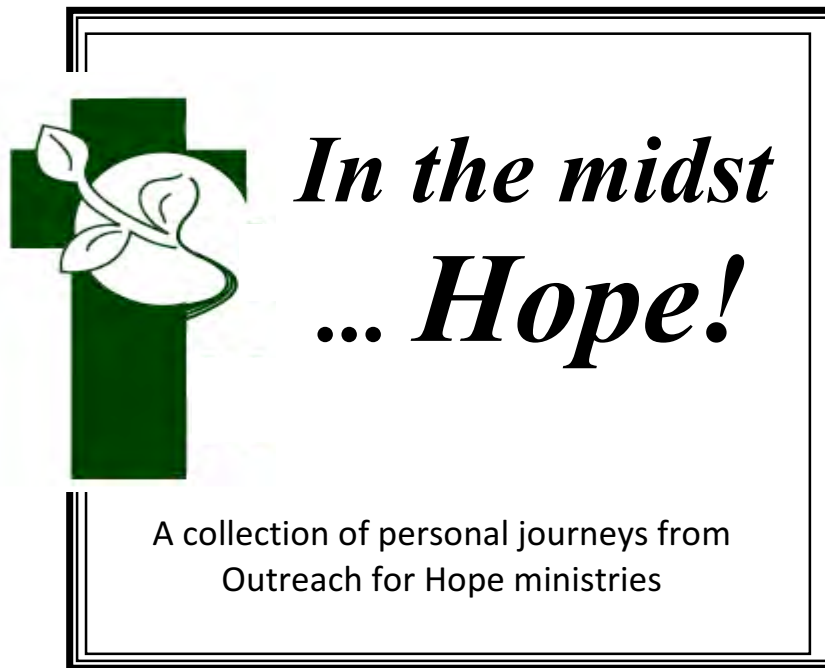


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# 2016 Lenten Devotions



## 20th Anniversary Celebration Edition

### OUTREACH FOR HOPE

1995-2015

Committed to raising financial support and awareness  
for ministries serving low income neighborhoods in the  
Greater Milwaukee Synod ELCA



## PREFACE

by Director Rev. Jim Bickel

### A gift for you from OUTREACH FOR HOPE celebrating 20 years

What better way to celebrate 20 years of ministry than by hearing the stories of those most affected by the ministry which your dollars support through OUTREACH FOR HOPE. We invited the 19 ministries which received support in 2015 to send us their stories of hope and faith. We gathered the stories together and put them into the following devotion collection for the season of Lent. We titled the devotions, ***In the midst... Hope!***

You are receiving these devotions as a **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gift** from OUTREACH FOR HOPE and the many individuals in ministries supported by OUTREACH FOR HOPE, who work daily to be the presence of Christ in their communities.

#### **Daily devotions are available by Email**

You can also receive these devotions each morning in your Email inbox. Go to [www.outreachforhope.org](http://www.outreachforhope.org). Scroll down to the right hand column and the headline "Sign up for OUTREACH FOR HOPE Mailings." Fill in your email address and name. Then click the box "Lenten Devotions." Each morning of Lent (except Sundays) you will receive one of the devotions printed here.

#### **Respond to the devotions on Facebook**

The devotions will be added daily to the OUTREACH FOR HOPE Facebook page. There you can also comment, join the discussion about a particular devotion, and share your own experiences of hope. In Facebook search for "Lenten Devotions-Outreach for Hope."

#### **Donate to the ministries funded by OUTREACH FOR HOPE**

As part of your Lenten journey we ask that you consider a generous donation to the ministry of OUTREACH FOR HOPE. Make it a '20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gift.' Make it a response to God's generous gift of hope to us in Jesus Christ. Make it in response to those who express their hope in these pages. See the last page for donating details. Thank you!



## Introduction by Bishop Jeff Barrow of the Greater Milwaukee Synod ELCA

Last year I heard a wonderful presentation by Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann where he talked about real faith as something other than the desire for certitude. He challenged the way contemporary faith tends to want to define itself in absolutes, absolutes which often degenerate into petty moralisms and lead to the judgment of others. Instead, he dared lift up some of the biblical texts which are altogether messy. He didn't talk about faith as something which we human beings figure out as much as he described the faithfulness of a God who doesn't mind wading into the broken places in this world.

As I read the Lenten reflections written by people involved with the Outreach for Hope congregations, I was reminded again of Brueggemann's powerful witness to the Gospel.

So many of the stories offered in these devotions are not at all about human accomplishments. They certainly are not about we saints and sinners getting things figured out. They are instead stories about God finding a way into our lives, even into the brokenness sometimes surrounding our lives.

If there is a common theme lifted up in these devotions it is indeed about God's faithfulness, God's persistent pursuit, God's ability to forgive and redeem.

These stories come from the hearts of real people in the midst of daily life. They come from the hearts of often fragile, vulnerable people who have found real meaning and renewed hope and joy because of the presence of a gracious God in our midst. After all, isn't that what the story of Jesus' death on a cross is all about?

As we embark on another Lenten journey, I hope you look forward to hearing these stories as much as I did.

A blessed journey, Bishop Jeff



Stories to tell... Gifts to share



## Blessing of a snowstorm

by Mary Brockhaus

*Mary Brockhaus attends Redeemer Lutheran Church in Milwaukee.*

Like good shepherds in the bible, God rescues His sheep. We are God's sheep and often need to be saved from ourselves. For some it only takes a gentle nudge to redirect; I needed a snowstorm.

Depression runs deep in my family and I have travelled in and out of that state for most of my life. When I am depressed I isolate myself almost completely. I doubt my God-given abilities and become paralyzed, unwilling to take any action at all.

When I reached my late 50's I was convinced that I had wasted my whole life. I sank to the lowest place I had ever been. I quit my job to avoid being around other people and because I lacked the energy for it. I narrowed my life.

When the furnace died I used space heaters to keep warm. When the cold caused the pipes to burst I had the water turned off and scrounged drinking water from public drinking fountains. I depleted my savings. When I couldn't pay the bills I lived without phone service and electricity. I ate less and less and soon stopped eating entirely.

I got weaker and I didn't care. I wanted to die. It was as if I had dug a hole, jumped in and then pulled the hole in after me. At this point God sent a snowstorm.

When I was stronger, I would shovel the snow early so as not to be seen by my neighbors. Now I was too weak to stand. The snow went un-shoveled for days. A neighbor noticed and called the police to check on my welfare.

When the police found me I was very scared and ready to be found. They called an ambulance and I was taken to the hospital. It was February. The next night the temperature fell below zero. If I had stayed in that house I would very likely have died.

I finally allowed myself to be helped. Long ignored health problems were addressed. Someone helped me apply for housing and other aid. In the people I met, I saw a side of life I had never been exposed to before. The chronically homeless and the addicted became my friends and earned my respect.

Even now, there are still bad days but I am close to finding what God wants me to do with the rest of my life and I am grateful for that snowstorm.

***Dear Lord, thank you for sending the unexpected helpers into our lives. Sometimes we have to be desperate to accept your help. Open our hearts to your presence. Amen.***

Redeemer Lutheran Church is located on the edge of the Marquette University campus in a neighborhood marked by both poverty and promise. Redeemer focuses on community collaborations with businesses, students and partnerships to serve their neighbors.

**Ash Wednesday February 10**



## Lamentations of walking with partners

by Aleta Chosse

*Aleta is a member of Kingo Lutheran Church, Shorewood, urban-partnering with All Peoples Church, Milwaukee. Aleta is a former member of the Outreach for Hope Board of Directors.*

*How lonely sits the city that once was full of people. How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations!....She weeps bitterly in the night. Lamentations 1:1-2*

Walt and I watch with horror as the news reporter tells of nine people dead at a church bible study. A place of peace has been violated. The sins of racism have been visited upon the people of Mother Emmanuel AME Church of Charleston, South Carolina, while they sought God.

How can this be? A pastoral letter from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton reveals that among those shot is the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, a graduate of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and the Rev. Daniel Simmons, associate pastor at Mother Emanuel. The suspected shooter is a member of an ELCA congregation. All of a sudden this is an intensely personal tragedy. One of our own is alleged to have shot and killed two who adopted us as their own. An angry President Obama asks the question, "how long must this go on before action is taken?" An anguished black man says to a reporter, "If we are not safe in our churches, where are we safe?"

