



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!

ASTRID

By Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

I have been watching *Astrid*, a program on PBS, under the category of "Walter's Choice." These programs are from all over the world and many are made for TV with a number of episodes. This program is from France, with subtitles. It is a crime drama, but so much more. The two main characters are Raphalle, a policewoman and Astrid, who works in the department of criminal records. They accidentally meet and then begin to work together. Astrid has autism and her special interest is puzzles. I learned from this show that all people with autism have a special interest, and are often extremely talented at working with their particular special interest.

As the show progresses, the two women become friends and learn about one another. People with autism lack social skills and can not understand body language, or clichés that NTs, neurotypicals, use. Astrid says exactly what she means, is very organized and precise about everything. Raphalle is the opposite, but very good at solving crimes. Astrid is very sensitive to loud noises and does not like being touched. There is a group of autistic people in the series that come together every week to discuss how to learn the social skills of the NTs. The show is very well done with brilliant acting. It demonstrates

how difficult it is to be autistic in our world and how hard, even the high functioning ones, have to work at learning what people mean in relationship to what they say and how they act. Astrid is very conscious of protocol and she points out when people lie, or stretch the truth. And of course, there are many cruel remarks made about her by others working in the police department, until they get to know and understand her great gifts. She sees details at the crime scenes that others totally miss, including the pathologist, and since she works in criminal records, and has a photographic memory, she connects crimes from the past to the present. Often in the episodes, there will be the statement that autism is not an illness, or a disease. Astrid, when she was young, was kicked out of school and then refused to talk. Her father was told to institutionalize her. He refused and worked with her at home. He was a policeman and used the puzzles of his cases to help her talk again.

I am so glad to see a program like this address difference. We are so very quick to judge and label people, putting them in categories and then disparaging them as lesser human beings. We in the authentic Christian community should do the opposite. We need to work every day to expand our thinking about groups of people we don't understand. Let's remember the saying, "Because you can be anything in the world, Be Kind!"

Friends,
Building on the article I wrote about the power of stories, here is a delightful story.
Elaine

The Loaves of Challah

By Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

At the beginning of the 16th century, a man named Jacobo and his wife, Esperanza, expelled

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from Spain, settled in S'fat in the north of Israel. Since Jacobo knew only Spanish, he never fully understood what went on in synagogue. One Shabbat he heard the Torah verses from Leviticus 24: 5-6 in which the Children of Israel were instructed to give God 12 loaves of challah in the ancient wilderness tabernacle before Shabbat. He came home full of excitement. "Esperanza! God likes challah for Shabbat and you make the best challah in the world. Next Friday bake 12 loaves and we can bring them to the synagogue for God." So Esperanza baked her best challah kneading her good intentions into the dough. Friday afternoon, when no one was around, the two brought the 12 challahs to the synagogue and arranged them neatly in the ark, said, "Buen apetito" to God closed the ark and left very happy. A few minutes later the janitor came in with his broom. "Dear God," he said as he stood before the ark. "My children are starving, I need a miracle." He opened the ark and finding the challahs inside, he smiled. He had believed that God would provide.

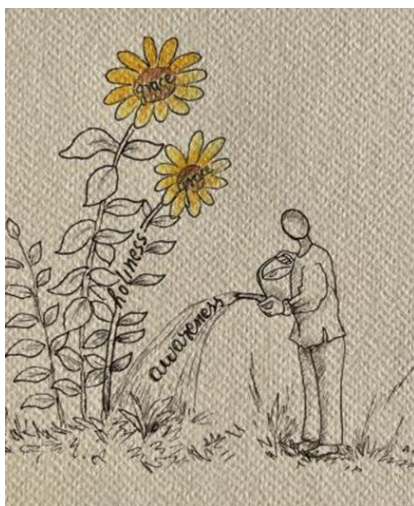
The next morning, when the rabbi opened the ark during services, Esperanza and Jacobo saw immediately that God had eaten every loaf. They winked at each other with great satisfaction. And so this continued week after week, year after year, Esperanza baked; the janitor and his family ate.

Effort Does Not Change the Person

By Anthony DeMello

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

Effort may change the behavior but it does not change the person. Just think what kind of a mentality it betrays when you ask, 'What must I do to get holiness?' Isn't it like asking, How much money must I spend to buy something? What sacrifice must I make? What discipline must I



undertake? What meditation must I practice in order to get it? Think of a man who wants to win the love of a woman and attempts to improve his appearance or build his body or change his behavior and practice techniques to charm her.

