



Welcome

Welcome to the Bryn Mawr newsletter, *Spiritual Reflections*. The idea behind the content is to deliver news and information to and from Bryn Mawr's parishioners and the good work we are doing in the community and on our own spiritual journeys. Please feel free to share with us your own spiritual reflection to publish in the newsletter every other month. We hope you enjoy!

A Blessing for the New Year

By John O'Donohue

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

On the day when
The weight deadens
On your shoulders
And you stumble,
May the clay dance
To balance you.

And when your eyes
Freeze behind
The gray window
And the ghost of loss
Gets into you,
May a flock of colors,
Indigo, red, green
And azure blue,
Come to awaken in you
A meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays
In the curragh of thought
And a stain of ocean
Blackens beneath you,
May there come across the waters
A path of yellow moonlight
To bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
May the clarity of light be yours,
May the fluency of the ocean be yours,
May the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow
Wind work these words
Of love around you,
An invisible cloak
To mind your life.

The Power of Story

By Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

We have just celebrated Christmas and instead of just reading scripture on Christmas Eve, we heard three stories about life and faith from the last century. It has been about 1500 years since the canon of the Christian Scripture was closed by a Roman Emperor. During the many years that have passed, there are countless stories of ordinary people, striving to find meaning in their lives at a particular point of history. These stories tell me that God has been alive, is alive, and working in the world, up to the present day. Contemporary stories should excite us if we believe in the truth of the Holy Spirit.

The tradition of Christianity developed the Doctrine of the Trinity to explain the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament is focused on the work of God the father in relationship to Israel, in the ancient world. The New Testament is focused on the work of God the son, in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, also in the ancient world. These testaments are considered Holy, and unfortunately the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, since these books were written, has been ignored. Maybe it is time to realize that all stories are scared and that human beings have had encounters with God for centuries.

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The Bible is primarily a book of stories. The writers wrote down the oral stories that had been shared from one generation to another, because they had united the community and given meaning to their existence. They described their encounters with God, a mystery beyond knowing, based on who they were and what they understood about their lives. This is true of modern stories, in both fiction and non-fiction.

One of the central ways stories are shared today is found in the form of the novel. The reader does not have to approach the story as anything factual or real, even though some aspects of it may be both. Instead, the story invites the reader to travel into it and perhaps find something that resonates with his or her lived experience.

As the power and status of the church as an institution has lost its influence in the world, the power and influence of story has strengthened. The Moth Radio Hour demonstrates the power of narration and story. Started in Georgia in the summer of 1997 by George Dawes Green, in his living room, the event moved to a main stage. People did and still do buy tickets and fill large halls, to listen to the stories of strangers. By 2017, some 3000 stories had been shared. In 2009, NPR created the Moth Radio Hour. Today there are Moth events all over the world and it can be heard on 250 radio stations. The name, The Moth, was selected because when people would gather on their porches, to share stories with either electric light, or candles, the moths would fly to the light. This is a perfect metaphor for the church. Making the Gospel story relevant by connecting it to modern stories could bring people to the light.

Another demonstration of the power of story can be found in the search for ancestors that people are presently engaging in. They want to know the stories behind the actions and behavior that generations before them had experienced. This knowledge and insight often helps individuals better understand themselves. When individuals develop a deeper sense of their stories, they can relate more easily to the Biblical stories and it is the power of this relationship that has allowed the Bible to speak to many people over time.

The church needs to once again teach people the stories found in scripture and connect them to the work of the Holy Spirit in modern stories. This connection between the ancient world and the world

today, requires new ways to interpret Biblical stories. It allows people to engage and challenge the stories with knowledge, with reason and with deep feelings. These challenges can assist in developing meaning in their lives and perhaps bring them back into the community of the Christian faith.

The Ethical Trade Company

By Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

On January 14, after worship, there will be a presentation by the owners of The Ethical Trade Company. They have a short video on YouTube, that we can watch. Then they will share their motivations for creating their company and have a display of the products they sell. Please put the date on your calendar.

Because books have been my salvation, I wish to start a book club, one afternoon a month, with a focus specifically on books about the Christian faith, theology and spiritually. If anyone is interested, we can begin in Jan.

Close

From Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words, 2019 ©

David Whyte: Canongate Books UK

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

Close is what we almost always are: close to happiness, close to another, close to leaving, close to tears, close to God, close to losing faith, close to being done, close to saying something, or close to success, and even with the greatest sense of satisfaction, close to giving the whole thing up....