As a suburban white grandmother, I ask where can we go for strength and comfort when murder invades the church? To our white congregation? Or to All Peoples, an urban church in the Riverwest neighborhood -- a neighborhood that many of my Lutheran brothers and sisters will not even drive through for fear of their own safety -- where the depth of the tragedy will be respected? Recently they have accompanied the family of Dontre Hamilton to seek justice in his death at the hands of the Milwaukee Police.

On a beautiful summer's evening, two days after the South Carolina event, my husband and I drive across the Milwaukee River. On this night of lamentation, we have gone to be with our partners who are able to provide a place for our sorrow, for our sin-sick souls. The wooden doors to All Peoples Church in the Harambee neighborhood are wide open as young and old, black and white walk in. The gathering space that we church people call the sanctuary is full.

As the prayer service begins, the names of the murdered, scroll across the screen, and people take turns reading brief biographies. Our hearts break as we hear of a student, a grandmother, the head librarian, a legislator and pastor. Pastor Steve Jerbi of All Peoples invites the lamentations. White people ask for forgiveness, some speak of the sin of racism. Black people cry out for the murdered. Others demand change. Dontre Hamilton's brother speaks of grief seeking justice. Some of us just listen and search our hearts.

We have come together to be led in this tragic walk by the people of our urban partners. The prayers begin. A voice cries out, "how long, oh Lord?" And the gathered echo the plea, "how long, oh Lord?" A child cries, an old man rises to offer his prayer for hope. As one, we turn to the God who was wounded for our transgressions. United in sorrow, we sing and the hymn rises.

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.  
There is a balm in Gilead, to heal the sin-sick soul.*

***Dear Lord, help us to be welcoming to all your children. We need each other to be part of the family of God. Amen.***

All Peoples Church makes it a point to be a church for all people. Young adults and youth make up a vibrant portion of their faith community.

**Thursday February 11**



## After addiction

by Nikita Stewart

*Nakita Stewart attends Hephatha Lutheran Church, Milwaukee.*

I was introduced to Pastor and Hephatha Church when my first child was an infant and I was pregnant with my second. At this time I was heavily involved with drugs. I started coming to the church with one of my aunts. I started attending the Sunday service for all the wrong reasons, or so I felt. Now looking back over 10 years later, I see this introduction to Pastor Mary Martha and Hephatha was not a mistake or accident. At this time in my life I came for the assistance I was given with little or nothing to give back. Although I felt hopeless, I never felt shamed by pastor. As a result, I kept coming back.

What I enjoyed most, was the adult Sunday school. The deep in-depth discussions shared after service assured me that God still loved me even in my mess. Following Sunday School I would look forward to the meal, which helped me feed my child as well as myself.

Looking back at my actions and behaviors while in active addiction, I can honestly say that I am sure Pastor and other church members were aware that I was in a bad space. However I never felt judged, I was never rejected. If I needed help it was provided without question!



In my present life, I am now a mother of four. I work for a treatment center with whom the church and Pastor have a close partnership. I also graduated! I have recently attained my Associates degree from MATC with Scholastic Honors. I help the church whenever I can. I attend Tuesday Praise with my children as often as possible. Also, I have 3 clean years. I can honestly say all of this would not be possible without people like Pastor and the supportive environment of Hephatha. Even through my struggles I was accepted and understood. I will forever be grateful for the memories and bonds I have made at Hephatha Lutheran Church.

***Dear Lord, help us to be welcoming to all your children. We need each other to be part of the family of God. Amen.***

Hephatha Lutheran Church puts a strong emphasis on welcoming and affirming children, individuals with special needs, the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated, all who need a place to be affirmed.

**Friday February 12**



## Daddy and daughter bond

by Airs Townsend

*Airs' story comes to us through Redeemer Lutheran Church, Milwaukee.*

My biological father and I have always been attached at the hip ever since I entered this world. I'm his first child. Growing up, you never know what adults experience and what drives them to make the decisions that they do. As I entered my early teens, my father's presence faded, but his spirit, love and compassion was still felt. It was like he fell off the face of the earth, but would find a way to call once a year to check in. As a young girl, I didn't understand what depression was and how it can drive you to want to be alone.

My father has been living as a homeless man in Madison, Wisconsin, for almost 15 years, making a way on his own. Oddly enough, I still sense happiness when I hear his voice. Throughout those years of separation, I have always been consistent in my support and understanding — maybe it's because of our bond. It's almost like we can feel each other's energy when we are apart.

Recently God has called me to use my skills for Redeemer Lutheran Church and I never would have thought that God would guide me to Him in this way. Not only that, but Redeemer interacts closely with the homeless of Milwaukee. This gives me a constant reminder of my father. Recently, my dad found a way to contact me to update me on his life. He was so excited to inform me that he's receiving assistance and work from a Lutheran church in Madison. All I could say was "Thank you Lord," as I updated him on our similar surroundings. God works in mysterious ways and He's shown me to never give up on someone and that the bond my dad and I share is God-sent. He hears my prayers and He will create blessings.



***Dear Father, when you seem far away, help us to sense our father-child bonds. We are yours as you are ours, Abba. Amen.***

Did you know that each week over 3000 people gather in churches receiving support from OUTREACH FOR HOPE, for worship and devotions, to Hear God's Word, lift up prayers together and receive strength for their daily living?

You can support the ministries you are reading about by sending a donation TO OUTREACH FOR HOPE, 1212 S. Layton Blvd., Milwaukee, WI 53215, or [www.outreachforhope.org](http://www.outreachforhope.org).

**Saturday February 13**





## Ask and it shall be given

by Willie Cloister

*Willie has been connected with the ELCA Outreach Center in Kenosha.*



Someone came into the Center and needed a cane. The center did not have one. By the end of the day however, someone had donated one. We got a refrigerator donated and a week later the one we had went out. A man came in and needed shoes for a job interview. We did not have any in his size. I gave him the shoes I was wearing, knowing that I had another pair at home. So often at the Outreach Center needs are filled before we even know there is a need. Sometimes the need is just for an ear to listen, a laugh to share, or a shoulder to cry on.

I also know that I will be blessed.

My family needed a couch and someone donated a couch that not only was the right size, it was the perfect color.

For our wedding, my wife and I did not know how we would afford anything. Through the center, we got my wife's dress. The volunteers and staff provided food and the cake and the director, Karl, took pictures. We are truly a community, sharing God's love with each other and with our larger community.

I give whatever I can to the Outreach Center, knowing that not only is God using me and my life to bless others, God is blessing me with abundance.

***Father in heaven, we thank you for the unexpected gifts. Help us to receive them graciously and to be generous when we can. All good things come from you. Amen.***

The ELCA Outreach Center serves over 2000 individuals a year with a variety of programs to help people become more self-sufficient.

**Monday February 15**





## Helping God's angels

by Lucia Brown

*Lucia has seen firsthand what the ELCA Outreach Center, Kenosha has done.*

Broke, busted and discounted, these are the men and women we see day in and day out. Hopefuls and at the same time hopeless -- just going day to day. I often see that the Outreach Center is the father to the fatherless, we are all God's children and we not only give them love, we give them the action of love. This can be a hug, handshake, clothes, coffee and most of all prayer. God's angel could very well come in looking homeless, so we give God's children our love.

**Dear Jesus, open our hearts to the hurting and hopeless around us. Give us strength to serve, knowing we are an extension of your love to them. Amen.**



## More than a lesson in a book

by Margaret Burgess

*Margaret volunteers at Kenosha's ELCA Outreach Center*

I first became fully aware of the ELCA Outreach Center in the fall of 2010. The new director was speaking to my church about the center and mentioned that they were always looking for volunteers. I walked in the doors a week later.

I started at Gateway Technical College in the Human Services Program January of 2011. My classes helped teach me everything they believed I needed to know about working in the human services field. I transferred from a volunteer to an intern at the center January of 2013. I believed I knew all there was to know about the clients since I learned about them in a book. How wrong I was!

