

**LIGHT OF CHRIST
DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET**



Behold, I am making
all things new.
~ Revelation 21:5



To All the Beloved

“To all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.” Romans 1:7

Or, as we might hear them today, ***“To all who are beloved of God in Delano, at Light of Christ, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”***

We, who are indeed God’s beloved, are enriched as we devote ourselves to Scripture, reading and prayer...together. As one church, as one family of faith, as a people who are united in the grace and goodness of Christ, enjoy these devotions written by fellow members of Light of Christ.

Indeed, ***“This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!”***

Psalm 118:24

February 10
Bruce Kuenzel

“Behold, I am making all things new.” Revelation 21:5

There is a confession of faith that we sometimes use in worship that is taken from the Iona Community, which is located off the coast of Scotland. There are many things I like about this confession and one of them is a line about the Holy Spirit that reads: “You showed how love makes all things new and opens the door to change and freedom.” God’s love makes all things new and, therefore, I’m not bound to the mistakes and sins and failings of my past. God’s love sets me free of the burden of my past so that each day is a new day, a new beginning, and a new start for me. The future is not bound by the past but open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Loving God, you are ever ancient and yet ever new. Free us from the mistakes and sins and failings of the past so that we may follow you into the future that you are preparing for us; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

February 11
Martin Luther

“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.” James 5:17

Cling to Christ in Prayer. These words, “in My name” [John 16:23], demand faith when one prays. They show that our own worthiness should not demand that we pray or achieve fulfillment, and that our unworthiness should not prevent us from praying; they show that we are surely heard solely for the sake of Christ, our only Mediator and High Priest before God.

Therefore our prayer must be centered in Him alone. All Christendom prays in this manner; it concludes and seals all its prayers and cries with the words “through Jesus Christ, our Lord.” In this way it brings its offerings to God in faith. Therefore you should do likewise, in order that you may defend yourself against the terrible thoughts which detain and deter you from prayer. Be sure not to let the devil delude you when he tells you that you are unworthy; but for this very reason fall on your knees when you feel that you are not worthy and cannot become worthy. Cling to Christ; make your prayer dependent on Him.

By no means be in doubt or uncertain when you pray; but believe confidently that your prayer has come before God, has reached its goal, and has already been granted. For it has been offered in the name of Christ and has been concluded with the amen with which Christ Himself here confirms His Word.

You hear by every prayer, my every need, my every desire, O Lord. Grant me faith to believe and trust in your unending mercy and love for me. And help me to receive your Spirit and guidance anew this day. Amen.

From Sermons on the Gospel of John, Chapters 14–16
(Luther’s Works 24:393–94)

February 12
Roland Carlson

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Psalms 46:1

If asked for an example of the work of the Holy Spirit in my life, my first response comes from an experience of 30 years

ago. I was suffering from debilitating back pain; doctors advised back surgery which would include a long recovery period and no promise of success. Troubled and in anguish, I prayed for help. (Psalms 46:1). Gratefully, Divine intervention was on the way! Calming words from a prominent doctor who “just happened” to be on a radio station I was listening to, stated that his non-surgical treatment, though controversial, was very successful in stopping pain, if sufferers could be “open minded” enough to accept it. Acceptance was the key!

I immediately acquired Dr. John Sarno’s book, and thus began my education into mind-body healing. The Holy Spirit “opened my mind” so wide that everything I read made sense, as if the doctor’s insights were written specifically for me. Within two weeks my pain was gone—never to return!

Lord, thank you for your wisdom and provision of help in my time of trouble. Recognizing that your Divine works may come to us in unconventional ways, I am grateful that you opened my mind to receive the healing I needed. Help me to always look to you first for guidance in my daily life. Amen.

February 13

Traci Torgerson

“He said, ‘Oh, Master, please! Send somebody else!’”
Exodus 4:13 from The Message:

I have often found myself making the same plea as Moses. “Please God, surely you are mistaken! The last thing I want to do is go to Lino Lakes Prison to worship with inmates.” And when God didn’t do it my way, I made my own plan. I would go to the rehearsal at church, but I would not sing up front with the Praise Team. Instead, I would just go along and be a member of our church. God responded by having the Praise Team leader tell me she needed more vocals,

and could I please give it a try. Well played, God. He knew I would not tell her no because she had done so much for me over the years. Fine, I will sing in the Praise Team. I'll be terrified because of where I am and the fact that I'm in a room with a few inmates – who aren't there for parking tickets. I didn't sleep well that night and was nervous all day. Then 4 p.m. came. I remember it clearly. What excuses can I make to the team, so I don't have to go? I couldn't muster up the courage to back out. Time to go to the church and ride along to a major prison....