Our human essence lies not in arrival, but in being almost there: we are creatures who are on the way, our journey a series of impending anticipated arrivals. We live by unconsciously measuring the inverse distances of our proximity: an intimacy calibrated by the vulnerability we feel in giving up our sense of separation.

To go beyond our normal identities and become closer than close is to lose our sense of self in temporary joy, a form of arrival that only opens us to deeper forms of intimacy that blur our fixed, controlling, surface identities.

To consciously become close is a courageous form of unilateral disarmament, a chancing of our arm and our love, a willingness to hazard our affections and an unconscious declaration that we

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might be equal to the inevitable loss that the vulnerability of being close will bring.

Human beings do not find their essence through fulfillment or eventual arrival but by staying close to the way they like to travel, to the way they hold the conversation between the ground on which they stand and the horizon to which they go. We are, in effect, always close, always close to the ultimate secret: that we are more real in our simple wish to find a way than any destination we could reach; the step between not understanding that and understanding that is as close as we get to happiness.

By Gary Zukav

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

This a beautiful story a Sioux friend told me: The Creator gathered all of creation and said, "I want to hide something from the humans until they are ready for it. It is the realization that **they create their own reality.**" The eagle said, "Give it to me, I will take it to the moon." The Creator said, "No. One day they will go and find it." The salmon said, "I will hide it on the bottom of the ocean." "No. They will go there, too." The buffalo said, "I will bury it on the great plains." The Creator said, "They will cut into the skin of the earth and find it even there." The Grandmother Mole, who lives in the breast of Mother Earth, and who has no physical eyes but sees with spiritual eyes, said: "Put it inside them." And the Creator said, "It is done."

By Brother David Steindl-Rast

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

"There are some who claim not to know gratefulness. But is there anyone who never knew surprise? Does springtime not surprise us anew each year? Or that expanse of the bay opening up as we come around the bend of the road? Is it not a surprise each time we drive that way? What counts on our path to fulfillment is that we remember the great truth that moments of surprise want to teach us: everything is gratuitous, everything is gift."

Gratitude

Copied from Awakin.org

By Tiruvalluvar

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

A good turn done is a
heaven-born gift you
cherish

Ask 'Will (they) repay
it?' and it'll perish

A helpful act
howsoever slight

When timely, acquires
true height

To help without
thinking 'What's in it
for me?'

Is to be, for the helped one, vaster than the sea
Help, like the millet seed, may itself be small
But its spirit stands like a palmyra tree, tall

Don't judge help by its shape or size-'is it large or is
it small?'

See how it met a need, if it has met it at all

When with ill-fortune you feel mighty sore

Just recall the pure ones who helped you in your woe

You will in all your seven lives bless

Those who've helped you in your distress

If you've been helped, don't forget it, not for a single
day

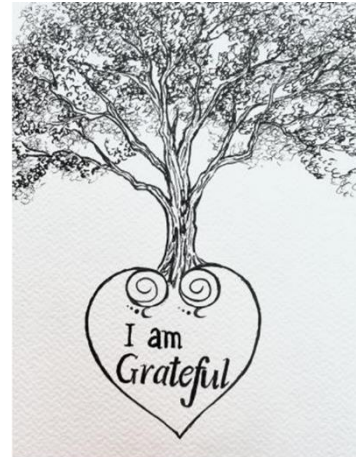
But if you've been wronged, you must forget it-and
right away!

When the wrong done to you hurts like a sore

Recall one good the wrong-doer may've done and
forget the woe

Forget to do good and you may find salvation yet

But forget gratitude and you're headed for
destruction's net.



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Sympathy, Empathy and Compassion

Copied from Awakin.org

By Jay Litvin

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

Pity, sympathy, empathy, compassion. Each is received at various times by one in distress. They are the responses engendered by our misfortunes from those we encounter. And each feels different when received. Each has a different effect on those who are suffering in the midst of psychic or physical crisis.

Of the four, compassion has a unique quality, a quality so different from the rest that it connotes a certain spiritual as well as emotional characteristic. Perhaps for this reason it is often cited in spiritual/religious texts as a virtue to be sought and developed.