The book did not tell me that I would meet a little boy that would steal my heart. He and his mother had been severely abused and she came to Wisconsin to escape. The Center threw together a fast birthday party for the boy when he turned six because his mom had no money and was ashamed. The book did not tell me that women who had nothing were going to come in daily, pick out new clothes from our free closet and change in the bathroom so that they can try to feel human. The book never told me that grown homeless men would overdose on purpose to get admitted to the hospital to stay warm in winter. The book also did not tell me that no matter how you try not to, you are going to get attached to your clients.

Our clients are not stories in a book. They are people with feelings, hopes and dreams. Every day I am excited to see what adventure awaits.

***O Lord, when the poor and needy become real to us, we realize they are children of God, too. Thank you for our brothers and sisters. Help us to help them. Amen.***

The ELCA Outreach Center's programs include GED classes, free legal advice, summer camp for kids, gardening, a drop-in center, and bible study.

**Tuesday February 16**



## I can't - Jesus can - Let Him

by Chris Capper

*Chris is Director and founder of Just One More Ministry, Milwaukee.*

It all began when I was about 18 years old and drinking. It was legal and many high school students were doing it. Little did I know what journey that first drink would take me on.

My name is Chris Capper and I am a recovering child of God. For over 39 years I struggled daily with addictions of many types. They got worse as the days, months, and years went by.

Those of us with addictions think WE are in charge of our lives; we live in total denial of the fact that our addictions CONTROL our every minute. They are our GOD. So here is what happened when I thought I was in charge. I was arrested 4 times for DUI, I was in jail 4 times and was in the House of Correction 2 times for a total time of being incarcerated of over 1 year.

Here are the really hurtful things caused by ME being in charge: I hurt my mother, I lost my relationship with three of my four children and most importantly I lost my relationship with my Lord and Savior JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus put me in The House of Correction the second time to save me from myself and to start me on my journey with Him. It has been and continues to be a blessed daily adventure. All I have truly done is one simple thing - say YES TO JESUS AND SURRENDER my addictions to HIM each day through prayer.

Here is what HE has done with and for me:

- 1) Kept me free of my addictions for over 9 years.
- 2) Let me be part of His ministry- JUST ONE MORE MINISTRY.
- 3) Restored my relationship with 2 of my daughters that I had no contact with for over 25 years- this happened on May 15th of this year.
- 4) Built a much more loving relationship with my now 92 year old Mom.
- 5) My life is blessed by HIS PEACE- GRACE and LOVE daily.

My prayer for each of God's children is that you would have FAT so you will SAS --- FAITH and TRUST so you will SURRENDER and SERVE.

***Lord, thank you for not giving up on us. Sometimes it takes a lot to get our attention. You have mine now, Lord. I'm listening. Amen.***

Just One More Ministry, in cooperation with caterers, restaurants, and grocery stores, rescues food that would otherwise be thrown away. Operating out of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, the food is packed up as meals to be distributed to congregations with food programs.



**Wednesday February 17**



## Amillya's story

by Amillya, age 10

*Amillya attends Hephatha Lutheran Church in Milwaukee.*

My name is Amillya and I am 10 years old. I have been coming to Hephatha Lutheran Church since I was a baby. When I was 5, I started coming with my mom and brother to Tuesday Praise. Pastor asks us about our day and we will pray and get a snack bag. I feel happy going to Tuesday Praise to see Pastor and all of the other kids that come.



When I turned 9, I started going to the Youth Work Ministry on Saturdays and during the summer.

We visit the elderly, clean up the church and the neighborhood, deliver food to the elderly neighbors on the block and we make cards for people who are sick or have birthdays.

What I like about coming to Hephatha Lutheran Church is that we learn about God. At Tuesday Praise we read a book called *Images of God* by Marie-Helene Delval. The following is one of my favorite poems from the book which helps me see that God is helping me go on the right path:

When everything looks too difficult,  
When we don't know where to go anymore,  
When it seems we stand before a closed gate  
on the bank of a river that is impossible to cross,  
We need to call on God to help us go forward.  
When we understand that his love awaits us,  
we won't be mistaken about the path.

***Father in Heaven, you are always with us. Help us to relax in your arms and know that you love us. Amen.***

Hephatha's members work on maintaining strong bonds with partnership churches, area institutions and schools.

**Thursday February 18**



## Giving Jesus a ride

by Mike Herold

*Mike is connected with Milwaukee's Capital Drive Lutheran Church and writes this story about Mel.*

One of the ministries that I enjoy the most is giving Mel a ride to church on Sunday mornings. Mel is a retiree who is one of the most spirit-filled people I know. He lives at Hadley Terrace, which offers affordable living units for seniors on Milwaukee's north side. Mel attends the Sherman Park Gathering Place, the senior drop in program at my church, Capitol Drive Lutheran Church. Going to and from church takes about 10 minutes each way, but I really enjoy our conversations. I don't get to talk a lot about Jesus with most of my male friends, but with Mel, this is not a problem. I find it meaningful that we both express how blest we are in sharing another day in God's creation, praising Jesus almost at every corner we pass as we go to and from worship.

A couple of Sunday's ago, Karen, a lady in a wheelchair, came to worship for the first time with our congregation because as she stated, "I really needed it." After the service was over, I walked across the street in the rain that had started falling while we were worshipping, to get my mini-van. I picked up Mel at the back alley entrance, and when I pulled out of the alley, we both saw Karen, wheeling her wheelchair towards the bus stop. She had no jacket or umbrella with her, so I asked Mel if it was okay if I gave her a ride. Mel was quick to respond that it was okay. I loaded Karen up in my vehicle and then dropped off Mel. As I drove, I listened to Karen as she shared her life's struggles, of being unemployed, of once being in prison, and that her husband had just been sent back to prison due to a parole violation. She asked that I pray for both of them. I told Karen that there is still hope, and to keep praying to God. I dropped Karen off at St. Johns Catholic Church in downtown Milwaukee's Cathedral Square, where they have a free lunch program for those in need.

The next Sunday morning was bright and sunny, and I was glad that I was picking Mel up. After Mel got in my van and buckled up, he said to me, "You know that lady you gave a ride to? You gave a ride to Jesus. Yes sir! Amen!"

Mel's comment brought a smile to my face and to my soul. It brought back a memory of the time that I was with my mom at a local mall, and a young man in his early 20's came up to me and asked me for a dollar, which I gave him. Since he looked fairly well dressed, my mom asked why I did that. I told her, "Mom, someone once told me that you never know where you will see the face of Jesus."

How true! I move forward with new vigor and I pray that Jesus leads us to those opportunities where we don't hesitate, and just act in the way that we have been taught. I pray that we all act with the same compassion for others in need that Christ has. And by doing so, we will bring the love and hope of Christ to those we serve.

And when I drive with Mel, I will remember that I am giving Jesus a ride. Dona nobis pacem, give us peace.

***Dear Lord, keep us open to your presence in the least of your children. Amen.***

Capital Drive Lutheran Church provides The Gathering Place that offers older adults opportunities for belonging to a caring community, growing in healthy living, spiritual growth and discovering gifts for service.

**Friday February 19**





# When Ricky met God

by Lucy Fischer

*Lucy, from Milwaukee's Reformation Lutheran Church, wrote this poem in 2008.*

What's in a name?  
I know who I am today. I am Greg.  
I know who I was. I was Ricky.

Ricky was really in love with himself.  
He would wave his magic gun  
and make that world sparkle  
Sparkle in cars and clothes and women.

*Ricky was about Me.  
Ricky would have it all.  
Ricky would be empty.*

He would not listen or see.  
He could not weep.  
And from not weeping  
he slowly began to dry up.  
Drier and drier  
without the juices of life.

Till one day Ricky met God.  
And became Greg  
Who walked right out of that dried-up man  
and was born again.

*I got to work overtime  
Trying to make it up  
To be there for people who might need me.*

Same body -- same scars  
New man -- with juices of new life.  
*It don't make me half a man to cry.*

Hard work becoming new  
There's loneliness --  
*I am still holding on to that thread.  
Sometimes that thread gets tired.  
God will work it out...  
because it says He will.*

*I have called you by name, Greg, and you are mine.*

***O Lord, recreate us into your image. Let our hearts be filled with your hope and love. Amen.***

Reformation Lutheran Church is committed to being a place of hospitality and hope for people in the neighborhood whose lives are often unpredictable and broken.