Turn in my license, get a visitor badge – on a lanyard? Seriously? Isn't this a bit dangerous? Okay, Traci, put it on because everyone else is and you don't like to stand out. Walk into a holding area with our group, and the large metal door bangs shut! Okay, God! You have my attention! Not funny!

Walk across the prison yard where inmates are playing baseball – with bats? Seriously? Isn't this a bit dangerous? **One** guard is walking our **entire** group ACROSS the prison yard where inmates have bats? Oh God, PLEASE send somebody else!

Walk into the worship area where there are many MANY chairs. Again, seriously?! Won't these become weapons? God, I sure hope you know what you're doing! Men enter – there have to be a hundred or more. I'm checking my escape routes, scanning the room, making my plan to get out fast if something goes wrong. Wait! There are no extra guards in here? Seriously? Am I the only person that understands how dangerous this is?! Am I the only one having a silent panic attack?

We begin to sing. The men begin to sing. The united voices are so powerful. All I can see are men raising arms – to praise God! There are young, old, short, tall, many colors. Somehow, I now only see worshipers praising God. I don't

see a prisoner in the room. I feel a sense of ...joy? How?
What's happening?

The ride home, I'm so overwhelmed. And to this day, at least 15 years later, I cannot explain how moved I felt. I went to every Lino Lakes worship service from that day forward.

God has continued to use me in ways that made me doubt His common sense. He called me to be a foster care provider, a reader for worship, a Sunday School teacher, and many more things. Then I was asked to write a devotional. I volunteered to get others to write so that I wouldn't be asked to write! I do not feel qualified to write a devotional. But over the years, I've learned that if God sends it my way, I need to trust and follow.

Dear Heavenly Father, please help us to realize your calling for our church body. Sometimes we feel unqualified and fearful. In those times, remind us of a quote by Christine Caine: "God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called." Amen.

February 14
Janine Holter

"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

A recent estrangement from one I love dearly had me confused, angry, and grieving. As time progressed there was no clear indication what I had done to cause this separation. There was no successful action I could take during this time that could repair the relationship, except lifting it up in prayer. I needed to turn this over to God and be still. So, I did. My daily prayer was asking God to bless this person and lift them up. In time, and by God's grace, the reunion has been a sweet blessing.

Lord, you are great and good and give us all we desire. Help us to be still and listen to your good counsel. Amen.

February 15
Laurie Brown

When pondering the question, “How have I seen God’s kindness, generosity and supernatural love in my life?” I was initially stumped because there wasn’t one instance or event that stood out as “that time” it had occurred.

But, after thinking on it for a week, I realized that this question prompts another question for me...one that is even more interesting: “When have I not?”

The reality is that when I think about my life, I honestly can’t think of a single time that God hasn’t been generous or loving to me. I look around and I see God’s love everywhere.

At birth, I was blessed to be born into a family that loved me and nurtured me to independence.

From there, a loving God brought my husband into my life, which was probably the single most-generous example of God’s love; it has enabled the amazing life that I now live.

God has generously blessed me with three amazing children, surrounded me with a caring and supportive faith community, provided me with financial stability and blessed me with a healthy family. In addition, God has also forgiven me again and again for my many sins, which is the ultimate act of supernatural love.

Light of Christ is a place that can guide us to see God's love in our many blessings rather than focus on what we don't have or fall into jealousy over what others have that we might want. We, as a faith community, are blessed.

Lord, grant me this day an awareness of the immense blessings of my life. And help me to be a blessing to others, especially those who may be most in need. Grant me your heart, eyes and hands to do as you would have me do. Amen.