The recipient of compassion feels its superiority immediately. Unlike pity, it has no condescension. Unlike empathy, it does not require a past or present similar experience on the part of the giver. And while sympathy is a wonderful virtue, it connotes less spontaneity and variety than compassion; one would not normally associate laughter or frivolity with sympathy, for example. And there is also a certain distance or separation inherent in sympathy, one sympathizes with the other. A very wonderful quality, still, sympathy stands at a different level than compassion.

While sympathy is a tender response to misfortune or difficulty, compassion is a way of life.

The dictionary offers the following root for compassion: *Com (with) - pati (to suffer)*, to suffer with.

But there is another definition, one that does not limit compassion as a response to suffering, but rather to life itself, making it a quality that one would live with in every situation, with every person, rather than only with one who is in distress.



Com-passion: *Com (with) - passion (strong feeling, enthusiasm)*; to be with another in strong feeling and with enthusiasm.

Compassion, then, does not require sadness, sorrow or even the desire to help, though it could include all these things. It simply means being fully present with someone no matter the circumstances of his or her life. Compassion suspends judgment and takes each circumstance equally — each as a moment of life to be lived in its fullness. It. All possible emotions and feelings and behaviors of which we are capable are inherent in every moment, in every circumstance.

And so, compassion comes with no preconceptions. It has no attitudes. It has no special face or tone of voice. It is not bound by rules of behavior, decorum, expectations, though it may be guided by all of these things.

Compassion is prepared to meet others wherever they are, recognizing that the circumstance or challenge they now face is as much a part of their life as any other part of their life. Compassion can laugh or cry, joke or commiserate, be curious and inquisitive, chatty or silent. Compassion is not afraid to be fully present, hopeful, or lighthearted. Compassion does not turn away. It is never afraid to see beauty or find humor or share a fractured heart.

Camas Lilies

By Lynn Ungar

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

Consider the lilies of the field.
the blue banks of camas opening
into acres of sky along the road.
Would the longing to lie down
and be washed by that beauty
abate if you knew their usefulness,
how the natives ground their bulbs
for flour, how the settler's hogs
uprooted them, grunting in gleeful
oblivion as the flowers fell?

And you---what of your rushed
and useful life? Imagine settling it all down-
papers, plans, appointments, everything-
leaving only a note: "Gone
to the fields to be lovely. Be back
when I am through blooming."

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Even now, unneeded and uneaten,
the camas lilies gaze out above the grass
from their tender blue eyes.
Even in sleep your life will shine.
Make no mistake. Of course
your work will always matter.
Yet Solomon in all his glory
was not arrayed like one of these.

Epiphany

By Sarah Rossiter

Submitted by Herb Evert

After the Birth,
The season of light--
Out of the darkness,
The moonflower opens,
Luminous, petals
Unfurling in the night,
As the star beckons,
Guiding us across
The lunar landscape
To stable lit
By new life, a candle
Cradled, light bearing
Light.

Thresholds

By Herb Evert

A threshold is the base of a doorway through which one enters or exits. As such it is a powerful metaphor for the many decisions one makes in life: to join a gang or try to maintain one's independence; to continue one's education or take a job; to marry or not. It is, as well, a metaphor for what happens to one within one's life: from dependence to independence; from health to illness and hopefully back again; from youth to aged; from life to death. In each of these instances one "crosses over a threshold" from one state of being to another, and one's life is often forevermore changed. To "cross a threshold" is as close as a human being comes to a metamorphosis.

The most cataclysmic metamorphosis in my life was to watch helplessly as our first-born, a little girl born six weeks prematurely, and her mother, crossed the threshold from almost certain death to life over the span of two months and many years.

My wife Jeanne and I met in high school and married young. We were both 21 when we each

proclaimed "I do!", and we enjoyed four carefree years together before she sweetly informed me that I was about to become a Father. We had graduated from college together and were then in seminary, she as a faculty secretary and me as a student. Money was, as for most seminarians, scarce to non-existent, but we were wondrously happy, doing what we had planned to do in preparation for a future we had mapped out together. And then this news. This wasn't part of "the plan"! Now what? My wife was as serene and confident as an expectant Mother can be, glowing more beautifully with every day. I, on the other hand, scaled the emotional range from panic to euphoria and back again. But together we set about gathering all we knew would be needed and arranging our efficiency apartment to accommodate a new-born whom we finally and joyfully accepted as God's gift to our union.