You truly win the love of others not by the practice of techniques but by being a certain kind of person. And that is never achieved through effort and techniques. And so it is with spirituality and holiness. Not what you do is what brings it to you. This is not a commodity that one can buy or a prize that one can win. What matters is what you are, what you become.

Holiness is not an achievement; it is a grace. A grace called awareness, a grace called looking, observing, understanding. If you would only switch on the light of awareness and observe yourself and everything around you throughout the day, if you would see yourself reflected in the mirror of awareness the way you see your face reflected in a looking glass, that is, accurately, clearly, exactly as it is without the slightest distortion or addition, and if you observed this reflection without any judgment or condemnation, you would experience all sorts of marvelous changes coming about in you. Only you will not be in control of those changes, or be able to plan them in advance, or decide how and when they are to take place. It is this nonjudgmental awareness alone that heals and changes and makes one grow. But in its own way and at its own time.

What specifically are you to be aware of? Your reactions and your relationships. Each time you are in the presence of a person, any person, or with Nature or with any particular situation, you have all sorts of reactions, positive and negative. Study those reactions, observe what exactly they are and where they come from, without any sermonizing or guilt or even any desire, much less effort to change them. That is all that one needs for holiness to arise.

Will awareness bring you the holiness you so desire? Yes and no. The fact is you will never know. For true holiness, the type that is not achieved through techniques and efforts and repression, true holiness is completely unselfconscious. You wouldn't have the slightest awareness of its existence in you. Besides you will not care, for even the ambition to be holy will have dropped as you live from moment to moment a life made full and happy and transparent through awareness. It is enough for you to be watchful and awake. For in this state your

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eyes will see the [truth]. Nothing else, but absolutely nothing else. Not security, not love, not belonging, not beauty, not power, not holiness — nothing else will matter anymore.

When I Taught Her How to Tie Her Shoes

By Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

A revelation, the student
in high school who didn't know
how to tie her shoes.

I took her into the book-room, knowing
what I needed to teach was perhaps more
important than Shakespeare or grammar,

guided her hands through the looping,
the pulling of the ends. After several
tries, she got it, walked out the door

empowered. How many lessons are like
that---skills never mastered in childhood,
simple tasks ignored, let go for years?

This morning, my head bald from chemotherapy,
my feet further away than they used to be
as I bend to my own shoes, that student

returns to teach me the meaning of life:
to simply tie the laces and walk out
of myself into this sunny winter day.

Thoughts on Forgiveness

Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell

In the last 25 years of the last century, the study of forgiveness developed substantially. It is now being examined in the disciplines of education and science, helping us understand the physical and the psychological effect it has on our lives. In many of the studies being done, clinicians are aiding people in letting go of hurts and wounds through the act of forgiveness. It allows many of them to move forward in their lives.

“At a time when we see so much evil, we are called to have the oral grandeur and spiritual audacity to

believe in good, to proclaim it, to stand in conviction, to take the people who truly do evil and, yes, hold them accountable. But to nevertheless stand for the possibility of human redemption that turns even the hardest hearts.”

Marianne Williamson

“We must forgive ourselves if we are to develop compassion in our hearts.”

Thich Nhat Hanh

“Forgiveness allows us to actually let go of the pain in the memory, and if we let go of the pain in the memory, we can have the memory, but it doesn't control us. When the memory controls us, we are then puppets of the past.”

Alexandra Asseily

“We need to be about forgiveness and compassion, if we are genuinely concerned about justice.”

Wife of 911 Victim

The Apostle in the Boat

By Steven Peterson

Submitted by Herb Evert

No, Matthew's gospel doesn't mention me when I was in that boat, wrestling that sail. But someone had to do it—I could see the waves were high, the wind a roaring gale.

The others wouldn't help, saying they were shocked, spotting our reckless rabbi suddenly walking on water, then our stubborn ox--yeah, Peter—trying to walk like he was He.

(That's so Peter; first to speak, first to act, pushing his pushy self against the master, as if that made him Number One in fact, as if he'd get to heaven even faster.)

The sail was flapping wildly but I roped it to the mast of that old fishing tub, and I confess a part of me had hoped his blah blah blah would turn to blub blub blub.

But Peter didn't sink. He cried, “Lord, save me!” Our rabbi heard his cry and, reaching out, rescued him, rebuking that big old baby: “O you of little faith—why did you doubt?”

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Read that again: “little faith”? Don't you see?
That's Peter—who later denied our Lord!
But since then, something changed in me,
in all of us. A different wind has roared.

I felt that wind the day I died for Jesus,
the day they told me, “Step into the storm
if you believe.” I did, knowing He sees us
walking to Him, now in a perfect form.

“Splash!”