**Saturday February 20**





## Marlena's story

by Marlena Kimbrough

*Marlena, from Hephatha, Milwaukee, shares her story about  
Kim's influence on her life.*

I first met Kim at Kingo Lutheran Church. I was 8 and attending tutoring for children from Hephatha Lutheran Church. Kingo has been a partner with Hephatha for many years. Kim was my tutor and she later told my mom that she thought I didn't like her because I would cry every week. To help me feel comfortable, she would bring candy and treats. The funny part is that I don't remember crying or not liking her. At Kingo, they had a room with a piano and I would ask Kim if I could play the piano. She would let me play for a little while before we worked on homework. She would encourage me to learn how to play, but in my mind, I couldn't teach myself and I didn't think anyone would be able to teach me. She said she knew someone who could teach me and over the next 5 years I learned how to play the piano and I was able to play in church.

Kim remained in my life over the years and as I got older and into high school, she was very encouraging and wanted me to finish. Kim had not graduated from high school and really wanted to see me succeed. When I was told that I was failing in my senior year, I decided to quit and go to Job Corps. Kim and my family were concerned for my future; they had wanted me to graduate from High School and go on to college, however, I struggled with learning and believing that I could finish. Once everyone saw the progress I was making at Job Corps, they supported me and cheered me on.

Over the last 3-4 months of my time at Job Corps, both of my parents became gravely ill. I was going to drop out to help them at home. Kim advised me that the best way I could help them would be to finish at Job Corps. When I graduated in September 2015, I had gotten my high school diploma, my driver's permit, a forklift driver's license, a Material Handling Certificate, an OSHA Certificate and practical experience from an internship that helped me to get a job at Patrick Cudahy.

It feels great to have accomplished all of this and I am thankful to my friend Kim who helped me to succeed even though I made a lot of mistakes.

***Heavenly Father, thank you for tutors. Help us to be supportive of children and their families. Amen.***

Hephatha Lutheran Church initiated efforts for a Habitat for Humanity summer 'building blitz' in 2012. Thanks to Hephatha and the partnerships established for the project, 12 new houses were built within a two-block radius of the church. Those 12 homes now provide quality homes for new homeowners in a low-income community.

**Monday February 22**





## God's amazing work

by Karl Erickson

*Karl has been the Director of the ELCA Outreach Center in Kenosha for five years.*

God does work in very mysterious ways. I learned that as soon as I started working at the Outreach Center five years ago.



My first week, Mary, who had been at the Center for over thirteen years at the time, explained that she saw Jesus in every person who walks down the stairs. We see very broken and hurting people. We also see many folks who are living deep in poverty who are very blessed with what they have.

In my time at the Outreach Center, I have seen many Christ sightings. One of which was on a Wednesday at bible study time. The leader for the bible study did not show up so there were three of us sitting at the table discussing what we wanted to talk about that day. Five minutes later a client walked in and sat down. We struck up a conversation that led to him confessing that he really wanted to stop smoking marijuana.

We ended up discussing his addiction for over an hour. The interesting thing is not the topic of the conversation, but that God made the hour available to us to sit down with him and have the conversation.

Had the bible study leader shown up that day, we would have never had that opportunity. This is how God uses the Outreach Center to His advantage. He uses us to help his people and listen to those who are most in need. The ways He works in our lives is really amazing when you stop and observe. God's work is happening all around us, all the time. Do you stop and observe?

***Son of the Most High, help us to stop and listen to the people around us. Make us aware of your presence even in the people we least expect. Amen.***

The ELCA Outreach Center is an outreach of eight ELCA congregations along with the ecumenical involvement of other congregations in Kenosha County.

**Tuesday February 23**





## Hope is community

by Pastor Steve Wohlfeil

*Pastor Steve served as Interim Pastor at Incarnation  
Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, 2014-2015.*

Here's what hope looks like in our neighborhood.

Picture a park....with litter everywhere, and always present; the bathrooms closed, and eventually razed, because of mold; the wading pool, broken and drained, only to become a garbage receptacle; the playground equipment, run down and rusting; no kids in sight, because gangs have claimed the park as their own turf. That was Lindberg Park, a source of despair in the neighborhood.



"Something needs to be done," said the Justice Team at Incarnation Lutheran Church, located just around the corner from the park. So began a year's long process of rescue. Together with partners from the community they reclaimed and revitalized the park. There were disappointments and delays along the way, but today the gangs are gone. New bathrooms have been built. A splash pad has replaced the wading pool. Kids can be heard laughing on the bright, colorful new playground equipment. Litter is still an issue, but Ms. Doris Owens, the Neighborhood Minister at Incarnation and a member of the Justice Team, recruits folks from the neighborhood to keep the park clean.

These days you can bring a lawn chair and listen to a jazz trio on a summer evening, or your bible and study Scripture around the picnic tables on a Tuesday morning, or your kids and play in the park anytime.

"Hope has two beautiful daughters: Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are and Courage to do something about it." —St. Augustine.



Some have suggested that Hope has a third daughter: Community. Some things can only get done when they're done together.

***Dear Counselor, give us your righteous anger to change our neighborhoods. Help us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with you always. Amen.***

Incarnation Lutheran Church provides a year-round youth outreach ministry called God Bless the Kids' Spot.

**Wednesday February 24**



## Angels

by Roberta Doxtator

*Roberta's Angels story comes to us from Milwaukee's  
Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit.*

Sometimes we see angels in the least likely places. Recalling some situations in my life, I can't help but think that someone is always watching out for me.

My mother passed away when I was nine, however a lot happened even before that. I had six brothers and two sisters, and we lived with our grandmother. My dad was orphaned at the age of six, and as a young man took to finding whatever jobs he could. He worked in the cranberry marshes, spent time on the road with other unemployed men, and got used to drinking.



Dad moved our family to a farmhouse on the ridge road outside of Oneida. One night, he had an accident. Someone came to the door saying the police were looking for him. We did not know what to do! My sister and I walked along the edge of the road to Oneida when a school teacher picked us up and took us to our grandmother's home.

In 1954, when I was 14, living in Milwaukee, I was walking home from school for lunch when a white stranger joined me. The man followed me to my grandmother's home, where a party was going on. He said "you don't belong here!" and took me back to my school. I never saw him again.

At the age of eighteen, I moved out of our house, got a job, and met my friend Pat Delgado. Pat took me in, even though another girl had taken advantage of Pat's generosity and stolen Pat's clothes and loose change. Pat and I have been friends for sixty years; we love to go out to eat together and celebrate special occasions such as our birthdays.

***Heavenly Father, thank you for sending us unexpected helpers in our lives. Bless our earth angels. Amen.***

The Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit brings Native American traditions into Lutheran worship, giving worshippers a new look at their worship and faith. The church stays connected to the Native American community through ecumenical and cultural events.

**Thursday February 25**



## The Canaanite woman's faith

by Mimi Garcia

*This story comes to us from Faith/Santa Fe in Milwaukee.*

The struggle from the Canaanite Woman almost fighting with Jesus for healing, is my own life story with my daughter Vicki, finding ways to keep her alive. Sometimes I believe that Jesus has forgotten us because of everything that happens to her. But through the word of God I have a matured faith that allows me to go to Jesus.

Vicki is a 27 year old mother of five beautiful children, two of which have disabilities like her. In her young life Vicki has had a rough road, everything that you could possibly imagine. She has survived cervical cancer, hip dysplasia, stickler syndrome and other illnesses. Now she has been diagnosed legally blind. In times like these, I want to shut out my heart to God for allowing such suffering and pain, but at the same time God's love helps me realize that HE is suffering and loving us every day no matter what.

Vicki feels that God put Faith/Santa Fe in her path. Living in the neighborhood, she drove Layton Boulevard on a daily basis, but never noticed Faith/Santa Fe Lutheran Church, until seven years ago, something made her come in to worship. She felt welcomed, and at "home" and that God still loved her even with all her disabilities. She says she feels "weird" because when she attends service the sermon seems to be directed at her and about what she is going through.

