessed by you as members of Faith. We and I, from the inside working in this building every day, know the gift of our building, and we know the needs of the building project which are very real and need attention now. And so we will join with you in seeking God’s guidance for our gift that we believe is a spiritual offering that will support the foundation that has been laid in Jesus Christ. This is our “church home” and a journey we want to join “WITH” you.

*Prayer: Gracious God, bless our prayerful journey, as together we seek your guidance in trusting your call and moving forward with faith. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

Pastor David Doppenberg

Monday, March 23

## “God Was There”

**Scripture:** *Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

Psalm 37:4

I received a plaque from a friend with this verse on it. It hung in my bedroom for several years. My prayer those days was to find a Christian man with whom I could share a loving partnership and raise a family. It was difficult as months and years went by to trust in the promise that didn't seem to be kept. But God was faithful. I met Dick and we were married. We both longed for children, but again we waited and waited and waited. Restless for this to happen, we sought adoption. Before we even started that process, our desires were fulfilled by God according to His plan. We eventually were gifted with the births of our three children.

We have learned throughout our lives to be more faithful and trusting in God's promises, presence and calling. Each time I have moved from one employment to the next, God was there. Each time I have been called to service, even when I feel ill-prepared or not quite ready, God was there. In times of grief – especially when our grandson was killed – God was there.

Faith Lutheran congregation has been a blessing to me. Opportunities to serve, to use the gifts God has given me, have been possible, as I trust in the support of members of the congregation and trust implicitly in God – that he will lead me, guide me and grant me salvation through Christ, my Lord, as he has promised.

**Prayer:** *Lord, help us to move forward with confidence as we plan for physical answers for ministry and leaders to do ministry and financial support for ministry at Faith Lutheran Church. Teach us to trust your lead and to listen to your call for each of us. May all of us proclaim Christ and do mission daily, guided by the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Char Meyer

Tuesday, March 24

## “Our Life in God’s Hands”

**Scripture:** *When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? Psalm 56:3-4*

It began on a normal December weekend morning around Christmas. Becky sat down and, after some conversation, stood up and paused, looked ashen and sat back down, holding her head. She said, “I’m OK, just a little light-headed.” I don’t know why, but a voice in my head told me it was more. Now I know that was God whispering to me. Fast forward a few weeks and a few more “dizzy spells.” Becky came into my office and said she was nauseated, dizzy and needed to lie down. We called paramedics, who took her to the hospital. A CT scan revealed she had a fully effaced aneurysm near her brain stem. When we consulted a neurosurgeon, he said to his knowledge no one had ever operated on a patient with this type of aneurysm. Well, God was with us. A visiting neurosurgeon at the University of Minnesota hospital had written about this type of surgery, and he was willing to operate on her. I will always remember the pre-op consultation, when he said there was a 50/50 chance she would not live and gave us a long list of complications that could ensue.

Once again, we prayed for God to be with us. This story has the ending we now know was God’s plan all along. My life partner, best friend and mother of our family came home 17 days later, and she is with us today thanks to our God above. Without the prayers of Faith’s family, the support of our pastors and friends and the power of prayer, we could have never made it.

Later, Becky thanked the paramedics who took her to the hospital. She said they looked like they had seen a ghost. As they told her, they never thought she had a “prayer” to live. Well, they had just witnessed a true miracle - God’s power at work.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, please give us the strength, courage and trust in you to always put our lives in your hands. You will always be there for us. We may not get what we want or hope for, but we must have faith that your will is to be done. Amen.*

Donn Berkeland

Wednesday, March 25

## “God Is Faithful”

**Scripture:** *God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* I Corinthians 1:9

I remember it was a tough budget year! The question at Church Council, “Would someone from council do the temple talk as an appeal?” John (not his real name) quietly raised his hand, prefacing his acceptance of the challenge with “you know I’m not much of a public speaker.”

Well, he stood before the congregation with nothing but his honest presence. He asked, “What would life be like for you without the church?” Then he went on to share what the church had meant to him when a whole lot of people stood by him. The company he worked for merged, he lost his job and he discovered that he had prostate cancer. He talked about what strength his wife received during her early struggles with M.S. He talked about the wealth of support he got from pastors, when their daughter lost her baby and struggled with relationships. Then he closed with this, “Sure we think we have done a lot for the church over the years, but we need to be thankful for the gifts that Jesus gives us through the church.”

We had a very positive annual meeting that year, and there were no budget problems. God is faithful, and this fellowship we share in Christ provides many gifts to us.

**Prayer:** *Faithful God, open our lives to understand the gifts that you share with Faith Lutheran; and open our lives to share the gifts we have received through Christ and others. Amen. .*

Pastor Ken Knutson

Thursday, March 26

## “God-Trusting Folks”

*Scripture: Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the LORD God is my strength and might; he has become my salvation.*

Isaiah 12:2

I had just said “YES!” to the call to be a local church’s pastor, and there wasn’t anyone who could have been more excited to start. Fine and faithful people had voted to extend the call, people who trusted their Lord with all their might and loved their church inside and out.

On my first day on the job, the property committee chair stopped by the church and said, “Tell me someone told you that the church’s roof needs to be replaced as soon as possible. It’s leaking like a sieve.” He proceeded to show me around, pointing out mechanical systems and bricks and mortar that were long overdue for some good old Lutheran-style tender loving care. A task force was formed. A few months later, a laundry list of “must do” items emerged, and the church voted overwhelmingly to begin a capital appeal to secure funding. These bold and God-trusting folks went two steps further, adding both a large gathering space and an elevator so that the whole community could gather. To this day, God fills that space with disciples yearning to be together, yearning to be the community God calls them to be.

It could never have happened if people didn’t trust deeply in where God was leading us. Fear could have immobilized every single one of us, but by the grace of God that was not about to happen. I thank God that together we opened the doors and windows widely, so that the Holy Spirit could blow among us, because as fear vacated our hearts and minds, trust in God replaced it. May that same spirit blow freely among the people of Faith.

*Prayer: Gracious and giving God, inspire us to act as you would have us act as your faithful disciples. Send your Spirit so that we might all trust in your call and move forward with faith, as we respond with exceptional generosity to the opportunity before us. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

Pastor Bob Wertz

Friday, March 27

## “Sending Out Roots”

**Scripture:** *Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is in the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.* Jeremiah 17:7-8

Growing up in a family that attended church each week made me understand the importance of having a Christ-centered family life. My parents instilled in me the responsibility and obligation to give back to our church and community by giving our time and financial resources. I remember hearing these words from my family, “If everyone does their part, our world will be a much better place.”