By *Herb Evert*

I know how Peter felt. No, I didn't try to walk on water, but I did try to come to the surface again after not so willingly diving off an “abandon ship” simulation at Great Lakes Naval Training Center. Yes, we were asked if we knew how to swim, but after witnessing the ridicule of those who admitted they didn't, no way was I about to confess. So I took the alternative: climb the ladder to the high dive and, at the order, jump or be booted off. I jumped.

After the most ungraceful dive ever attempted, I hit the water with a tremendous splash. I went down, and down, and down. It was a taste of eternity before I felt myself coming back up again. By then I had given up all hope of resurfacing. But I did. Coughing and sputtering, I thrashed my way to the far end of the pool. I passed, with the fervent prayer that if ever I was assigned to a ship, it would never founder.

To avoid the draft and the prospect of being assigned to the infantry, a friend and I had enlisted in the Coast Guard when we were 17 years old, juniors in high school. Our early training was in port security and small boat handling. After graduation, however, when we were called up for our two years of active duty, we each were assigned to shipboard service, my friend as a damage controlman and I as a quartermaster or navigator/helmsman aboard icebreaker/buoy tenders. My ship's home port was Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, from which we tended aids to navigation (buoys, channel markers, and lighthouses), provided search and rescue services, and broke ice for lake freighters from Buffalo, New York to Duluth, Minnesota.

An old military transport plane touched down at Soo CG base on a snowy cold November evening, and I disembarked to board my ship. Not many hours later we got the call to assist a freighter which had

lost power on Lake Superior, and I got my first taste of that lake's fury. It very soon brought back dark memories of my “abandon ship” drill, and with it the clutching fear of jumping into that icy water. It didn't help when one of the old hands asked, “How ya' doing kid?” and, at my stammering reply, said, “Just remember: ya' gotta' go out; ya' don't gotta' come back!”

The Coast Guard's official motto is *Semper Paratus*—always ready—but my shipmate's citation, I was to learn, is its unofficial motto. You do your best in accord with your training, you deal with the consequences to the extent you can, and sometimes you succeed. Sometimes you don't.

Years later, after receiving my discharge and attending college, seminary, and graduate school, I was invited to preach at my home church. I very much looked forward to seeing those beloved folks again, but I was puzzled about what message I could bring them. Then it occurred to me that the Coast Guard's unofficial motto may be as good a paradigm as any for the Christian life: with your baptismal or confirmation or membership vows you sign on, and if you are serious about it, you go where you feel God sends you or do what you feel called upon to do. But there are no guarantees of success, just the promise that the Spirit is with you even unto the ends of the earth.

That was my sermon. Ya' gotta' go out; ya' don't gotta' come back.

Published in *The Christian Century* magazine, issue of November, 2023, p. 51.

What a Cutterman Knows

By *Mark T. Holmes*

Submitted by *Herb Evert*

I've seen with my own eyes
Gray ships come to harbor
When the ocean is wild
And the skies clap with thunder

Meekly they motor past
White ships with stripes
Letting off lines
Heading off in the night

The sailors look up

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Not trusting their eyes
You're going out THERE
Out there you will die

We just smile and wave
And steer towards the gale
There are lives to be saved
We vow not to fail

We trust in each other
Our all we will give
We commit with our lives
So others may live

A Cutterman knows
When the skies are turned black
You have to go out
You don't have to come back

Semper Paratus!
"Always Ready"

Submitted by Louise Rhead

I spoke with Steve this week. They arrived in Palmetto, Florida and are settled in at the following address:

Steve and Anne McNab
9303 Bayshore Rd
Lot F23

Palmetto, Florida 34221-1637

They were happy to hear some have asked about them, and that they are in our prayers. They would enjoy getting mail from you.

Pastors Battle Post-Pandemic Burnout

By Peter Smith – Associated Press

Copied from the Wisconsin State Journal

Submitted by Vicki Kraus

Post-pandemic burnout is at worrying levels among Christian clergy in the U.S., prompting many to think about abandoning their jobs, according to a new nationwide survey.

More than 4 in 10 of clergy surveyed in fall 2023 had seriously considered leaving their congregations at least once since 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began, and more than half had thought seriously of leaving the ministry, according

to the survey released last month by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

About a tenth of clergy report having had these thoughts often, according to the survey, conducted as part of the institute's research project, Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations.

The high rates of ministers considering quitting reflects the "collective trauma" that both clergy and congregants have experienced since 2020, said institute director Scott Thumma, principal investigator for the project.

"Everybody has experienced grief and trauma and change," he said. Many clergy members in open-ended responses to their survey, cited dwindling attendance, declining rates of volunteering and members' resistance to further change.