Then, in the seventh month of her pregnancy, Jeanne became terribly ill, toxemia endangering both her life and that of our baby. When the available medical procedures failed and my wife's health became seriously imperiled, labor was induced and our child was born six weeks early, a helpless and almost lifeless little waif weighing just four pounds three ounces. She was whisked away to an incubator before either my wife or I could see her much less hold her, and there she remained for six weeks while my wife's condition finally stabilized enough for her to come home but without our child. In her weakness and her emotional state of not knowing whether our little girl would live or die, my wife's despair was overwhelming, while I, fearing that I would lose them both, did my best to comfort her while praying for all of us. Family members, friends, classmates and professors supported us in every way they could, but we all lingered in a state of limbo as the threshold of death's door loomed before us.

In the sixth week of our daughter's incubation, something seemingly miraculous to us occurred. Our baby began to move on her own, to gain an appetite, to begin to grow, to smile and laugh and cry and struggle, to move away from death's door and to enter that of life. Tears of joy supplanted tears of grief, and prayers of supplication gave way to prayers of thanksgiving as within a week of her transformation our baby came home. And with her she brought her Mother back to life as well.

It took many months, in fact a couple of

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years, for my girls to overcome the aftereffects of their respective traumas, but overcome them they did. Our little girl grew into an active, vivacious young woman who would eventually have two daughters of her own, our first grandchildren. And six years after that difficult birth of our first child, Jeanne bore us a son with minimal ill effects.

I am both a grandfather and a great-grandfather now, well into my ninth decade and blessed with a wonderful family. My wife has preceded me across the threshold of death's door, and I will soon follow her. Meanwhile that precious daughter of mine, Jeannine, lives nearby and does everything in her power to forestall my demise, for which I am most grateful. But as she busies herself with my care, I cannot help but remember the metamorphosis she herself underwent to share with us and with me the blessed days of our lives.

Ash Mark

By J. Barrie Shepherd
Submitted by Herb Evert

Thumb-born across the temples,
Earth's smear, in all the surface brush
and shove, wipes speedily away.
But to those who bear the season,
who wear the stark and somber mark within,
a depth plumbs deeper
than the tomb, a path leads
beyond the dust toward the garden,
a light that shines beyond mortality's
dark warning.

Congratulations Herb!

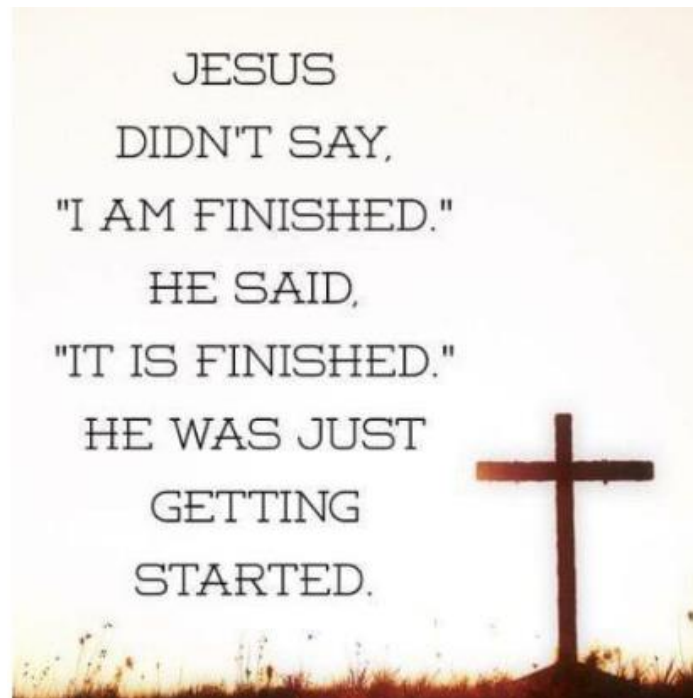
Congratulations to Herb Evert! His essay on the subject of "Splash" was published in Christian Century. He received money and a free subscription for a year.

Also, Herb has published a book entitled "A Break in the Clouds: Stories of Family, Friends, Fields, Forest and Faith".