There were many times in my adolescent years when my parents volunteered my family for community events that took us away from our friends, times that I thought were much more important than helping others. Attending a weekend FCA retreat changed my spiritual walk; I accepted Christ during that retreat and prayed that I would walk with God everyday for the rest of my life.

Well, that changed as I went off to college and experienced the pressures of college life and all the activities that go along with that environment. But fortunately, the college I attended had an active FCA club. Going back to the group re-connected me with the spiritual life that my heart craved during that time, when I had followed worldly ways instead of God.

Over the past 22 years I have been blessed to work for a Christian financial organization whose purpose is to give their profits and volunteer hours to support Christian ministries and make an impact on people’s lives. Knowing that we have a higher calling and setting our priorities on reaching out and helping others allows us to see God working through his people to make positive changes to our communities.

**Prayer:** *Dear Heavenly Father, you have taught us the importance of being part of organizations and outreach that make an impact on lives. Work through us to build that trust and support so that with everyone doing their part, our Christian community is a much better place. Amen.*

Resa J. Larson

Saturday, March 28

## “Trust or Fear – A Matter of Focus”

*Scripture:* He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” Mark 8:1-8

I like to think of myself as a “man of faith.” But, if I’m honest, I have to admit to many occasions where doubt and fear have easily exceeded my faith and trust in God. When we struggled with infertility early in our marriage, it was very easy to focus on the problems and not trust in God’s promises. When my wife, Becky, was diagnosed with breast cancer ten years ago, it was easier to focus on the problem than it was to trust God to be with us as He has promised.

When I’ve focused on the problem, like the disciples in the text, with too many people and not enough food, it is easy to be doubting and afraid. But Jesus said very simply, “Bring me what you have.” They did, bringing five loaves and two fish. Jesus blessed what they brought him and it was more than enough.

When I am able to focus on God and His promises, they have always been sufficient to meet my needs and more. So trust, to me, is rather basic. It depends on whether I focus on the problem and my ability to solve it or whether I focus on God and His promise to meet my needs.

*Prayer:* Dear Father, help me to trust you by keeping my focus on your promises rather than on my solutions. Amen.

Tim Johnson

Sunday, March 29

## “Treasures”

**Scripture:** *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* Matthew 6:19-21

We are called to give of our resources to move forward in answering God's call. He is asking me now to prayerfully consider my response to the capital appeal campaign. These past few years have shown me that my material treasures are not protected from moth or rust or thieves spoken of in Matthew. My real treasure is rooted in knowing that, by God's grace, I am saved and that I truly live because of the blood that was shed for me by my Savior, Jesus Christ. My treasure is inside the walls of Faith where we worship and receive the Holy sacraments, where we listen to and study God's Word, and where we teach our young ones that they are loved by our Father. My treasure lies in the Music Ministry where I've unceasingly been encouraged to sing and play to God's honor and glory for our worship services, the IMPACT middle-school ministry and in the Via de Cristo community.

I treasure the smiles, the laughter, the sharing and witness of God's faithful with whom I serve. God has gifted me with these treasures - He is everything I need. "You have made me glad. And I'll say of the Lord, You are my shield, my strength, my portion, deliverer, my shelter, strong tower, my very present help in time of need." (Miriam Webster, Hillsong Church)

**Prayer:** *Lord God, thank you for the blessings, these treasures which you have bestowed upon me. Build me up to boldly witness for You by giving generously of my resources to further Your mission that I am blessed to be a part of at Faith. Amen.*

Jeff Skaare

Monday, March 30

## “Blessed Be the Patient”

*Source: An excerpt from Brian Taylor's book found on [explorefaith.org](http://explorefaith.org)*

I was reading a daily devotional e-mail I receive; it sums up my faith in Jesus Christ and our (Kim and I) seven-year conception faith walk, as we were trying to start our family. The Lord truly does answer prayer in his time. Blessed be his name!

“But there is another positive use of ‘belief in Christ’ that is both faithful to the church’s experience and teachings, and also nonexclusive. It is to understand that when we believe in something or someone, we place our trust there. When we really believe in our partner in love, we place our trust in them. We count on them to be there for us, to be true and faithful to us. We know that as we place our trust in another, they will come through. We will follow that person anywhere, because we believe in him or her. The same is true with Jesus. When we place our trust in him, when we open our heart to his spirit, he comes through. He then lives in us, he teaches us by his presence, and he guides us into a free and vital life.”

*Prayer: Lord, thank you for your abundant blessings you pour out upon us. Our cup is filled by you and is overflowing with grace and love. Amen.*

Jeff Fields

Tuesday, March 31

## "Christ Gave His All, What Can I Give?"

*Hymn: We All Are One in Mission ELW 576*

During these weeks of Lent, we reflect on Christ's sacrifice for us through his death on the cross. He sacrificed his life so we may gain eternal life. What can we give to our congregation and community in thanks to the gift Jesus gave us? Through the many programs of Faith Lutheran Church, we are afforded a wide variety of activities to get involved making a difference in someone's life.

We are frustrated by the current economic recession and see the need to change our consumption-driven lives. Yet, this is also an opportune time to recognize the far more negative impacts of a down-turned economy in other parts of the world, as well as in our community, and work to make other lives better.

If you are concerned about how you can impact the lives of people around the world, get involved with the Global Mission Ministry of Faith Lutheran. If you are moved by the needs of neighbors in our surrounding community, the Social Ministry Team provides a wide variety of service activities that address the problems of our neighbors. In addition to meeting the physical and emotional needs of our neighbors near and far, we have the opportunity to share our love for Christ and invite others to become members of Faith.

Each of us has been given varied talents to use, and each of us has been given time to use them. How will you make a difference in these depressed economic times? The hymn shows us faith to make a difference.

*Prayer: "We all are one in mission; we all are one in call, our varied gifts united by Christ, the Lord of all. A single great commission compels us from above to plan and work together that all may know Christ's love." Amen.*

Karl Rasmussen

Wednesday, April 1

## “In Thanksgiving”

**Scripture:** *Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Proverbs 22:6

I like this Bible verse – it is one of my favorites. I am a retired teacher and so, of course, I like the idea that if you teach (train them) someone well, those “training” lessons will not be lost on them. I just watched the 60 Minutes program interviewing Sully, the pilot who flew the plane into the Hudson River and all 155 people on board the plane were saved. He credited his training, all the things he had been taught and practiced, for helping him keep his focus. What a wonderful story – thank God for the pilot’s training!