February 16
Melanie Paulson

“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

“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

I have always been a Christian, have always gone to church, and have prayed almost every day of my life. But it wasn't until our child was diagnosed with a life-changing disease that I realized how much I needed God. These verses are ones that give me hope in the midst of what seems to be an endless journey. Time and time again, I see glimpses of hope...people that come into our lives, or events that happen where I can see God's love. I know that I can trust that my child's life will be great, and I trust that healing will come! Without God's word, I would be lost.

Lord, you watch over me and bless me day by day. Help me to deepen my trust in you so that I might experience the joy

of your presence. And help me to be a blessing to others, that they, too, might know of your joy and hope. Amen.

February 17
Heidi Wuerger

Psalm 119:105,
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

It's easy to forget that every day is an extraordinary gift. Yet, other gifts grab your face with two hands and turn your head to focus on the glowing phenomenon – such as our children. As every parent knows, the time for your children to grow up happens in the blink of an eye. Now that my kids are almost graduated, I am so thankful that God's kindness and love have granted them an internal compass. I know their decisions are made with God's guiding touch. This allows me to excitedly participate in their journey.

I pray God's blanket of wisdom, comfort and love for each and every one of you, as life actively unfolds before you. Amen.

February 18
Gina Nee

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart [rejoice], I have overcome the world!" John 16:33

I love this scripture because Jesus is totally telling us the truth...we are going to have problems in this world. So when we do, we know He is not a liar; it is just as He said it would be.

Better yet...He goes on to tell us we can rejoice in our troubles because He has overcome the world (for us). This is so hard to comprehend because – I don't know about you – but rejoicing is the last thing I naturally feel like doing when a problem arises in my life! It is something I need to learn to do, however, because how I choose to respond to a problem can make all the difference in the world!

The other day I overheard someone talking and they said, "Don't you know by now that nothing can happen to you? It is not a guarantee, it is a warranty!" These couple sentences stood out to me and hit me from the Holy Spirit! I wrote them down and just pondered on the word "warranty."

A warranty is a guarantee that if anything goes wrong, it will be fixed. So, I thought of Jesus as my warranty, and the Father having the ability to fix anything. What an interesting way to look at it! In the past, I sometimes had trouble trusting and relying on God because of my troubles. I would have the thought, "If He allowed this trouble in – a trouble that feels like anything but love – how can you trust Him?"

But this truth about God, My Father, and Jesus, My Savior, gives me assurance that I can have peace in the midst of anything! Not only is my God able, He is also willing to help me fix anything! Isn't that what Jesus is trying to tell us in the Gospel of John, Chapter 16? That in any problem we have, we just need to ask for what we need and receive? We have direct access to God, the Father, because we have chosen and love the Son. We can rest assured that the Father hears us and answers us because of His love for us in His Son! He sees us as He see His Son – with perfect love!

The more confident I become in believing this, the more confident I become in discovering and asking for what I need. It seems the more I confidently come and ask for what I need, the more I am finding that the Father really does answer! And the more He answers the more I experience His love and grow in my love and gratitude for Jesus!

Thank you, Father, for Your Son! Thank you that in Jesus we can have confidence and assurance to come boldly to your throne of grace and obtain mercy, and find your favor in our time of need! Please help us grow in greater wisdom and knowledge of this treasure. Amen!

February 19
Laura Jaunich

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7

As a new mom, I would wake up multiple times a night to feed my daughter. I would dread the night time and the feeling of loneliness, anxiety, and exhaustion that came with it. At night I had plenty of time to fret over all of the things that mothers worry about, and plenty of other things as well. Was my baby eating enough; was she sleeping enough; did I do a good job on that work assignment; did I make the right decision the other day? Turning my doubts and fears over to Jesus has helped make an anxious, lonely time into a calm and peaceful time. With each subsequent baby I have learned to enjoy the quiet and the peace that comes with nighttime baby duties. Instead of dreading it, I turn all of my fears and anxiety over to God. What was once a period of worry and doubt turned into the most peaceful and sacred time of my day.

Dear Jesus,

Forgive me for doubting and worrying and not living a life of trust. Help me to trust in you and your love for me, and to feel confident that you have the unknown future under

control. Grant me the grace and peace that I need. Thank you for accepting me as I am, worries and all. I give them all to you now, in Jesus' name, Amen.