"I am exhausted," said one pastor quoted by the report. "People have moved away from the area and new folks and fewer, and farther, and slower to engage. Our regular volunteers and tired and overwhelmed."

Some of these struggles are trends that long predated the pandemic. Median in-person attendance has steadily declined since the start of the century, the report said, and with fewer younger participants, the typical age of congregants is rising. After a pandemic-era spike in innovation, congregants are less willing to change, the survey said.

The reasons for clergy burnout are complex, and need to be understood in larger contexts, Thumma said.

"Often times the focus of attention is just on the congregation, when in fact we should also be thinking about these bigger-picture things," he said. A pastor and congregants, for example, might be frustrated with each other when the larger context is that they're in a struggling rural town that's losing population, he said: "That has an effect on volunteering. It has an effect on aging. It has an effect on what kind of possibility you have to grow."

About a third of clergy respondents were considering both leaving their congregation and the ministry altogether, with nearly another third considering one or the other.

Most clergy reported conflict in their congregations, but those considering leaving their churches reported it at even higher levels and also were less likely to feel close to their congregants.

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Those thinking of quitting the ministry entirely were more likely to be pastors of smaller churches and those who work solo, compared with those on larger staffs and at larger churches.

Mainline Protestant clergy were the most likely to think of quitting, followed by evangelical Protestants, while Catholic and Orthodox priests were the least likely to consider leaving.

The percentages of clergy having thoughts of quitting are higher than in two previous surveys conducted by the institute in 2021 and spring 2023, though it's difficult to directly compare those numbers because the earlier surveys were measuring shorter time periods since 2020.

The news isn't all grim. Most clergy report good mental and physical health – though somewhat less so if they're thinking of leaving their congregations or ministry – and clergy were more likely to have increased than decreased various spiritual practices since the pandemic began.

The results are based on a survey in fall 2023 of about 1,700 Christian clergy members from more than 40 denominations, including Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox bodies

The survey echoes similar post-pandemic research. A 2023 Pew Research Center found a decrease in those who reported at least monthly in-person worship attendance, with Black Protestant churches affected the most.

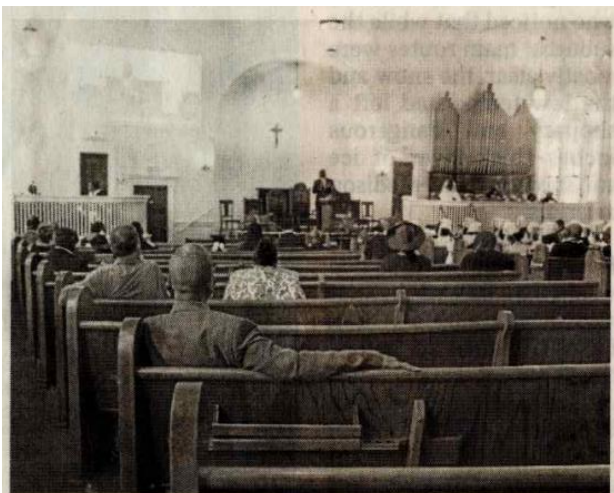
Submitted by Herb Evert



Submitted by Herb Evert

"Jesus was not killed by atheism and anarchy. He was brought down by law and order allied with religion, which is always a deadly mix. Beware those who claim to know the mind of God and who are prepared to use force, if necessary, to make others conform. Beware those who cannot tell God's will from their own."