When I think of the Bible verse, however, my mind quickly goes to my hometown roots. My father died when I was young, and my mother, my brother, and I lived with my grandparents. I was raised not only by my family, but by a whole small town community. Two very good people stand out in my memory – the grocery store owner Carl and one of my Sunday school teachers, Polly. Carl provided a basketball court in the back of his store and let us kids play there after school while waiting for our parents to pick us up (no school buses in my grade school days). No swearing, no fighting, just good basketball and all were welcome. Was this not a marvelous training place for our small community? And then there was Polly, a woman who had no children of her own, yet she helped raise all of us with her directing the junior choir program of the church each week and teaching Sunday School most of her adult life. They not only trained with words; they trained with Christian example.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, encourage all of us to reflect on some special people from our past years who have helped guide us in the way we should go. Help us send up prayers of thanksgiving for those who have helped us in our Christian living. Amen.*

Sue Evert

Thursday, April 2

## “Faith or Fear?”

**Scripture:** “Voice of Truth” Casting Crowns. Matthew 14:22-33

Have you ever been asked to do anything that really terrified you? A few years ago, I was challenged to step out and try something new. I had always been a part of the choir and helped out with youth fun events, but after being a part of that congregation for about six months, the pastor approached me to help with developing and leading their new contemporary praise worship. The idea of this terrified me. I had sung in front of others, but I was not comfortable with speaking in front of a large group, and definitely not with praying aloud.

As I was praying about this decision one week, the lectionary reading was from Matthew 14. In this lesson, the disciples are terrified of seeing Jesus walking on water. Jesus’ first words to the disciples are, “Do not be afraid.” Then he invites Peter to do the impossible. “Come,” he invites him to walk on water with him. I heard this verse and felt that Jesus was calling me also to do something terrifying by leading worship. But I was still afraid that I wasn’t really hearing God’s call. The following day, when I was listening to the radio, I heard the song, “Voice of Truth” by Casting Crowns. The lyrics of the chorus are, “The voice of truth tells me a different story; the voice of truth says do not be afraid, the voice of truth says this is for my glory, and for all the voices calling out to me. . . I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth.”

Through these times of God speaking to me through scripture and song, and with the encouragement of friends and family, my fears were calmed enough for me to hear and respond to the call to lead worship and music in each congregation that I have been a part of. I only needed to set aside my fears, and trust that God would equip me to do His work.

**Prayer:** *Lord, thank you for your call to us each day to step out of the boat and respond to your will. Calm our fears so we can fully hear your call and lead us to the roles that you have gifted us for. In your name we pray, Amen.*

Heather Frei

Friday, April 3

## “An Uphill Battle”

**Scripture:** Psalm 141:1-2

After graduating from college, I joined a small group of people on a bicycle trip from Seattle to Washington DC. I signed up for the trip, having never ridden in mountains and having never ridden more than about 50 miles in a day. On the first day of the trip, I was full of excitement and had no problems making it to the end of the 60 mile day. But on day two, I was quite sore and was facing my first mountain pass of the trip – Steven’s Pass. As a way to help me get through the day, I put a piece of masking tape on my handle bars with Psalm 141:1 written on it, thinking it would help me keep focused. By the time I was approaching our lunch stop, it wasn’t working. I rode into the lunch stop leaning heavily over my handle bars and fell over beside a tree, tangled in my bike.

While I was lying on the ground, a man came over and started asking me all sorts of questions. He’d seen our van and a bunch of the other riders and wanted to know what was going on. I just wanted to sulk and rest, but politely responded to his questions. Then he asked me how the ride was going. I replied, “I don’t think I’m going to finish. I’m just not strong enough to do this.”

Then he pointed at the tape on my handle bars. “I think that might be your problem,” he said. I just looked at him. I lift my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? He knew the verse, and I was a bit put off why he thought that a Bible verse was my problem. “You’re focusing on the wrong part – you’re focusing on the cry for help. If you’re struggling, maybe you should be focusing on the second verse – the answer. My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Then he said “good luck” and walked away.

I had intended to focus on God for strength, but what I was really focusing on was my own pain, my own failures, my own ego-driven desire to make it up the mountain. I was using the verse as a tool to try to pull myself up the hill, instead of truly looking to God for strength. The mountain had humbled me, but I felt that God had used that as an opportunity to teach me what it meant to truly trust and rely on God. While it didn’t do anything to make up for my lack of training or sore body, it changed my attitude and got me back on my bike to tackle the mountain again. This time, however, it wasn’t my ego pushing me – I was moving forward in faith.

**Prayer:** *God, I thank you for the blessings you’ve given me. Remind me when I face a tough road in life that you, the one who created the mountains, have the power to lead me over them. Help me turn away from selfish ambition and to trust and rely on you more every day. Amen.*

David Frei

Saturday, April 4

## “Trusting in God’s Call”

*Scripture:* Psalm 23

Faith Lutheran was looking for a choir director to lead the adult Chancel Choir. A good friend and colleague, Ken Jenson, was leaving the position, and he casually mentioned it to me. My wife, Deb, was singing in the choir and also mentioned the position opening and asked if I might like leading the choir. Being the director of choral music activities at Coon Rapids High School, my first thought was, “Where will I find the time to prepare and lead another choir?”

As the weeks progressed and no other candidates appeared, I began to feel God “tugging” at my heart and mind. I worried that I was not qualified, because I had never led a church choir before, and fretted that I might burn-out from an over-taxing schedule. But during this particular time, I had been developing a new understanding of God’s clear hand and direction in the course of my life. As I prayed about it, it became obvious that I was being called to the position, despite my carefully constructed reasons of why I shouldn’t and couldn’t apply. I decided to apply for the position out of obedience to the call that I felt and leave the decision in God’s hands about whether I was qualified or had enough time and energy to do the job. I look back and realize that God’s call always has led me to a deeper and more fulfilling life.

In Psalm 23, David makes the relationship between God and his creation clear. He is the shepherd, the pasture-maker. By following him, he promises green pastures, clear waters, and a restoration of the soul. Even through dark times, we can count on his presence and guidance. My favorite part of the Psalm is the promise of dwelling with God and seeing Him face to face. But another great promise in the Psalm is for us all today: goodness and mercy throughout our lives on earth and a cup of blessing that overflows.

*Prayer:* Loving Lord, thank you for a cup of blessing that overflows.  
*Amen.*

Rick Geiger

Sunday, April 5

## “Have Faith in Love”

**Scripture:** *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.* 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

My motto is that eventually a child needs to choose what he or she believes, based on what they have experienced. When I was confirmed, I chose to believe in God. That was the first time I had ever actually asked myself, “Do I really believe, or am I just saying it out of habit?” I have been going to church services since before I started talking and Faith Lutheran since fourth grade. There have been many times in the past sixteen years that I have doubted, but the verses that always get me through are 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. The passage reminds me of the type of person I have to be, with all the traits of love: patient, kind, not jealous or boastful, not rude, selfish or angry. To always trust, hope and persevere. These also are everything that God is.