February 20
Wendy Towne

"By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10

The very concept of grace is a tough one to grasp for me, especially when I read that it's a gift from God – that there's nothing I can do to earn it or lose it. What greater love can there be? I once heard it said that Jesus knew what he was paying for on the cross, and has no buyer's remorse. It seems to be human nature to judge others – and often ourselves – based on "works". While we were created for good works, our works do not determine the love and grace we receive. What a blessing that we truly get to start each new day washed in the favor and grace of God.

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me for me, for loving me even though and still. I choose to receive your grace and goodness each day. May I be a light unto others that they may see you through me. Amen.

February 21

Midge Amend

Have you ever noticed the word "Acclamation" in the Order of Service printed in our weekly church bulletin? Like me, did you briefly ponder what that word meant, or did you shrug it off as just another of those oblique words often associated with church rituals? Out of curiosity, I decided to look at an online dictionary for the word's meaning, and here is what it said: "Strong and enthusiastic approval or praise."

In reference to church, the Acclamation is usually sung just before the Gospel is read -- honoring and alerting us to listen and hear God's good news about Jesus. It is used to welcome the Gospel reading, and is sometimes reverent, sometimes cheerful and fun to sing, sometimes short and sometimes longer depending on the message that will be presented in the Gospel reading.

There are many different Acclamations to choose from in our hymnals. I have begun to make a kind of study of them – in fact I am sometimes using them as a daily devotion. If the tune of one sticks with me, I find myself humming or singing the short verse off and on during the day -- maybe while making the bed or washing dishes, e.g., "This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made..." (p. 234 in "The Other Songbook") or "Alleluia, Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord" (p. 671 in "With One Voice"). There are MANY to choose from. My favorites are those that have a nice melody that sticks with me...and becomes a kind of prayer. Martin Luther is credited with saying something like, "He who sings a prayer prays twice." I believe he means that the musical offering is a gift to God as much as the prayer written in words, thus there are two prayers being offered. What a fun way to pray!

So, the next time that Pastor announces that we should rise and sing the Gospel Acclamation, look at it differently and

sing it joyfully as intended, as a thanks for the good news from God's Word that we are about to hear. It is becoming a favorite part of our worship service for me.

"Lord, thank you for the gift of words to express our thoughts and ideas, and the even greater gift of music which puts us in touch with our soul." Amen.

February 22
Kirsten Kelly

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." 1 John 4:7-8

Thinking back, I hardly remember a time when I didn't feel loved. In this way, I feel extremely lucky. My parents, although not perfect, loved each other very much and will have been married 50 years this May. Their love and example in our lives truly has been a gift! Although there were some challenging times in my house growing up, there never was a time when I questioned whether I was deeply, unconditionally loved by my family and ultimately by God. This is probably what helped me survive my teenage years... especially trials that I went through during my 8th grade year.

Besides the fact that I was going to a brand new school, my 8th grade year started off pretty "normal". The summer before, several of the small towns in our area had merged to form a new school district and created the first middle school in our area. My mom had taken the job as the Middle School Counselor and we both would now be commuting to school/work. This meant that I'd be riding the bus to school for the first time in my life. School was now a 20-minute drive versus a two-block walk. Being an extrovert, I enjoyed

meeting the new kids while also hanging out with old friends. But by late fall/winter of that year, I began getting teased by several kids in my grade. The details aren't important (nor are they easy to think about), but what I remember is how I felt: alone, scared, worried and unlovable. This was the first time in my life that I felt so unloved. And yet it was the knowledge that I was a beloved child of God that helped me to survive these months of ridicule and bullying.

This experience is partly why I feel called to ministry. Just as I needed to know and feel God's unconditional love during this time of my life in order to survive, kids today face things that I never dreamed would be realities. They need to know God's unconditional love now more than ever. During a time when we base our self-worth on how many social media "friends" we have and who likes our posts, unconditional love is becoming somewhat foreign in our culture.

As we walk through the journey of Lent, I encourage you to find one way each day to help a child feel its worth. Look in their eyes, call them by name and tell them they are a beloved child of God. It might just give them something to live for in a world where they feel like they have no worth.

Lord, grant me today such a deep awareness of your unconditional love that I might be freed to love others as you would have me do. And help me to especially be mindful of children and those in need, and to be a blessing to all I encounter this day. Amen.