Submitted by Jeannine McKoy

The Dentist's Hymn.....Crown Him with Many Crowns
The Weatherman's Hymn..There Shall Be Showers of Blessings
The Contractor's Hymn.....How Firm a Foundation
The Tailor's Hymn.....Holy, Holy, Holy
The Politician's Hymn.....Standing on the Promises
The IRS Agent's Hymn.....I Surrender All
The Gossip's Hymn.....It Is No Secret
The Electrician's Hymn.....Send The Light
The Shopper's Hymn.....In the Sweet By and By
The Realtor's Hymn.....I've Got a Mansion Just Over the Hilltop
The Massage Therapist's Hymn.....He Touched Me
The Pilot's Hymn.....I'll Fly Away
The Paramedic's Hymn.....Revive Us Again
The Judge's Hymn.....Almost Persuaded
The Psychiatrist's Hymn.....Just A Little Talk With Jesus
The Waiter's Hymn.....Fill My Cup, Lord
The Baker's Hymn.....When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder
The Shoe Repairer's Hymn.....It Is Well With My Soul
The Geologist's Hymn.....Rock of Ages
The Librarian's Hymn.....Whispering Hope
The Mail Carrier's Hymn.....Deliverance Will Come
The Nurse's Hymn.....Rescue the Perishing
The Telephone Operator's Hymn.....Jesus on the Mainline
The Fisherman's Hymn.....Shall We Gather at the River?

Submitted by Jeannine McKoy



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Submitted by Jeannine McKoy



Copied from 2024 Union of Concerned Scientists Calendar

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

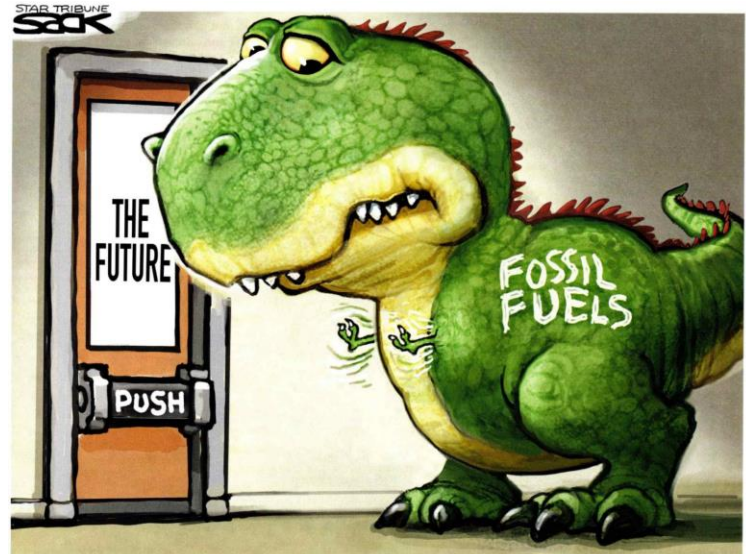


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Copied from 2024 Union of Concerned Scientists Calendar

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell



© Steve Sack

Recipes

Spicy Applesauce Cake

Copied from Taste of Home

Submitted by Jeannine McKoy

TOTAL TIME: Prep: 15 min. Bake: 35 min.

YIELD: 20-24 servings.

This picnic-perfect cake travels and slices very well. With chocolate chips, walnuts and raisins, it's a real crowd pleaser. —Marian Platt, Sequim, Washington

Ingredients:

- 2 cups applesauce
- 1-1/2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking cocoa
- 1-1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon each ground cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice and cloves
- 1 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts



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TOPPING:

1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
 2 tablespoons brown sugar

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, beat the applesauce, sugar, shortening and eggs. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice and cloves; gradually beat into applesauce mixture until blended. Stir in the raisins, chocolate chips and walnuts.

2. Pour into a greased 13x9-in. baking pan. Combine topping ingredients and sprinkle over batter. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

Nutrition Facts 1 piece: 227 calories, 10g fat (3g saturated fat), 18mg cholesterol, 185mg sodium, 34g carbohydrate (23g sugars, 2g fiber), 3g protein.

Caramel Chocolate Chip Cookies

*Copied from www.twosisterscrafting.com
 Submitted by Vicki Kraus*

Ingredients

1 cup butter (sweet cream, salted)
 1 cup granulated sugar
 1/2 cup brown sugar (packed)
 2 large eggs
 2 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 cup mini chocolate chips
 1 cup kraft caramel bits

Instructions

1. Cream the butter and sugars in a mixer.
2. Add the eggs and vanilla and mix until fluffy.
3. Add the baking soda and salt and mix.
4. Add the flour a bit at a time and mix until it is completely incorporated.
5. Finally, using a spoon, mix the mini chocolate chips and the caramel bits.
6. Bake the cookies in a 375 degree oven for 8-10 minutes.