Vicki is very grateful to Jesus. She says that she would not be here if it weren't for Him and His words of consolation and comfort every single day in her life. She now believes that God brought her to a new stage in her life in which she feels confident for whatever may come and because of her faith and experience in Jesus nothing can defeat her. She calls herself "God's Warrior" because with faith ALL things are possible with Jesus' power!

*You shall serve the Lord your God and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you? Exodus 23:25*

***Dear Jesus, strengthen us on our faith journey. At times we feel overwhelmed and hopeless. Remind us that you are with us crying when we cry, supporting us through it all. Amen.***

Worship and programming are in both English and Spanish at Faith/Santa Fe. After school tutoring, music lessons, children's programming, and a food pantry are some of the programs offered. Faith/Santa Fe is committed to expand its ministry into other Spanish speaking communities.

**Friday February 26**



## Shaping our youth with ministries

by Pastor Elizabeth Baires

*Pastor Betty serves Milwaukee's Church of the Great Spirit  
in the Native American traditions.*

*For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the **hope** of the poor perish forever.  
Psalm 9:18*

In my fourteen years of ministry, I have mostly served in the inner city. I have done some outreach among the youth and I have witnessed the distress and hopelessness in which some of them grew up. I mostly remember the first year I served in my last church where I led a youth bible study and one of my questions to break the ice was: "where do you see yourself in five years?" It was so painful to hear some of the young men saying "in jail or dead" and the rest didn't have any idea. It was as if they couldn't picture themselves in the future. No hope, no dreams, no idea, just living the moment.

That feeling was very familiar to me. In 1985, I went to live in El Salvador, Central America, after marrying my husband who was Salvadorian. During that time, the Civil War was still going on and many young people couldn't see themselves living a long life. Death and violence was all around us. It seemed that the war was going to last forever and even if you trusted that the Lord will protect you, there were moments in which there was no hope.

As you can see, there is a parallel between those who live in war torn places and those who live in the inner city where violence, drugs and poverty mimic a war zone.

My personal experience was that the church is a place where young people can find hope and meaning to life by doing ministry. The youth found hope by doing Summer Camp and by taking ownership and leadership of it. The church helped them to get the training and encouraged them to believe in their potential. In that way they saw themselves as positive role models and were encouraged to show the younger ones that there were other ways to being noticeable in the community. They realized that no matter what you do (good or bad) there is always somebody looking up to you and many of those times it is your own younger siblings. These young people went from having bible studies once a month to having one every Saturday and it was a request that came from them. I keep in communication with some of them and they are having productive lives, big dreams, and are in college making a difference in their lives and others.

It was very important to me to help them see that God never forgets the poor and needy, nor does he abandon them.

When the whole church makes a serious commitment to walk with the poor (young and old), it spreads not only the word of God but makes God's love, compassion, and presence more palpable and real which helps those in need to get back their hope.

***God of love, use our hands and make us instruments of your peace and love. Amen.***

Did you know that during an average week, the churches and ministries receiving funding from OUTREACH FOR HOPE give 630 volunteers a place to serve, to grow in faith, and grow in appreciation of God's diverse world? You can support the ministries you are reading about by sending a donation TO OUTREACH FOR HOPE, 1212 S. Layton Blvd., Milwaukee, WI 53215, or [www.outreachforhope.org](http://www.outreachforhope.org).

**Saturday February 27**



## Gleanings

by Marge Johnson

*Marge is Reformation Lutheran Church's Ministry Coordinator,  
located in Milwaukee.*

I caught a glimpse of Jesus. During morning prayers, a Peer Minister told his story. Someone beat him and he required emergency medical care. Days later, still nursing physical and emotional wounds, he was offered a weapon to use in retribution against his assailant. He struggled with his decision whether to seek revenge, and then shook his head no; he would not take the gun.



In that moment, I caught a glimpse of Jesus' transformational power. There was a time in this man's life that anger consumed him. Now a gun was easily accessible and his emotions were running high. In the moment, he was able to see himself differently, as Jesus' beloved, and walked away. He is a changed man.

Jesus changes us, too. When we go towards people who are different than us, even those who scare or repulse us, and look for Jesus behind the mask of "addiction or mental illness or just plain nastiness", we encounter God. In that encounter, we are changed, too.

Reformation walks with the community that no one wants to deal with. Partners step outside of their comfort zone to stand in solidarity with our faith community. In the ministry of partnership, we look for the face of Jesus in people who are different than ourselves that may be filled with despair or hate. It takes a step of faith to talk to, listen to, and walk with such an individual. But in that extraordinary search for Jesus in others we find different or despicable, something happens to partners. They discover Jesus in the other, and have the possibility of seeing Jesus in themselves as well.

Partnership is powerful. Together we experience a "vision of faith and work that will never be boring."

***O Lord, bless our relationships. Give us the courage to serve and be transformed by our acts of service. Amen.***

Reformation is rooted in their community as a place of support and love. The church provides The Neighborhood Store, community bible study, and youth programs.

**Monday February 29**



## O death

by Rev. Steve Jerbi

*Pastor Steve serves as Senior Pastor at All Peoples Church in Milwaukee.*

*O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? 1 Cor. 15:55-57*

A generation ago, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Epiphany was facing ecclesiastical hospice. Like many urban churches, when the demographics of the neighborhood changed, the membership of the church didn't. Fueled by racism manifest in white flight, Epiphany lacked the resources to sustain a congregation. The members decided that the most faithful thing to do was to die.

Death, however, could not win the day. Resurrection burst forth. With a vision from the members of Epiphany, residents of the neighborhood and Rev. Greg Van Dunk, new life came. Through support from synodical leaders and mission partners, Epiphany was born again as All Peoples Church. 2016 marks our 25th year of ministry.



Last year the rebirth All Peoples knew in 1991 repeated as Florist Avenue chose the difficult and faithful path of dying for the sake of resurrection. The corner of 40th and Florist is now the Havenwoods campus of All Peoples Church.

A congregation rising like the Phoenix is a compelling story for the Lutheran fellowship. It shows us that our God is always capable of doing a new thing. But keeping a building open is far from reveling in the hope we know in Jesus Christ.

Congregational rebirth must reflect the resurrection of our neighborhoods and our city. When hunger affects our neighbors, we must bring daily bread and the bread of life. When poverty cripples the opportunities for our friends, we must claim Jesus as the healer that tells our city to take up our mat and walk. When the demons of addiction and despair steal lives, we cast out those demons with the name of Jesus. When violence plagues our community, we must be blessed as peacemakers.

When we reflect the light of Christ in our members and in our work, then the resurrection story is more than just a hope of what is to come; it shows that resurrection is now!

***Lord, let our lives reflect your Spirit, revitalizing and resurrecting the community around us. No matter where we live let us be neighbors who care about each other. Amen.***

Two of the many programs that All Peoples Church offers include "Kids Working to Succeed" and "Thrive" for young adults.

**Tuesday March 1**





## Bread of Healing Empowerment Ministry

by Linda Radder

*Linda serves Milwaukee's Cross Lutheran Church as their parish nurse.*

Late this summer we had a group of interns from the national church office visit with us to see the medical clinic and ministry in action. We decided to have the Men of Faith and Women of Faith AODA groups select a representative to meet with the group to share with them about what they do, what kind of people attend, and why they keep coming.

The conversations were interesting and lively, but took a personal and emotional turn when both Donnie Jackson and Deborah Nelson decided to share their personal stories with the group. The food pantry initially brought Donnie to the ministry, but he later became a member of the Men of Faith AODA group as he shared that he has been battling the demon of drugs since his early twenties. He made no excuses saying he came from a stable, two parent household with siblings, graduated from high school and landed a good job with AO Smith and was later married and started his family. The first time he tried cocaine he was hooked and has struggled throughout his life to kick this addiction. We learned that even though it has wreaked havoc on his home life, marriage, and finances he may quit for a while, but always returns to it even though he knows well what it can do. He continues to pray and return to the ministry even when he stumbles. He has become a valuable member of the entire ministry and is very active in the group, serving as communion assistant for Holy Communion once a month. He is one of the leaders in the Men's Wellness group and has started attending church as well.