I often find myself wondering how it is that people believe in love, and all the things it gives us, but not believe in the Lord. Love is the Lord, and the Lord is love. They are intertwined and have the same qualities. By having faith in love, we have faith in God. The most important part is: love never fails. That is the most astonishing and amazing thing to realize. Everything in this world fails, especially us. The beautiful thing is that we can love. We can emote something that never fails, and we can talk to the one who created it: the Lord. Knowing that love exists is knowing that God exists. This is what I’ll remember from my confirmation and beyond.

**Prayer:** *Lord, give us the strength to see all the things that you need us to be. Help us to have faith in you and have faith in the love you give us, to know that it will never fail. Help us also to love others just the same, with all the qualities you have told us to use. Thank you Lord. Amen.*

Laura Landvik

Monday, April 6

## “Goodness and Grace”

**Scripture:** Luke 18:18-26

There is an account in Scripture of an encounter between a rich ruler and Jesus. He asks Jesus what good things he must do to inherit eternal life. After Jesus lists the commandments, the man, with what must have been a sigh of relief, says that he has kept all of these since his youth. Jesus says that he lacks one thing: to sell all of his riches, give the money to the poor and then follow him. Disheartened, the ruler went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

What can we learn from this? The man’s love of riches and his refusal to give them up shows that he had broken the greatest commandment of all: to love the Lord with all your heart, mind and strength. His possessions came before God in his life. Also, Jesus was trying to teach him about what goodness really is. True goodness is an attribute of God alone. All of the man’s good works did not make him good, and he was not capable of earning eternal life.

How often do we think along those same lines? Sometimes we want to rely on what we have – our wealth, our talents or our experience to make it through our trials in life – forgetting our need for the grace and mercy of God to bring us through. Most of all, we must never forget that our salvation is not based on the good things that we do, but solely in trusting in Christ, who lived the only “good” and perfect life.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, help us to put you first in our lives, ahead of all else, and to trust in your grace in every circumstance, good or bad, relying on the One who made the way for us, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

Mike Jones

Tuesday, April 7

## “Here I Am To Worship”

**Scripture:** *Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known to all the earth. Isaiah 12:5*

*“Here I am to worship; here I am to bow down. Here I am to say that you’re my God. You’re altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.”* From the song by Tim Hughes

Music has always been an important part of my Christian walk. My whole family has always been in a church choir. By being given the gift to sing, I believe this is my way of sharing God’s word and love to others. I have been so blessed to be involved with the music programs at Faith and, if I can show one person the love of God through my music, I will be truly blessed. The verse of the song above is one of the messages that I hope will show my love for the Lord.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of music, and thank you for letting me share your word through song. Bless the music program at Faith so that it shows your amazing love. Amen.*

JoAnn Steiskal

Wednesday, April 8

## “What’s With the Excuses?”

**Scripture:** *You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.* Matthew 5:14-16

What keeps us from sharing God with others? What excuses do we come up with in our daily lives that push the thought of sharing the gospel from our minds? “I’m too young.” “I’m afraid of rejection.” “I don’t know how.” “I’m not good enough to share God with others.” These are just a few excuses that prevent us from sharing our faith with those who don’t know Christ.

We need to realize that God loves us no matter what happens in our lives. Even with our sin, God has a plan to use us to make his name known. Don’t allow negative thoughts to prevent you from sharing God with others. We are worth the world to God, and, through the sacrifice of his son Jesus Christ, we should know that his love for us is beyond our comprehension. We may feel unworthy, but by realizing the extent of God’s love, we can know that it is all right to make mistakes, just as long as we allow God to guide us in all we do.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, I realize that only you can give me the assurance I need to share the truth of your son’s life, death and resurrection with others. Grant me the strength to communicate your love effectively with others to bring you glory. Amen.*

JNatalie Beiter

Thursday, April 9

**“Stewardship Is...”**

**Scripture:** *“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. 1 Peter 4:10*

I am late again but that's not new  
At least I am sitting in my favorite pew  
I hope that the service won't be too long  
I will check the bulletin for something to do.

Oh no! I exclaim in a voice quite strong  
Its stewardship Sunday and this is all wrong  
They will talk about money, talents and time  
And there is a meeting after for those who belong.

They want me to pledge from all that is mine  
To give a commitment so they can define  
A budget or plan for helping people in need  
I give enough already! I started to whine.

The lesson is from Peter, the pastor did read  
We must serve one another from what we receive  
For all that you have comes from God as a gift  
Through faith you give willingly is what we believe.

As I pondered this message, I noticed a shift  
And my spirit was given a wonderful lift  
Stewardship is not something that is kept apart  
It is faith in action and it comes from the heart.

**Prayer:** *Dear Father, thank you for the wonderful gifts that you give us each day. Help us to entrust them to your service, and let our faith put our money, time and talents in action for others. Amen.*

Rick Meier

Friday, April 10

## “God’s Gifts”

**Scripture:** *For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift from God.* Ephesians 2:8

As Easter approaches, we are reminded that God has given us the gift of eternal life through the death of his son, Jesus, on the cross. This is the best gift we could ever receive.

During these tough economic times, I am reminded of when my employer of 19 years went out of business. Through friends and others I soon found work. I believe God provided these people for me when I needed them. About five years later, I again went through the unemployment experience. This time it lasted for seven months. This can be a time to become discouraged or it can be an opportunity to grow in our faith. My own experience was that it was some of both.

The reality was that God did continue to provide for my family. These experiences showed me that through God’s love and grace he continues to bless us with an abundance of gifts. It reminds me of the song that has often been sung as we bring our tithes and offerings forward at church.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise him all creatures here below,  
Praise him above ye heavenly hosts,  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, remind us to always bring everything to you in prayer. I pray especially for those who are experiencing difficult times now during our current economic conditions. May they feel the power of prayer and also love and support from their family and friends. Amen.*

Bill Klinsing

Saturday, April 11

## “Family of Believers”

**Scripture:** *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20*

To me there has been no single moment of epiphany at Faith, although each trip I've taken with the youth has been a phenomenal experience filled with joy and growth. My brothers and sisters in the congregation are the most important part of Faith. The Saturday morning men's group has become a high point of my week, everyone genuinely cares for each other and shares not only in learning, but also in each other's lives, good or bad. With the youth group the excitement of youth and love of the leaders is incredibly contagious. The chess group is just a nice quiet time to enjoy the company of family. The joy of praising my Lord with the choir is beyond measure.

On Sunday morning there are always people to talk to and share our week's experiences. I thought about mentioning names, but would surely miss many with so little space to fill. Faith is a wonderful family of believers, filled with the love and joy of Christ. I want to thank the staff and all of my brothers and sisters for inviting me to be a part of it.