February 23
Cynthia Kuenzel

"Now, friends, I want to report on the surprising and generous ways in which God is working in the churches in the Macedonia province. Fierce troubles came down on the people of those churches, pushing them to the very limit. The trial exposed their true colors: They were incredibly happy, though desperately poor. The pressure triggered

something totally unexpected: an outpouring of pure and generous gifts. I was there and saw it for myself. They gave offerings of whatever they could—far more than they could afford! —pleading for the privilege of helping out in the relief of poor Christians. This was totally spontaneous, entirely their own idea, and caught us completely off guard. What explains it was that they had first given themselves unreservedly to God and to us. The other giving simply flowed out of the purposes of God working in their lives. I'm not trying to order you around against your will. But by bringing in the Macedonians' enthusiasm as a stimulus to your love, I am hoping to bring the best out of you. You are familiar with the generosity of our Master, Jesus Christ. Rich as he was, he gave it all away for us—in one stroke he became poor and we became rich.”

2 Corinthians 8:1-9 The Message

Thirty-five years ago, we became the recipient of Mark and Ann's tithe. Bruce and I and our two girls had moved to a run-down rental house in St. Paul so Bruce could attend Luther Seminary. It would be Bruce's fifth year of seminary. We had very little income and qualified for public assistance. Our friends, Mark and Ann, and their two children were living in South Dakota while Mark did his internship year. One winter month, we received a check and a note from Mark and Ann. They had prayed about where to give their tithe that month and felt led to send it to us. They, too, had very little income, yet were so generous. That check was truly an answer to our prayers. Our friends' generosity reminded me that God's gracious generosity comes without strings; it is given freely out of love.

Gracious Lord, help us to be like the Macedonians, clamoring for the opportunity to show generosity. Open our hearts to see all the ways that you have been so generous to us. Open our eyes to see the needs of those around us. Open our hands as we use them to show your generosity to others in need. Amen.

February 24
Carmen Hanson

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

God's love is a gift to us. It's a gift we don't deserve, especially when I think of myself before others, when I hurt someone else. His generosity overwhelms me; His blessings overflow my cup. Accept God's gift with open arms and let God and others love you. Purposefully open yourself to receive God's wonderful gift of love. If you find yourself down because you have done something wrong, remember God's love and that it is a gift to you.

*God,
Thank you for your gift of love. I know I don't deserve your love. Help me to love everyone, as we are all your children, made perfectly in your image. Amen.*

February 25
Dave Wuerger

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John 13:34

These powerful words are a guideline on how to live a good and fulfilling life. By becoming truly human, God has given us an example of how to love others and look beyond our differences. The values he demonstrated transcend time, and the people that live them are shining examples for all.

*Lord,
I pray that we continue to be a loving community of faith that is open to all. Help us to love one another and have a positive impact and influence on the lives of all. Amen.*

February 26

Peter Grant

You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. Psalm 18:28

During my times of loss over the years I have always felt and known that God had my back and there would be light after the darkness. The sunshine that I now have in my life I know is God given. I am thankful and give thanks every day and night for the blessings in my life. I know if things go dark again, there will be light.

Lord, I pray that others will find the light through the church that I have with Your guidance and love. Amen.

February 27

Brenna Demeules

Your generosity defines your experience:

“One gives freely yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.” Proverbs 11:24-25

I don't get to take it with me when I go. That's not really my motto, but it puts a different perspective on every situation where money is involved in my life and I don't know the right path to take. It's not really anything but paper and gets me things I "need" (we all know there is a difference between need and want even when we don't always feel it). I came from a poor family, but I sure didn't feel poor in spirit. I remember not being able to have "things" but remember being happy and have incredible memories.

We didn't have money to go to Valleyfair, so instead we went to the Humane Society to see the animals. What kid doesn't love animals!?! I feel like that was God's kindness to me – how to really live without material things while being creative and making memories and relationships. Now as I an adult, I can buy myself things that I like, but I also find much more joy in giving to others. I remember that feeling longer than I remember the material possession.