- Barbara Brown Taylor

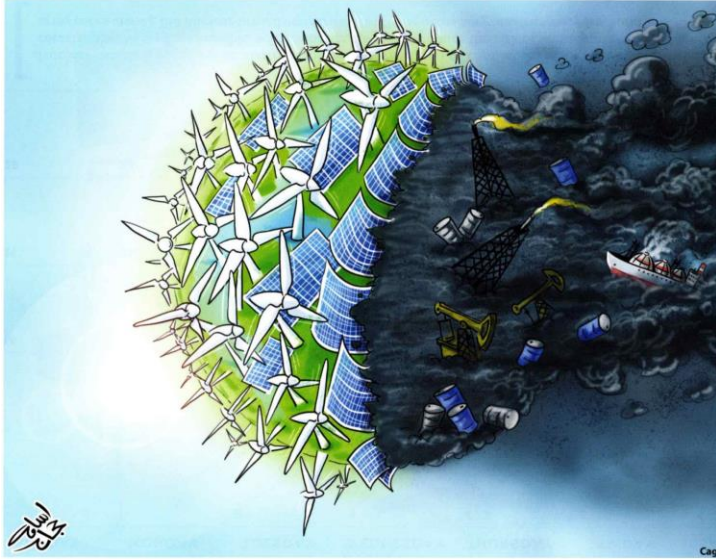


JESSIE WARDARSKI, ASSOCIATED PRESS

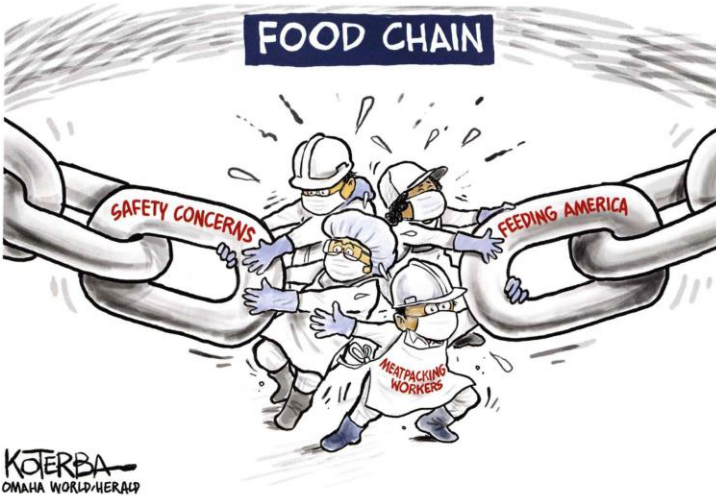
Congregants sit in largely empty pews during an April 16 service at Zion Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C. More than 4 in 10 clergy surveyed in fall 2023 had seriously considered leaving their congregations at least once since the pandemic began, a new survey found.

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Copied from 2024 Union of Concerned Scientists
Calendar
Submitted by Rev. Dr. Elaine Hanson-Hysell



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Recipes

Frosted Cashew Cookies
Submitted by Vicki Kraus

Ingredients:
½ C butter
1 C brown sugar
1 egg
½ tsp. vanilla
2 C flour
¾ tsp. baking powder

¾ tsp. soda
¾ tsp. salt
1/3 C sour cream
1 ¾ C Salted whole cashews

Golden Butter Frosting:
½ C butter
¼ tsp. vanilla
3 T light cream
2 C powdered sugar



Directions:
Cream together butter and brown sugar. Add rest of ingredients saving 1 cashew for top of each cookie. Bake 10 minutes at 400°. Let cool and frost.
Frosting:
Lightly brown butter. Add cream and vanilla. Stir in powdered sugar. Beat until smooth. Makes 5 dozen. Best with butter!

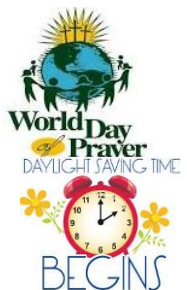
What's Happening

MARCH 2024						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
25	26	27	28	29	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						

APRIL 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	1	2	3	4

March 1st

- ✓ World Day of Prayer
- **March 9th**
✓ Food Pantry 9:00-11:00 am
- **March 10th**
✓ Daylight Saving time begins
- **March 17th**
✓ St. Patrick's Day
- **March 19th**
✓ Spring begins
- **March 20th**
✓ Luke House
- **March 23rd**
✓ Food Pantry 9:00-11:00 am
- **March 24th**
✓ Palm Sunday



KOTERBA
OMAHA WORLD-HERALD

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- **March 28th**
 - ✓ Maundy Thursday 
- **March 29th**
 - ✓ Good Friday 
- **March 31st**
 - ✓ Easter 
- **April 13**
 - ✓ Food Pantry 9:00-11:00 am
- **April 17th**
 - ✓ Luke House
- **April 22nd**
 - ✓ Earth Day 
- **April 27th**
 - ✓ Food Pantry 9:00-11:00 am

March Birthdays

- 13 Avery Anderson
- 16 Hannah True
- 19 Larry Rhead
- 23 Adam Pfeffer
- 27 Brandon Rausch
- 28 Paul Nonn



April Birthdays

- 02 Alex Tuten
- 15 Julia Tenebruso
- 20 Kathy Farwell
- 24 Rick Ryback
- 25 Margy Newton
- 28 Amy True
- 29 Harvey Skaar
- 30 Caleb Joshua Hank



April Anniversaries

- 16 Margy Newton & Ray Tennebruso



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

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 Rodefeld dealing with cancer

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



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2024 Session and Deacons:

Session Members/Committee Chairs:

Dave Conklin – Finance
Todd Fletcher – Worship/Personnel
Andrew Hysell – Membership/Missions
Patti Ryback – Communications
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