**Prayer:** *Loving God, I pray that you will touch each of our hearts and guide us everyday. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

Darryl Steiskal

Sunday, April 12

## “Dwelling in God’s Word”

**Source:** *We are God’s people, dwelling in God’s Word, proclaiming Christ’s salvation, and living in daily mission empowered by the Holy Spirit.*

Faith’s Mission Statement

I don’t know what person or group composed Faith’s Mission Statement, but I thank you whoever you are. It has truly been an inspiration to me. It reminds us that we are dwelling, not just living, in God’s Word, in his world, and in his love. Notice that the word “well” is part of the word “dwell.” We live well when we dwell in God’s Word, in his salvation.

Life has its high points and low points, some so low we wonder how we’re able to bear the pain or the sorrow. But remembering that we are God’s people, we open our hearts to his presence. Then we often experience our closest relationship with God, when anxiety, pain or grief surrounds us. And we thank him for that nearness.

Our heavenly father also shares our joys. I know that God is as near to me when I am happy as when I am sad. When I am rejoicing and remember that God shares my joys as well as my sorrows, my joy becomes more joyful; my heart overflows. I believe that this pleases him. He really is an awesome God!

**Prayer:** *Gracious God, we beg your blessing and your guidance as we members of Faith Lutheran Church seek to fulfill our stated mission in Coon Rapids and in all your world. Amen.*

Carol Pletan

Monday, April 13

## “My Faith Story”

***Source:** O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. You are behind me and before me, laying your hand upon me. Psalm 139:1-5*

I once read that when people, who profess to be Christian, are surveyed about their priorities, they will say their priorities are: first, God; second, family; third, friends, cars, sports, music, jobs, etc. However, if they were being honest with themselves, their heart is in the third category. And if I am honest with myself, I would have to say that God is not always my first priority. But I try to be mindful that everything in my life is from God.

About ten years ago I attended a Promise Keepers conference at the Metrodome with a group of men from Faith. At that event I went down to the stage with a couple of thousand other men and re-dedicated my life to Christ. Looking back, I am not the same person I used to be, and I am thankful for God's grace. I am thankful for all of God's blessings – my wife, our family, our children, our close friends at Faith. I am thankful that I have talents and skills. I am thankful that I had the opportunity to finish a degree; I am thankful for the determination that God has blessed me with.

I do not know where God will lead me in the future. Whatever I am called to do, I will need the strength, guidance and wisdom that are freely given by God. In a changing world, my rock, my foundation and my salvation are my faith and my God.

***Prayer:** I pray each day that God will bless my words, thoughts and actions that I may be kind to others before rushing to judge them, because we all fall short. I hope that others will be kind to me when I fall short. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Mark Anderson

Tuesday, April 14

## “We Are Never Alone”

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

I often wonder why I allow anxious thoughts to take over my life. When difficult times arise, I let my stress overcome me, and I lose sight of what God's plan for my life is. I feel the need to simply take charge and try to figure the problem out on my own without looking to God for help. I know he is there, but the anxiety that has built up inside of me has clouded my vision of what God wants. When I take a step back from the chaos in my mind, I open my Bible to these verses in Philippians because they help me refocus on what God desires to happen in my life. Though I feel bombarded with uneasiness, these verses remind me that the Lord is walking beside me at all times. Whenever I am overwhelmed, I need to present my worries and needs to God, and His peace will surely follow.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, may the words that you give us in scripture provide comfort and peace to all those who are facing uncertainty in their lives. May we be reassured by the knowledge that you are walking beside us every moment of every day. Amen.*

Linda Halverson-Beiter

Wednesday, April 15

## “Trust”

**Source:** *Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do and he will show you the way.* Proverbs 3:5-6

I have been blessed with the opportunity to not only help other people through my career, but also to learn a lot from them. I am a physical therapist with a homecare agency, which means that the majority of my day is spent with people over the age of seventy-five. I have come to learn over the last five years that people of this generation have so many wonderful talents, stories and pieces of wisdom to share that I cannot imagine my life without having met each one of them. I have learned how to polka, count to 10 in Russian, how to play (okay, pretend to play) the accordion, and the list goes on. My most valuable lesson, however, is one of trust.

Because I am such an independent person, I struggle at times with trusting in anyone but myself to plan for anything in my life. In stark contrast, however, I often heard my patients say things that sound something like “I don’t know why things happened the way they did. . . God must have a plan.” Or “I am okay with knowing that my time here will end. I trust in the One who makes that decision and I’m glad it’s not mine to make.” Seeing the peace in their faces and hearing the strength of their words has helped me to grow in my own trust that God has a plan for my life, whether I understand it or not. And it is so much better than any plan that I could ever come up with!

**Prayer:** *Thank you, God, for being the part of my life that I can always trust. Please help me to remember that you have made the perfect plan for my life, even though I may not always understand what it is. Amen.*

Emily Kuhn

Thursday, April 16

## “God’s Big Boat”

*Hymn: You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore.* ELW 817

In the past eight years, I have purchased a boat and traveled on three mission trips to Costa Rica. I have always felt God has been speaking to me while working with Iglesia Luterana Costarricense (Lutheran Church of Costa Rica – ILCO). It has been a joy to work along side people from Faith Lutheran and the people of ILCO painting. . . singing. . . building. . . worshipping. . . playing. . . praying. Although I speak no Spanish, I have been through an entire worship service in Spanish and felt every bit uplifted, forgiven and inspired as a service in English in our own sanctuary.

It was in Costa Rica when I first heard this hymn composed by the Spanish priest, Cesario Gabarain. When it was translated into English for me, I realized that God is also speaking to me every time I get out on Belle Lake near Hutchinson. I freely admit I am still not sure what God is calling me to do, but I can feel God working within me. I am Trusting God’s Call and Moving Forward with Faith. Join me then in singing the hymn’s refrain as we get into God’s big boat:

Sweet Lord, you have looked into my eyes;  
Kindly smiling, you have called out my name.  
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;  
Now with you, I will seek other seas.

*Prayer: Lord, you are calling out to each of us. Help us to be ready for your call. We know it will take courage and strength – but that will also come from you. We know we won’t be comfortable accepting your call – but our comfort comes from you. Amen.*

George Dahlman

Friday, April 17

## “Hurrah Hossiana!”

**Scripture:** *And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and grain, the produce of the ground, will be rich and plenteous.*  
Isaiah 30:23

In 1994 George and a group from Faith Lutheran spent some time at Kolila Lutheran High School in Old Moshi Tanzania. There he stayed a weekend with the Peter and Hossiana Komba and their three children. Peter is the chaplain for the high school and also serves as assistant pastor at a couple nearby churches. Hossiana appeared to be a delightful woman, but it was frustrating since she spoke no English and George spoke no Swahili. Peter spent most of the weekend translating so that the three could carry on conversations. Little did we know at the time that Hossiana was very embarrassed by her lack of education and her lack of English-speaking skills. So embarrassed, in fact, she vowed to go back to school to get an education, despite big obstacles. . . a woman, mother of three, and little extra time in a busy day to study. We pledged to help out with some of the education expenses.