Mrs. Nelson shared with us what brought her from the South, first to Chicago then to Milwaukee. She had a black nephew who had a white wife. They had come here in the late 70's to have a better life than would have been possible as an interracial couple in the South at that time. They were found murdered in their car on the south side of Chicago. After that, she couldn't bear to live in that city anymore. She and her husband moved to Milwaukee near relatives. Although Milwaukee was a different kind of difficult, she has raised her family here and continues to support her larger community, so that young people know there is more to life than quick money and the violence they witness every day.

She had heard about the bible study and women's group. Once she was no longer working she decided to come and see if there was a way she could give back to this community around Cross since she had lived in the neighborhood previously. Mrs. Nelson has been coming to the Bread of Healing Empowerment Ministry for approximately five years now and is very faithful. She is being trained as a facilitator for the Women of Faith/AODA group and has organized the women to lead a portion of the bible study. Mrs. Nelson has experienced a lot in her life and can often relate to people within the community because she has been where they are. She offers a real sign of HOPE that things will get better and do more than just survive.

We are very blessed to have Donnie and Mrs. Nelson walking with us in our ministry.

***Dearest Jesus, thank you for people like Donnie and Deborah. They are witnesses to your powerful love working in us and through us. Give us strength to fight our addictions and love to do your work through our hands. Amen.***

Cross Lutheran Church has a long history of working for community and social justice.

**Wednesday March 2**





## Ernestine's story

by Ernestine Ruffin

*Ernestine is a member of Capitol Drive Lutheran Church, Milwaukee.*

I am Ernestine Ruffin, daughter, sister, aunt, mother and grandmother, and also a member of Capitol Drive Lutheran Church where I attend the Sherman Park Gathering Place every week.

Two years ago, in February 2013, I had a heart attack. I called "God help me, God help me!" It was an unexpected emergency procedure. While I was in the hospital, my children and family rallied around me. I had faith, knowing God would pull me through.

I had so many visitors wishing me a speedy recovery and many get-well greeting cards. The doctors and nurses, and all caretakers, did a very good job. It was a long and rough journey, but through the will of God, I had a strong mind and the courage to face what I thought would be my last day. I now feel good about the future.

Personally I take care of myself as I meditate for five or ten minutes each day and physically, I walk a lot to restore my health.

I am blessed while I look forward each Wednesday to going to the Sherman Park Gathering Place. I participate in the different events, exercise class, bible study, and enjoy sharing meals with others.

We help one another while together we enjoy guest speakers and the nursing students from Alverno College, who in their presentations, tell us how to take care of ourselves along with other health related topics.

When things go wrong, I can use the power of gratitude to release some, some of the negative emotions that I may be feeling due to the setback that I may have just experienced after a negative event.

I put things in perspective by remembering that even a difficult, unexpected event like my heart attack carries within it the seed of equal or greater benefit. At the Gathering Place, it's the weekly meal, which is prepared for us, that allows us to share in each other's lives around the table after we close our bible study with expressions of our faith and uplifting prayers. May God continue to bless us!



***Lord, thank you for life. May we all live a life of gratitude, remembering that even in the difficult times you are with us. Amen.***

Did you know that donations to OUTREACH FOR HOPE support programs that grow lasting and meaningful relationships between people of a wide variety of economic and racial backgrounds and help discover the gifts that each brings to ministry?

**Thursday March 3**



## God Squad

by Pastor Denise Mbise

*Pastor Denise serves the congregation at  
Atonement Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Racine.*

*Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. 1 Samuel 3:1a*

At Atonement Our Savior's afterschool program, which the children have dubbed "God Squad," we have learned the importance of mentoring. Many of our volunteers are retired teachers who have seen the importance of meaningful, caring relationships between adults and children. Knapp school, our neighborhood school, has also expressed the desire for us to help provide mentoring relationships at God Squad.



Children blossom when they know that adults care about them and listen to their concerns and joys. We have been able to create face-to-face relationships as well as pen pal relationships. The highlight of last year's program was the final party at Skatetown when pen pals got to meet each other and encourage one another face to face. As mentors we can also express the reality that not only do we care about them, but God cares about them and has dreams for their lives-- lives that are abundant and full.

***Gracious God, may we be lovers of your children and examples of your way. Bless the children in our lives and may they be a blessing to us. Amen.***

Atonement Our Savior's ran an after-school program on Wednesdays and Thursdays called the God Squad. It especially focused on outreach, encouraging the diverse community of neighborhood children to participate.

**Friday March 4**



## A story of hope

by an Older Child of God

*This story comes to us from Just One More Ministry, Milwaukee.*

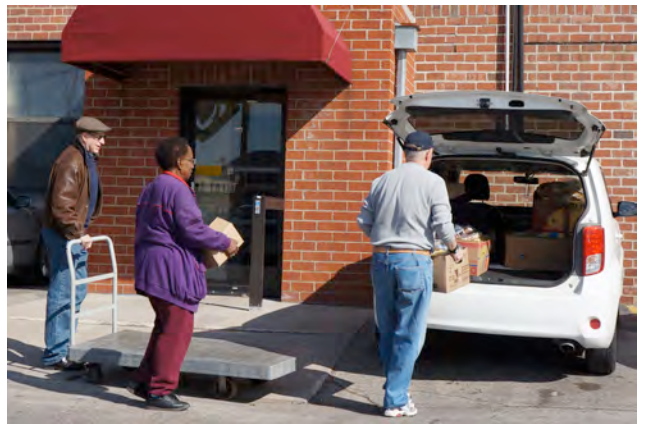
Have you ever had the rug pulled out from under you? How about the floor boards along with the rug?

I was sailing along in life, living the American Dream -- a big colonial home in the suburbs, a wonderful wife, 3 kids, a mini-van and even a Golden Retriever, just no white picket fence. I owned my own business and was living the good life.

Fast forward to last year. I was sitting in a jail cell trying to figure out how to kill myself. I lost my wife, my home, my business, all my money, and my relationship with my kids. I eventually was released from jail and now had to figure out how to start all over again. I was chronologically over-the hill, and as a convicted felon, I had little hope of finding someone willing to hire me. I was depressed, defeated and desperate. I did not know where to turn.

I began volunteering at one of the Outreach for Hope sites. I was welcomed and accepted and after a few months of volunteering, I was offered a part-time job there. God has always been faithful to me through this wonderful ministry. No one would give me a chance, but God and my friends here had compassion for me.

Now life has turned a corner for me. The rug was pulled out of my life, but a door was opened for me. I now have hope for the future. I have the opportunity to help others who have gone through hard times and faced major disappointments in life. I now have the privilege of offering hope to others. God is faithful, and finding faithful followers, like those serving through OUTREACH FOR HOPE, has made a great difference in my life. I've seen great things happening in the lives of many others through the hope that is found in Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God who never gives up on us, and thanks be to His followers who are willing to extend grace to those who need it.



***Father, sometimes life's lessons are difficult. Give us strength to turn to you when our paths seem so dark. You are our light. Amen.***

Eleven of the ministries receiving funding from OUTREACH FOR HOPE take an active role in the ministry of advocacy. They organize to walk with people who have little power on their own, but together can help make systemic changes possible for the common good.

**Saturday March 5**



## Sandra's story

by Sandra Kimbrough

*Sandra shares her story and attends Hephatha Lutheran Church, Milwaukee.*

My niece, Ruby, told Pastor Mary Martha that she had an Auntie that was struggling with drugs and alcohol and that she wanted her to meet me. So Pastor Mary Martha told Ruby to find out if she could come over to see me in the treatment center I was in. My response was, "I don't care, she can come if she wants to. I don't have nothing to say to her."

So she came to see me at Meta House and offered me a book about living a life in the Lord and dealing with drugs and alcohol. I gave it back to her and told her that I didn't feel like reading. I told her if she wasn't going to be bringing me money or getting me out of there, I saw no reason for her to come back. So she started coming every Thursday. We started talking about the things in my past that I was having trouble dealing with and I watched every expression on her face to see if she was judging me. When I saw that she wasn't judging me it became easier to talk to her on those Thursdays.