Sometimes money is tight and I find myself saying once again, "You don't get to take it with you when you go," when I give to church or to a fundraiser or a family member in need. I feel really uncomfortable doing it and worry if I spent too much and took away from the needs of our immediate family. But every time – every time, I kid you not – money comes in from somewhere. A debt repaid from someone at the right time, a birthday/Christmas/other gift, a sale of something we own, a bonus at work. Each and every time it brings me to tears because I know it's God's way of saying, "Thank you for helping me take care of others; now, let me take care of you."

This Bible verse speaks to me in this same way. I definitely feel happier, richer and my heart feels fuller when I give than when I buy something for myself. And if I see someone else do the same, I feel my heart explode with joy. What a better and happier world it would be if we all took care of each other without fear for our own lives, but in faith that we will always be taken care of.

Dear Lord -

I thank you so much for everything you have blessed me with. Please guide me to use these blessings to bless others and rejoice in your name. Thank you for always showing yourself when my faith waivers. I love you. Amen.

February 28
Tom Sebelien

“Know Thyself!” Greek Aphorism-Socrates
“Physician, heal thyself.” Luke 4:23

Lord, grant me the wisdom to see myself as I am, not as I think I am. With the help of the Holy Spirit, help me find the ways to become a better person. I want to be a person who shares your love with others. Amen.

March 1
Tim Johnson

“It is finished.” John 19:30

Three words.

Sometimes I think that these are the three most important words in the Bible. Obviously, there's a backstory; for certain, there's a lot behind the words.

You likely remember that as Jesus came to the conclusion of his earthly ministry, after he had accomplished everything that his Father had intended for him, that he gave his life up willingly upon the cross in order to die once and for all (Romans 6:10), for my sins and for yours. This sacrifice, this gift of pure grace and undeserved love, gains us everything – perfect standing with God, eternal life, favor and blessings, access to God's wisdom and guidance and power, confidence that we're not alone, and the opportunity to begin again, to leave the past behind, to turn over a new leaf, to step optimistically into the next moment of our lives. Sometimes, perhaps more than I'd like to admit, all sorts of apprehensions and fears creep in. I can feel stuck, guilty, ashamed, worried, anxious, lonely, and not at all convinced that God loves me or is for me. I can feel like I should do something, get my act together, work harder, be more

faithful, become more acceptable. But then I remember these words of Jesus: “It is finished.” Over. Done. Accomplished. Completed. Jesus’ mission to save me from my sin and to restore my relationship with God, giving me complete and total access to His grace, mercy and power, is accomplished. And now, now I am invited to live in that reality, that truth. He has done it all. He has done the work. The gift is mine. Indeed, when my faith is renewed in these three words, it is nothing less than a new day!

Lord, your finished work on the cross accomplished everything that I could not. You paid for my sin, you bridged the gap, you brought peace, your forgiveness and mercy is complete. And now you have called me to live this new day in freedom, grace and courage. Help me to be mindful today for others I encounter who are also in need of grace and blessing. Fill me with your Spirit, that I might bless and help others as you have done for me. Amen.

March 2

Tim Johnson

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Jesus – Matthew 6:21

I don’t know about you, but it sure seems clear that God’s ways are so often counter-intuitive. And nowhere, perhaps, is that more persistently evident than in Scripture—in God’s Word. In fact, these words from Jesus are such words for me. I would have said it differently. I think I would have made a statement about giving, about generosity, about treasure, exactly the opposite: “For where your heart is, there will your treasure be also.” You know, whatever are the things of your heart, surely your resources, support and

treasure will follow. Makes sense, right? But that's not what Jesus says. He says that our hearts follow our treasure.

I remember being at a faith conference once when the presenter was speaking on money—on giving. He asked us to take out our checkbooks (shows you how long-ago it was!) and to hold on to them as he was speaking with us about a very personal matter—our own giving of treasure. He said that our checkbook registers told the truth about what was important to us. He said that many of us *said* that God's Kingdom, the ways of Christ, the work of the church, were all important to us. Or that the Lord's work was where our heart was. Yet he said the truth was that it was likely not as accurate as we would like to believe. And he said that the problem was that too many of us were waiting to feel moved, to have something touch our hearts, before we would be generous. And that's when he suggested that we had it all backward. Give, he said, and your heart will follow. That's how it works.