Over the next decade we wondered if we were doing something foolish. Hossiana suffered through some serious medical issues. What we thought would be a three or four year project turned into a thirteen year marathon. Then, in November 2007, we received a letter from Hossiana. She had finished her degree at the University of Dar es Salaam! Her English is impeccable! She wrote, “My degree will help me to help my family, my relatives, my church and the whole nation. I promised to God, whoever needs my help, I will help him/her, since I myself got my education through other people and your help. It is a miracle and something no woman, especially in Moshi Kilimanjaro and my homeland (Iringa), has ever done.”

We are proud of Hossiana. It took a lot of trust and faith to keep up those money transfers to Africa. There were many times we considered halting the support. But, somehow, we trusted God’s call and moved forward in faith. Hossiana had to trust God’s call and move forward in faith despite many setbacks and many obstacles. Hooray Hossiana!

**Prayer:** *God, we are human and we want to trust ourselves rather than you. We are more likely to have faith in ourselves rather than you. Help us to overcome our self-centered attitude, trust your call and move forward in faith. Amen*

Jan and George Dahlman

Saturday, April 18

## “Blessed To Be a Blessing”

**Scripture:** *The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.* Psalm 145:15-16

Although we have heard of record cold temperatures this winter, we enjoy the luxury of our warm homes, an extra sweater or perhaps a cozy quilt.

There is a great need for making quilts to bring warmth and comfort to suffering people. Some members of Faith Church from its very beginning have made quilts for Lutheran World Relief, which is a ministry of the ELCA and the LCMS serving in 23 countries around the world. Recently, we have sent quilts to the Global Health Ministries, a non-profit organization that aids the health care programs of Lutheran churches in other countries. Some of our quilts are given to local families. Faith's Frogs have been a blessing by providing the transportation of the quilts to the World Relief warehouse or to Global Health Ministries. We are also blessed with necessary resources that are given for quilt construction.

Our quilting group is small and friendly. We would welcome anyone who would like to join us the second Thursday of the month anytime from 9-2 o'clock.

**Prayer:** *Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for calling us to be a blessing. We pray that those who will receive the quilts will recognize your love and care. May the Lord's name be praised. Amen.*

Ruth Peterson

Sunday, April 19

## “Coming Back to Faith”

*Hymn: Blest Be the Ties That Bind* ELW 656

This hymn holds a special memory for me; at my mother’s request it was the congregational hymn sung at our wedding 36 years ago. Growing up in western Wisconsin, one of my closest friends was the daughter of the pastor at a congregation named Faith Lutheran Church. Although my family was Methodist, I spent a lot of time hanging out with the Lutheran kids. Luther League, VBS, and church camp were staples of my youth. Faith was one of the places I learned about the ties that bind our hearts in Christian love.

As an adult, I moved to Coon Rapids and struggled to find a church home. My friend Mary invited me to a group at her church, and I went with her to “Mothers and Others.” I felt an almost immediate connection to the women in the group, became a member and began attending worship services. The group is now named “Morning Break” and the church is Faith Lutheran. I felt as if I had come home.

Over and over again Faith has blessed me with the ties that bind. Through worship, Bible study and prayer, my faith has been nurtured and has grown. Faith helped me raise my children in a Christian environment and has supported our family through illnesses and the deaths of cherished parents. Faith has continued to call me into God’s service in many varied ways. I am anxious to see how God and Faith Lutheran will call me to serve in the future.

*Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the many blessings Faith Lutheran has brought to me, my family and countless others. Continue to guide us as we move forward in service to you in this place. Help each of us to discern the best ways to support our ministry and guide each of us to find our place in this ministry. In Christ’s Name, Amen.*

Judy Lautenschlager

Monday, April 20

## “My Faith Story”

**Scripture:** *He has told you, O Mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?* Micah 6:8

Several years ago, when asked to serve on the Social Ministry Committee, I gladly accepted, little knowing where that commitment would lead me. The first few years I worked on the annual Thanksgiving Dinner, the annual meal served to those in the community with no where to go on Thanksgiving, and Share Fest, an annual bazaar that raises money for local and international hunger causes. It felt good to help those in need.

Over ten years ago the needs of Anoka County were changing, and we were asked to participate in a program sponsored by Lutheran Social Service called Project Abaku. Homeless families were provided transitional housing, counseling and job training skills for one year. I saw the face of the homeless, especially homeless children, in a personal way. Seven years ago, we began serving the Family Table Meal, a free meal served to the community on the first Thursday of the month. We started out serving about 75 guests a month, and now we serve 180. Once again, I found these to be meaningful ministries, but there was a nagging sense that these were only temporary solutions to a greater problem. I felt a need to do more.

About the same time that we began serving the Family Table Meal, our congregation was invited to join MICAHA, the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing. This organization, whose members come from various faith communities, works on housing issues throughout the metro area. The task has not been easy; it's sometimes daunting and not without setbacks, but the MICAHA members continue to persevere. I will gladly keep working with them, for our neighbors need love and compassion, and they deserve justice.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, help us to continue to serve those in need, not only with love and compassion, but also by seeking justice for them.  
Amen.*

Sue Baysden

**Tuesday, April 21**

**“Faith Story”**

***Scripture:*** *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7*

I don't remember a time or place where I felt a special call. I guess I've always felt God was with me, guiding me to do good works. My parents are founding members of Faith Lutheran Church, so my “Faith Family” has always been there for me, through baptism, Sunday school, confirmation, marriage and baptism of our son. I'm growing in my faith through volunteering at church and meeting so many different people.

***Prayer:*** *Lord, guide us to follow your ways even when the going gets tough. Amen.*

Lora Schwaab

Wednesday, April 22

## “Faith is Scary When You Are Seven”

**Scripture:** *O Most High, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you.*  
Psalm 56:3

When I was 7, I had to have my tonsils and adenoids removed. At the hospital, I tried to be very brave, but I was really very scared. When they brought me into the operating room, and my mom had to leave me, I started to cry. I didn't want her to go... I didn't want to be alone. What if something happened? What if the doctors made a mistake? What if I didn't wake up? But I realized that God was with me, so I wasn't really alone. He would watch over me and make sure the doctors would do all the right things. I was still scared, but knew everything would be fine - I just had to have faith.