I started not only letting her pray for me, but I also started to pray with her. I found myself looking forward to seeing her on Thursdays and if I thought she wasn't coming, I would call the church to see if she was going to be able to come.



I found out that Pastor was a very honest person. She talked to you straight from the heart and she did not mix words, she meant what she said. That is what I

needed at that time, some honesty in my life. Allowing Pastor to take me on that journey, I have now been able to have a life of being honest with others and I will be celebrating 20 years of sobriety this year. I let her in and all she wanted to do was help.

***Dear Lord, thank you for our pastors. Keep them strong; constantly refresh them from the well of your grace. Amen.***

Besides putting a strong emphasis on welcoming and affirming individuals, Hephatha members also work on maintaining strong bonds with partnership churches, area institutions and schools.

**Monday March 7**



## The least of these

by Mary Zorn

*Mary is on staff at the ELCA Outreach Center, Kenosha.*

Of the many people that have crossed my path at the ELCA Outreach Center, the ones that stand out the most are the ones that have taught me the most about myself. One such person had been coming to the clothing closet since before I started working there.

One day, during my second year at the Center, she was particularly angry. We did not have any clothing that fit her or anything that would be helpful to her. She yelled at my coworker and me, and she let us know that we were useless to her. We tried to explain that we could not control what others donated and that she could check again another day.

It is my belief that Matthew 25:40 is literal. "Whatever you do for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me." I had been trying hard to see the face of Jesus in every person that came into the Center. I knew, if I thought of a person as Jesus, I would treat them better. This is easier in theory than in practice. Especially when that particular person is not acting in a way you would ever expect Jesus to act. I looked at my coworker and told her that I just could not see the face of Jesus in this woman.

Later in that week, I remembered seeing an unrelated bumper sticker that reminded me that I had no idea why she was mad, but that there were probably very valid reasons for her anger and that maybe she just needed some kindness. Remembering this, it was much easier for me to smile and to be kind to her.

About five years later, this woman came back to the Center. It had been a long while since I had seen her. I mentally braced myself for her complaints, however, she shocked me. She had an envelope and she handed it to me saying, "It's not much, but you were here for me when no one else was. I am doing good now. I have a job and I want you to use this to help someone else who needs it."

We walk by faith, most of the time in the dark, trusting that God is guiding our steps. I have seen her many times since that day and have had the opportunity to share what her blessing meant to me. It is a wondrous thing when we are reminded that God is, indeed, guiding us and showing us the way, even through an unrelated bumper sticker and an angry woman.

***Thank you, Lord, for your life changing grace. Help us to keep praying.  
Amen.***

Ministries receiving support from OUTREACH FOR HOPE collaborate with local businesses, residents and government leaders, in order to be more efficient in the use of resources and more effective in impacting their community.

**Tuesday March 8**



## Love your neighbor as yourself

by Carol Yust

*Carol serves as Outreach Director of Emmaus/Emaus Lutheran Church, Racine.*

Recently while attending a Synod anti-racism training, I was opened to the painful reality of what people who do not experience "white privilege" must endure daily.

Among the sixty-two individuals who attended the training there were people of different cultures, age ranges, privileges, and backgrounds.

All were there with one common goal in mind, to create space to be honest and self-reflective. We learned about how systemic racism has influenced our culture and history and how it has shaped us as individuals and institutions. We asked ourselves where we can effect change within our lives and institutions.

During the three days there were many moments that struck a chord within the vulnerable hearts that had been opened. For many of us, there were two especially poignant moments.

The first awareness was when the language spoken by the trainer went from English to Spanish. For the "white privileged folks" it was the first time that most of us found ourselves being in the minority. At that moment we realized the struggle our Spanish speaking neighbors/friends face daily. It wasn't easy listening to the interpreters translating the message.

The second time of awareness was when a Latina women stood to speak to the crowd. She looked around the room and said in Spanish (which we understood thanks to the interpreter), "I am one of the people of whom you speak, but I am not here to hurt anyone, or to take from you. I am here to embrace you. I just want to be able to live as you live, to love as you love." As she continued to speak, tears were in the eyes of many in the room. The walls that were built over years of systemic racism, began to come down, and hearts were opened to new life. As we began to build trust, lines of communication were opened, and hope for future relationships were formed.

At the training completion, it was obvious to many, that we had just been blessed with the power of God's grace, for we had just learned what it was like to love our neighbor as God first loved us!

***Our Father who art in heaven, you have blessed us with your love. Forgive us for our fear of people who do not speak like us or look like us or act like us. Deliver us from racism. Make us your family. Amen.***

Emmaus/Emaus Lutheran Church began a Spanish speaking ministry in 2009 to serve its neighborhood. It provides a four day-a-week program called Emmaus After School for Youth (EASY).

**Wednesday March 9**





## Blessings abound

by Thaurra Stallings

*Thaurra is the Neighborhood Youth Minister at  
Reformation Lutheran Church, Milwaukee.*

Every day we spend on this earth, we have the opportunity to send and receive a blessing. They come in so many shapes and forms. Sometimes we just don't see them. We really have to be rooted in the Word, with our eyes wide open, so that we can notice them when the opportunity occurs.

If you want to learn more about blessings, it's plain and simple. Just pick up your bible - it is your complete guide. Start by looking in Matthew 5:3-12. "Blessed are those who know they are spiritually poor. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Blessed are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires. God will be merciful to them. Be blessed and glad for a great reward is kept for you in heaven."



The blessing of our church keeps us surrounded in God's love. We are very important to the people in our community. I remember a family of six - they didn't have the money for rent or Christmas presents because the wife lost her husband to a murder. She moved to Milwaukee to keep her family safe. A lady on the bus said this church on 35<sup>th</sup> Street could help her family. Reformation helped the family get gifts for the children and helped with a portion of their rent.

If we do not have the gift of sharing in our heart, we cannot be a blessing to our brothers and our sisters. Remember how you came to Christ and share a story of your life. Help someone else if you can. Remember, you have a blessing inside of you!

***Dear Lord, open our hearts to the possibility of sharing your love with others.  
Amen.***

Fifteen of the ministries receiving support from OUTREACH FOR HOPE are committed to one or more Partnerships with other churches around the Greater Milwaukee Synod. While Partnership members join together in service and financial support, members of both churches also grow in cross-cultural understanding, face issues of racism together, and learn to overcome barriers of stereotypes and fear.

You can support the ministries you are reading about by sending a donation to OUTREACH FOR HOPE, 1212 S. Layton Blvd., Milwaukee, WI 53215, or [www.outreachforhope.org](http://www.outreachforhope.org).

**Thursday March 10**





## Daniel and Cassie

by Teresa Miranda and Renee Bauman

*Teresa and Renee are coordinating staff of Terrific Tuesdays, a program of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Racine.*

Teresa shares this story:

During this past year, I had a first grader, Daniel, who was constantly struggling with friends and school. Terrific Tuesdays helped him to create new bonds with kids. Also, his teacher came over to our facility and tutored him every Tuesday. This helped him to gain both self-confidence and catch up to his classmates in school.

Renee shares this story:

Cassie comes from a difficult family life. She was in our program as a child and helped us as a teen. We worked with her, helped her to be a mentor for the younger ones and talked her through some tough times. With encouragement she graduated high school. Now Cassie has even taken it to the next level. After a little hiccup she is back in college and has had the same job for the last 2 years. She is being a great example for her younger siblings.

***Dear Lord and Savior, help us remember how important it is to take care of your children. Help us to give our time freely to be mentors, or tutors, or support those who can. Amen.***

The Lutheran Church of the Redeemer provides Terrific Tuesdays, an after-school program of enrichment and support for neighborhood children, including a meal, worship and bible study.



**Friday March 11**



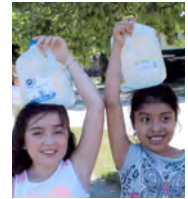
## Water is precious, water is life

by Nancy Smith; chant arrangement by Chris Keim

*A compilation of an August 7, 2015, Racine Journal Times Article, Walk 4 Water Chant and a letter written by Camp Director, Nancy Smith about the project.*

Last summer, 58 children enrolled in Emmaus Lutheran Church's summer Neighborhood Camp walked a 4 mile round trip hike from Emmaus, to the Racine Zoo and back as part of the ELCA World Hunger Walk for Water.