The church is the Body of Christ, and each one of us are members of that Body—members of the church (1st Cor. 12:27). We're a motley crew, in some ways. We're most certainly imperfect, challenged, seemingly without much that we might need, struggling to be "up to the task." And yet, we are exactly who God says we are—God's holy people (Deut. 7:6), His light—a city on a hill (Matt. 5:14), chosen (Deut. 14:2), and part of God's household (Eph. 2:19). Being generous, giving of our treasure, all demonstrate that we trust God's ways and power. And that the church—our church—is exactly where it is that God intends to work faith, miracles and new life! So, our treasures, for the work of Christ's church, will lead our hearts, as well.

Lord, help me to more deeply trust you. Everything that I have has come from you. You have provided for me all

along; you will continue to do so. May my treasure reflect my faith in you. And may my heart follow into the joy of your love. Amen.

March 3
David Schneck

“You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the fields will clap their hands.” Isaiah 55:12

Abundant, tangible joy. That is what our Lord is to us. There is no definitive end-goal for your path, though I can guarantee there is immense joy in sharing that path with the one true Love, Jesus Christ. Love so infectious, so palpable that all of God’s creation cannot help but burst out in song and celebration. So, march on through whatever trials and tribulation that may await you on your path. March on with the most beautiful song in your stride. And do not hesitate to sing along.

*Lord,
Thank you for walking with us on our journeys. Your presence is a gift to the world. Teach us to spread love and joy with every step we take. Amen.*

March 4
Penny Bailey

"He restoreth my soul and surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Psalm 23

Words from an old hymn speak to this:

Vs 1. Give to the wind thy fears hope and be undismayed. God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears. God shall lift up

thy head. Through wind and clouds and storms He gently clears the way. Wait thou his time so shall the night soon end in glorious day.

Vs 2. Still heavy is thy heart still sink thy spirits down?
Cast off the weight let fear depart and every care be gone.
He everywhere hath sway and all things serve his mind.
His every act pure blessing is his path unsullied light.

It was the fall of 1995. My father had suffered a catastrophic stroke in the summer and had been in a vegetative coma. He was slipping away and no hope was left. The future was full of hardship since I would now have sole care of my mother who had dementia. My present and future were filled with grief, financial destitution and fear. At that time, I was unchurched but had "church" by myself in the woods with an old hymnal. This hymn was my sustaining rock in the difficult years that followed. It starts out expressing fear and the storms of life, but ends praising God's sustaining love that restored my spirit and kept me going.

Eight years later, when Mom went into the nursing home, God led me to Light of Christ. The love of God was truly a beacon that shown from the church and its members to sustain me through 10 more years of poverty and hardship. I tithe because God has a bottomless love and generosity. Tithing is important to me to express my love and service to God for everything he has done for me.

O Lord, your presence with me is as certain as the air I breathe. Make me aware this day of all the ways you lead and bless me. Strengthen me with your grace and love and give me opportunity to lead others into an awareness of your great love and your peace-filled presence. Amen.

March 5
Gary Prinsen

“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6: 37-38

We are so blessed to live where we live with the lifestyles we so very much enjoy. This passage, to me, is a great reminder of how God’s Word can guide us in our daily lives. It matters how we think about people and how we treat others. We can be humble, unassuming and nonjudgmental in our interactions with everyone in our daily lives. We are encouraged to give what we can because it will be given back to us as God promises. Our mission at Light of Christ includes giving back to those in need, and we should continue to aspire to stretch our giving as it will come back to us in many, blessed ways!

Dear Lord,

Thank you for this congregation and church home. We are so blessed in your presence. Help us all to believe in our hearts that what we give will be returned in the same measure to us. Please place in a us a thankful and generous spirit and the courage to act! Amen.

March 6
Dan Langner

“The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name sake. 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. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

This psalm has helped me through many problems and troubling events during my life. No matter what is troubling me, there is always some verse in the 23rd Psalm to help me through it. It doesn't matter if it's money issues, relationship problems or just life in general. The 23rd Psalm has always been there to help me.

It comes down to...we need to trust God and His Word to help and guide us through life!

Lord,

As we navigate this next step in the future of Light of Christ, we ask for your help and guidance. Please help everyone to work toward a common goal. With your help we can touch more lives, showing your love and grace.