**Prayer:** *Thank you, God, for giving me faith when I am scared and for helping me through tough times. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Breck Bartholomew

Thursday, April 23

## “Faith is Scary When You Are Seven”

**Scripture:** *But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel.”* Psalm 56:3

People learn the most amazing things at times they least expect it. This past summer, I went on a mission trip to Tijuana, Mexico. My group stayed at a church where the neighborhood children were always around us. It was fun to play with the kids, because they were so inventive. Despite a language barrier between them and a majority of us, the kids still managed to create fun games for us all to play. They could create games with the plastic bottles and broken toys that littered the ground. Each child I played with had an impact on me, but the child who made the most lasting impression was a four year old boy named Omar.

Towards the end of the trip, I went with a few people from my group down to the local store. When we returned, the only tree in the dusty lot outside the church had plastic bottles, water jugs and other plastics pulled from the nearby recycling pile filling its branches. I asked one of the kids hanging around the church about who had put the garbage in the tree. He told me that it was Omar. I found Omar and asked him why he had put the garbage in the tree, and he replied to me very seriously in Spanish, “It’s not a garbage tree; it’s a Christmas tree.” At this point I developed a new appreciation for the tree. To an outsider, the tree appeared to be filled with junk, but to Omar it was his “arbol de Navidad,” which he had made for others to admire and enjoy.

Omar taught me to appreciate what I have. I learned from Omar that people you do not expect to have a significant impact on your life can cause you to change your perspective on what you want. Omar really did cause me to reevaluate myself, so that I could find a place in the world for my talents and abilities. If I can see the talents of those around me, together we will be able to solve the problems that face us everyday. I will always remember that what may seem like a garbage tree to me may be someone else’s “arbol de Navidad.”

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for the simple gifts you give us everyday, and please help us to open our eyes so that we can see them and appreciate them. Please help us to look away from what we are unable to do, but instead help us to take that step back, so we can see all of the gifts and talents that you have given us. Help us to have the simplistic appreciation that children have, so that we can all make our own “arbol de Navidad.” In your name we pray. Amen.*

TJ Reiersen

Friday, April 24

## “A Burden Too Heavy To Carry Alone”

**Scripture:** *Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Matthew 11:28-30

I grew up in the church. Sunday school, worship, and confirmation were weekly staples in my family. You might even say I was a “church rat.” However, in my late teens and early twenties, I fell away from God. I was the center of my universe, and it was a very sad and dark time for me. I was having huge success with my career, the then most important aspect of my life. But somehow, I always felt as if I was missing something; one little piece of happiness was always just out of my grasp. I made many mistakes and hurt many people. I was so far from living a Christian life that those days of church and Jesus seemed a million miles away. I felt alone and isolated.

I remember the exact day that I decided to put control of my life into someone’s hands other than my own. I was in an abusive relationship and had hit “rock bottom,” barely wanting to live. I had a just had a baby and could not face the burden of rebuilding my life alone. I attended church for the first time in years. I prayed to God, “I can not do this alone. I am lost and give my life to you. Please help me.” I was so overwhelmed by a total sense of peace and clarity in my thought process; that one moment was truly the start of my life as a Christian. I had finally found rest for my weary soul in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

**Prayer:** *Loving Father, we all have burdens that weigh us down and keep us from seeing You clearly. Help us to turn to You in our times of trial and know that nothing is too heavy for Your love and saving grace! Please hold in Your loving arms those who are struggling to get back to you, Lord. Help them to see that the only way to release the weight of their burden is through faith and trust in You. Amen.*

Michele Sjoberg

Saturday, April 25

## “What Truly Is Important”

**Scripture:** *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* Matthew 6:19-21

Matthew 6 is especially relevant in the economic times we find ourselves in today. It reminds me to slow down and look at what I am pursuing and what truly is important. Our lives here are a blip on the screen of our eternal life, and we must strive to “act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.” As this chapter later states, “he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.” This reminder has helped on a daily basis to ease the struggles and the worries that come especially in these times.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, thank you for knowing all that I need – yesterday, today and tomorrow. Amen.*

Dave Noe

Sunday, April 26

## “My Grandpa Kevin”

**Scripture:** *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.”* Matthew 6:19-21

When my Grandpa Kevin died, I was sad. I missed him very much and I didn't understand why he went. I began to pray to God more. I asked God to take care of Grandpa Kevin and all of us here. As I prayed, my faith in God increased. And I began to feel better. I trust God to take care of Grandpa and me until we meet again in heaven.

**Prayer:** *God, please be with us. Let us grow in our faith in you; and God, we know you will be with us through the hard times and good times. Amen.*

Meghan Reilley Katers

Monday, April 27

## “Patience and Perseverance”

**Scripture:** *I know what I am doing. I have planned it all out- Plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.* Jeremiah 29:11

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* Philippians 4:13

We have always known that God has a special plan for our lives. We have believed that since the day we met; we knew it was God who brought us together. Sometimes we have had problems with what God has planned for our lives, but looking back, we have found that he is always the answer.

In 2007, Chris was laid off and unemployed for ten months. During that time our relationship was really tested. Our hope was he would find another job immediately, no matter what the field. He went through numerous interviews and numerous heartbreaks as he got the calls that the company had chosen someone else. There was even a short three-week span during those ten months where he was employed, only to be let go again the day before Christmas. We had our hopes dashed so many times; it was tough to get our hopes up when he did have an interview. By the grace of God we persevered, and in April of 2008 Chris was offered his dream job.

During the times when we felt so distant from each other, God was actually drawing us closer together by giving us something so difficult to deal with. We learned that God has his own plan for our lives. We just need to continue pushing through and trust that God will show us his plan in the end.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, sometimes I am so full of worry, so concerned about how things will go that I lose my trust in you. I try to conquer all and do all, while deep inside fear rises, and I know that I have no power to change things, to make things different. Please help me have faith in you, that you will guide me in your ultimate plan for my life. Amen.*

Lisa and Chris Partyka

Tuesday, April 28

## “My Faith Family”

**Scripture:** *He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. Matthew 22:37-38*

I’m 13 years old and have gone to Faith Lutheran Church all my life. I was baptized here, went to Sunday school, and now I’m in my final year of confirmation. Going to church at Faith Lutheran lets me see my grandma and grandpa, Aunt Polly, Aunt Jean, Uncle Doug and my cousin Lucas. I’ve also met a lot of friends here. I really like the music we sing at Impact, and Angela, my teacher, has taught me a lot about Jesus and his life.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, thank you sending your Son for us. Thank you for families, music, teachers and friends at Faith Lutheran Church. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

Cory Schwaab

Wednesday, April 29

## “Gratefulness”

**Scripture:** *Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the LORD'S offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.* Exodus 35:21 (NKJV)

Not long after God renewed His covenant with the Israelites, they responded by bringing offerings in abundance, because of their renewed and intensified relationship with the LORD; they were grateful to God for His law and were then stirred to give generously.