Notes

Allow the cookies to cool slightly on the cookie sheet before removing them if the caramel is sticking on the bottom of the cookie.

UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY 2024						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

FEBRUARY 2024						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- **January 1st**
 ✓ New Year's Day
- **January 6th**
 ✓ Epiphany
- **January 13th**
 ✓ Food Pantry 9:00-11:00 am
- **January 15th**
 ✓ Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **January 17th**
 ✓ Luke House
- **January 27th**
 ✓ Food Pantry 9:00-11:00 am
- **February 10th**
 ✓ Food Pantry 9:00-11:00 am
- **February 14th**
 ✓ Ash Wednesday
 ✓ Valentine's Day
- **February 19th**
 ✓ President's Day
- **February 21st**
 ✓ Luke House
- **February 24th**
 ✓ Food Pantry 9:00-11:00 am



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January Birthdays

- 12 Maxwell William Sykes (Farwell)
24 Ray Tenebruso
30 Herb Evert



January Anniversaries

- 03 Rick & Patti Ryback



February Birthdays

- 03 Heather Arnold
13 Suzanne Anderson
15 Otto Kraus
18 Clayt Smith
21 Brett Skaar
23 Sara Schaefer
23 Andrew Tuten
25 Dona Everingham
25 Cindy Skaar



Beth Fletcher's oldest sister, Eulalia (Skip) fell, broke her hip and is in rehab
Prayers for the Luke House Director, Sarah, who is having a difficult time hiring a cook

November 12, 2023

Evert, the very young son of a friend of Rachael Pfeffer's, had to have surgery and will be hospitalized for 2 weeks

Continuing Prayers:

The Bakers: Karen starting treatment for cancer that has returned and Preston with health issues
Diana Hurd (former member) dealing with health issues
Jerry Rodefled dealing with cancer

Prayer List

December 24, 2023

The family of Dana Hazlet, Dana, the boarder of a pantry volunteer, passed away early Friday morning



December 17, 2023

Allen Farwell, Dale Farwell's brother, hospitalized at Saint Mary's Hospital probably with a heart attack. He also has a brain tumor which seems to be getting worse.

December 10, 2023

Otto Kraus and family. Otto's brother Adolph died December 3rd
Nancy Dinga's daughter who is 54 and is suffering from Alzheimer's
Bryn Mawr church to continue to exist and serve our community

December 5, 2023

Prayers for all those with depression and anxiety and uncertainty in their lives
Tom Perry and family, friends of Shelley's, who is going through a long rehab

November 25, 2023

Patti's niece, Sarah, who is pregnant had to be hospitalized due to complications of kidney stones

November 19, 2023

Patti Ryback's cousin, Ron Matyas, passed away unexpectedly
Cindy Skaar's friend, Mary's husband was hospitalized

To help keep the prayer list updated, prayers will remain on the list for two months and reviewed at the Deacon's meeting. If you wish to have us continue praying for an individual or family, please let one of the Deacon's know so we can add them back on. All other prayers involving a world situation, community concerns, groups, governmental, disasters, etc. are prayed for during church. Due to confidential reasons, please be sure the person you want on the prayer list has given us permission to do this and a prayer request card has been submitted with this marked on the prayer card.

Updated 12-24-2023

2024 Session and Deacons:

Session Members/Committee Chairs:

Dave Conklin – Finance
Todd Fletcher – Worship
Andrew Hysell – Membership/Missions
Patti Ryback –
Jeff Stapleton – Buildings and Grounds
Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell (Moderator)
Vicki Kraus – Clerk of Session

Deacons:

Eileen Conklin
Louise Rhead
Cindy Skaar
Tammy Tuten
Ramona Winger

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A New Year's Blessing

May God make your year a happy one!
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,
But by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;
Not by making your path easy,
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from you,
But by taking fear from your heart;
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping your face bright,
even in the shadows;
Not by making your life always pleasant,
But by showing you when people
and their causes need you most,
and by making you anxious to be there to help.
GOD'S LOVE, PEACE, HOPE & JOY
To you for the year ahead.

Happy New Year!



Founded 1896