In your name we pray. Amen.

March 7

Kim Wortz

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

1 Peter 4:10

I am a mom of three kids with busy schedules. We had been members for a long time and I'd never gotten involved in the church. One Sunday morning I read in the bulletin of a leadership role opening. That morning God came to me and guided me to say Yes. He gave me peace about this decision and I never had thoughts about how I would fit this

into our schedules. Since then I have joined two other groups. My involvement in church has changed my life.

O Lord, you come to us sometimes in unexpected times and in unexpected ways. Yet you are always about the work of blessing us. Help me today to remain open and attentive to how and where your light is shining, so that I might not only be blessed but also be a blessing to others, as well. Amen.

March 8
Laurie Langner

“The Lord takes pleasure in his people.” Psalm 149:4

God wants us to be like Him – kind, giving and loving. So I just looked back at this last month and thought of times that I saw three examples of how He wants us be.

Kindness: I was in an airport just waiting for my flight when I heard this young gal yelling “Ma’am, Ma’am!” I turned and saw her running in the corridor carrying a scarf. She caught up with a lady pulling luggage. The young gal said, “I think you dropped your scarf.” The lady looked surprise that this young gal picked it up instead of walking right over it. Then came the smile; she was so thankful. What a small, simple act of kindness that took approximately one minute and, I’m sure, made that lady’s day.

Generosity: TSA workers at the airport had been working without pay due to the government shutdown. Passengers were giving them gift cards for groceries and gas.

Love: The first time I was able to see our newest grandchild. I picked little Ramona up and wrapped my arms around her and looked at her like she was the only little one in the whole world. Instant love, just like God’s love for us. He has His

arms wrapped around us every moment of the day and never takes His eyes off of us. We are His children and He wants the very best for us.

Lord,

Please keep your arms around all of us as we try to be like you – kind, generous and loving. Amen.

March 9

Andrea Quandt

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched and one who waters will himself be watered. Proverbs 11:24-25

Generosity is a quality that's a lot like unselfishness. When you happily give your time, money, or food to someone God has placed in your path you demonstrate generosity. When you are forgiving and gentle to people, you show generosity of spirit.

Generosity comes in many forms and, as I look back, I realize it has defined my life experience. My heart is full when I think of all the generous people God has placed in my path...

My prayer partner – assigned to me through a mentoring program at church in 6th grade – who kept in touch with me through tough times in junior high, high school, college, and my first years of marriage struggling to figure out how to be a good partner.

My parents, who cooked frozen pizza after frozen pizza for my friends and me and carted us safely to activity after activity without complaint.

My husband, who stepped in to help with the day-to-day things when I couldn't find a way to accomplish them in the months that I struggled with anxiety.

So much time, so much love, so many kind words and deeds... *happily* given.

Dear Lord,

Thank you so much for your gift of generosity. Help us each day to recognize the people You place in our paths. Give us the wisdom to recognize what they need from us, and the spirit to happily give it. Amen.

March 10: ***Celebration Sunday***

From the Evangelical Lutheran Worship hymnal #27

Halle, Halle, Halle, Hallelujah!

The word, Hallelujah, is an oft-used word for Christians. It is a translation from two Hebrew words, literally meaning, "Praise the name of the Lord."

We are reminded as Christians that the name, Jesus, literally means, God saves. And as Romans 10:13 states, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

So, today's devotion is a hymn. Sing the words if you remember the tune, or simply pray them and be mindful of the unmerited grace and unconditional love of this Lord whom we're called to praise:

1. *Oh, God to whom shall we go?
You alone have the words of life.
Let your words be our prayer
and our song we sing:
Hallelujah, hallelujah. [Refrain]*

2. *My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord.
When I call them, they follow me.
I will lead them to rest
by the restful streams:
Hallelujah, hallelujah. [Refrain]*

3. *I am the light of the world says the Lord.
Walk in the light of life.
All who follow my words
shall have life indeed:
Hallelujah, hallelujah. [Refrain]*

4. *Now Christ is raised up from death,
he will never die again.
All who follow his way
shall have life in him:
Hallelujah, hallelujah. [Refain]*

*Halle, halle, hallelujah! Halle, halle, hallelujah! Halle, halle,
hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!*