Generosity and giving do not come naturally to me. I like to think this is because I am an only child (thereby passing the blame upon my parents), but in my heart I know that it is often because I am not always that grateful a person. Over the past few years, however, God has been teaching me that in order for me to give willingly and cheerfully, I must first focus on what I am grateful for.

Like the Israelites, I have come to understand that generosity and giving are fruits of gratefulness to our gracious and awesome God. Gratefulness is the soil in which generosity is nurtured and grown.

**Prayer:** *Gracious Father, help us to discern your blessings in our lives and to be grateful for them. Grow from this gratefulness the delicious fruit of generosity and giving. Amen in Jesus' name.*

Cory Ramel

Thursday, April 30

## “Simply Pray”

**Scripture:** *Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.* Luke 18:17

As children in Sunday school, my husband and I were taught to pray. It is this one act that we have carried throughout our life journeys that has not only kept us focused on our love for God, but also has helped us to grow. It gave me strength when I was scared, love when I was alone. It gave him comfort to deal with death and guidance in life-changing decisions. It has helped with patience, healing, understanding and love.

My husband says, “It is important not to let the stresses of our daily lives get in the way of our spiritual lives.” Prayer keeps us on the right track. Sunday mornings at Faith refresh us spiritually and prepare us for the week to come. Our involvement in our Faith small group gives us insight into our lives. But prayer is really the key; it brings us back to the calmer and simpler times of our lives.

**Prayer From Daily Texts 2005:** *Merciful God, thank you for the simple ways in which your mercy and grace come to me anew every day. Sometimes I am too serious, too adult, to see your awesome grace. Help me see with the faith of a child how you wonderfully move and shape my life. Amen.*

Margaret and Greg Engholm

Friday, May 1

## “A Journey’s Path is Not Always Known”

**Scripture:** *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on our own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths..* Proverbs 3: 5-6

My own journey with God is similar to the path not always known. Growing up in a split faith family, having an active church life was not a priority. My mother was Catholic and my father was Covenant; neither side of the family accepted the others’ faith. My brothers and I grew up with a belief in God but no formal church education. When I met my wife to be Kathy, she encouraged me to be baptized and confirmed.

We have been members of Faith Lutheran for over 25 years, with all three of our sons being confirmed at Faith. Our faith in God continues to grow, as does our commitment to His work. While my path to faith was certainly unknown to me, I believe God’s guidance down that unknown path leads me in the right direction.

**Prayer:** *Lord, thank you for your constant guidance down life’s path. Although sometimes the path is not clear to me, guide me in your wisdom to be a good shepherd of your bounty. Amen.*

Ken Solem

Saturday, May 2

## “Kaya, Little Turtle, God’s Creation”

**Scripture:** *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works I do; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that my Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it.*

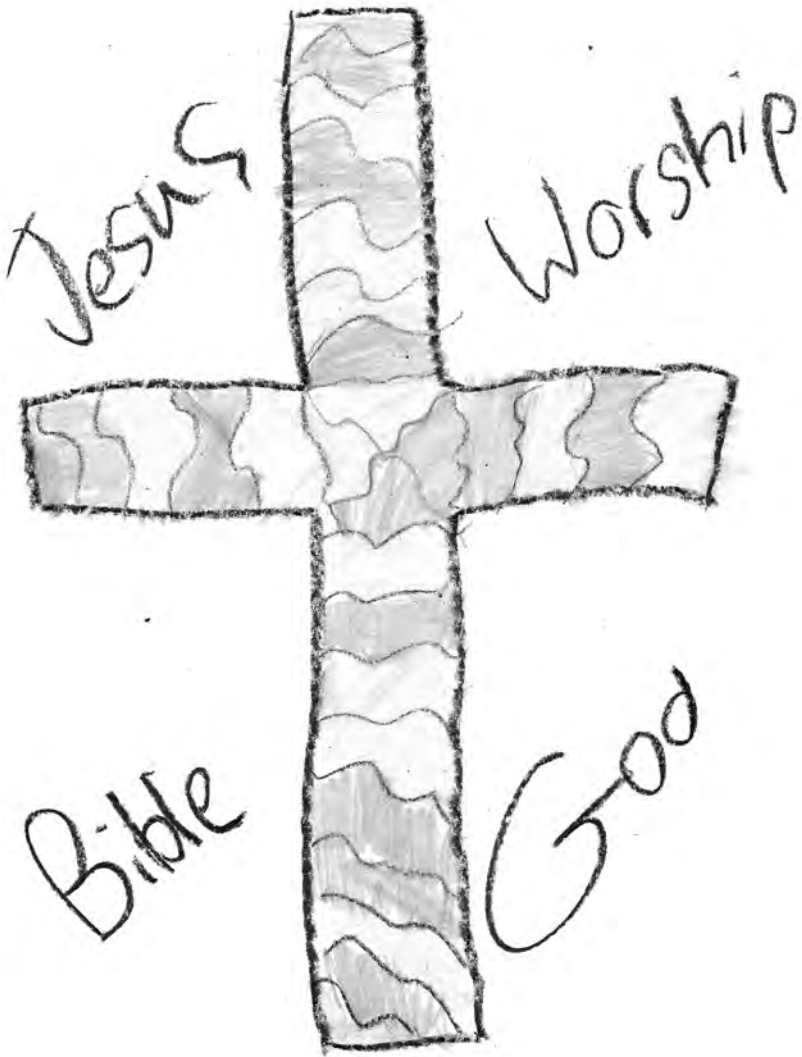
John 14:12-14

This faith story is about hope, and trusting in the creative and redeeming power of God’s word in our everyday lives. Our four year old granddaughter Kaya was born with a huge hole in her diaphragm. Her chance of survival at birth was less than 50%. We all prayed for a miracle. “Thank God!” for the creative knowledge, skills, talents and commitment He placed in the minds, hearts and hands of the surgeons, doctors and nurses at Minneapolis Children’s Hospital. “Thank God!” for the faith, trust and love He placed in the hearts of family and friends. The result was a successful surgery and recovery.

Today Kaya, our bouncing, energetic little miracle creation, is testimony to Jesus’ promise of greater works. (Kaya is Lakota for little turtle, and that’s another story....)

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for your love and power in our lives today. Thank you for Jesus our Redeemer, our hope and creation. Thank you for your Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts as we trust in the promises of your work. Amen.*

LeRoy Curwick



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