*Everywhere we go  
People want to know  
Why we carry water  
Round and round the block.*



In preparation for the walk, every day during the 5-week program, campers practiced carrying a gallon or half gallon jug of water through the church neighborhood and learned about water systems in some parts of Africa where women must walk as far as three miles to get water.



*We are in training  
For Walk for Water  
Walking in the shoes  
Of those far away.*

They spoke before the congregation, asked family and friends to help and went door to door in their neighborhoods to raise money. Special blue t-shirts were designed. They were a sea of blue as they walked to and from the Racine Zoo.

*Oh, we want to help  
Those who need water  
Raising lots of money  
For a water system.*

They came to realize that water is precious, that water is life and in the process raised \$2,215 for this national youth service project. This was quite an accomplishment considering the campers ranged in age from 6 to 11 years old.



*Water is Life, Yes.  
Needed for cooking,  
Bathing and drinking.  
Helping our neighbors.  
What are we doing?  
Walking for Water.  
What are we doing?  
Walking for water.*



***O Lord thank you for your life giving water. Help us work to make it available to the whole world. Clean water is a basic need. Amen.***

The Racine Neighborhood Camp was created to offer free, multi-site, summertime Christian programming to children of the unemployed and working poor. It operates during the summer at three Racine campuses: Atonement Our Saviors, Emmaus/Emaus, and Lutheran Church of the Redeemer.

**Saturday March 12**



## Recipe after 10 years

by Danielle Nixon

*Danielle has been working at the ELCA Outreach Center in Kenosha for 10 years and shares her story below.*

I was once asked, how are you able to always be so calm and patient with the clients? I had to think about it, and I came up with a combination: a cup of patience, a double dose of God, and a half a teaspoon of professionalism.

*Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually. 1 Chronicles 16:11*

Ok, so please let me explain. I went to school for human service so that gave me the skills to work with different clients. I have had a strong walk with God for many years now and I've always been told to see the face of God in everyone.

*Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually. Psalm 105:4*

I'm professional at all times so I feel as though I get respect because I give respect.

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16*

So I came up with this theory. Every day is a new day. Once I turn off the lights and I turn that alarm on the day is behind me. Just like I ask for forgiveness daily, I have decided to do the same for my clients. For example, I'm going to use the saying "woke up on the wrong side of the bed". I had a client who came in who must have woke up on the wrong side of the bed and she was mad at the world. Everything I said and did was wrong. She cursed at me, called me out by name and told me she would never talk to me again. The next day she came in and was in a much better mood. She asked if she could speak to me alone. I said "sure let's go to my office." She begin by saying "I'm so sorry, I was having a bad day" and she asked me to forgive her. I said "Sweetie I have already forgiven you for yesterday."

*You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19*

So from that moment on I didn't take anything clients said personally and began seeing the face of God in each person.

*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good. Proverbs 15:3*

I asked for daily forgiveness. I have chosen to give that same forgiveness daily.

*Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21-22*

***Lord, help us to see you in the face of the people around us. Give us patience. Help us to forgive ourselves and others when our days are not ideal. Amen.***

Did you know that at least four languages are spoken among various ministries receiving support from donations to OUTREACH FOR HOPE, reflecting the amazing diversity of all God's Church?

**Monday March 14**



## Dewayne's Story

by Dewayne Early

*Dewayne, a member at Hephatha Milwaukee, shares his story about overcoming his addiction, and the influence of the Hephatha congregation in his life.*

Over the years, I have been lost, wounded, and broken-hearted. There have been many troubles, sorrows, and falsehoods. I was in need of direction and truth.

I had been battling addiction for many years. I committed various crimes to support my chemical dependence. One of the consequences of my addiction was confinement to jail. I prayed for a different way of living, but was not sure where to start or who would be willing to give an ex-offender an opportunity to live a productive and enriching life.

During my transition from the institution to the community, I was placed at Felmers O. Chaney Correction Center on North 30<sup>th</sup> Street in Milwaukee. During the week, Pastor Joe of Hephatha Lutheran Church, would come in and provide religious services to those interested. Also, on Sundays, Pastor Joe would drive interested inmates from Chaney to Hephatha. Pastor Mary Martha, who is the Pastor at Hephatha, focuses on ways of supporting the community through the Word of God. It was magnificent to leave a church service feeling spiritually lifted and full of hope. Her words settled my heart and gave me hope. While attending Hephatha, I was able to attend confirmation classes held after church service and on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013, I affirmed my baptism and became a member of Hephatha.

As a member of Hephatha, I am constantly encouraged and strengthened and made able to help others as they have helped me. As a result of a referral from Hephatha, I am an Innkeeper at Serenity Inn located on Milwaukee's northwest side. Serenity Inn is a drug and alcohol-free residential environment that provides a safe place for men in recovery. I also facilitate a men's recovery group at Hephatha.

Hephatha has also directed my path to the Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAHA), where I am an active member committed to addressing issues that impact community and congregations. Volunteering as a member of MICAHA allows me a meaningful way to give back to the City of Milwaukee and speak on problems such as education, transportation, and housing.

I am thankful for the direction, support, words of wisdom, and counsel of Pastor Joe and Pastor Mary Martha and the ministry of Hephatha.

***Lord, thank you for your intervention. Open our lives to be your means to help others. Amen.***

Donations to OUTREACH FOR HOPE support congregations and ministries of the Greater Milwaukee Synod in Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee working to be the presence of God's love in low income communities.

**Tuesday March 15**



## Jason's joy

by Nikkeya Berryhill

*Nikkeya is the Soup Kitchen Coordinator at Unity Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, and Director of Faith Mentoring and Communication.*

A few weeks ago we received a call from a man asking for help. He needed financial assistance for a train ticket to get his fiancé from Michigan to Milwaukee.

Pastor Kevan obliged, and told the man to come in and the church would buy him a ticket. When he came in, he was distraught. He had not heard from his fiancé in 3 days, which was very atypical for their relationship. He told us that he normally heard from her daily and was disturbed since it had been so long. He was extra distraught because his fiancé, he shared, was homeless. We tried to get in touch with her by helping him set up a Facebook account to reach her. She didn't respond.

We chatted in the office for a while and I invited him to our Soup Kitchen and our Sunday Worship Service. As I left at the end of the day, he sat in the office forlorn, worried that he would not reach her. On my way out the door I said to him, "Jason, I will pray for your fiancé." As I walked home I prayed for her, but honestly I didn't have a lot of hope. I, too, was very worried about her and the situation seemed grim. As I carried on with my week, this incident slipped my mind.

Then Sunday worship came. During worship, as the congregation shared peace, I turned around to share with the person behind me and saw it was Jason! I exclaimed, "Jason, you're here!" Then, in his joy he pointed to the person next to him. "Nancy made it!" He rejoiced. I jumped over and reached out to both of them, incredibly excited that she was found. I was also excited that they were both at church with us.

After church, they asked me if I could help them out with food. I was so grateful that I could go over to our Food Pantry and fill two bags for them to take home. I then invited them to return on Wednesday for a meal and for more groceries. I left that day feeling incredibly blessed to be part of a church that has food on hand for people in need. I was also blessed by the fact that it's my job to make sure there is food in this pantry!



***Dearest Jesus, it is a blessing to help others. Help us to take advantage of the chance to give to food pantries and help the homeless. Amen.***

Unity Lutheran Church connects people at various levels of needs and gifts through a weekly Soup Kitchen, a Food Pantry, a Clothes Closet and an Open Door Free Clinic. All are housed within its walls and combined with an emphasis on spiritual growth and worship.

**Wednesday March 16**



## Froggy hugs

by Nancy Smith

*Nancy is director of the Racine Neighborhood Camp through Emmaus/Emaus Lutheran Church campus.*

Oh, the love of a stuffed amphibian! Meet Froggy. Yes, he is green. He has wonderful big eyes. His unique quality is that his arms and legs are long and have Velcro on them. He is the perfect size to be wrapped around our kids who attend Neighborhood Camp, a 5-week summer program, at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Racine. While Froggy is unable to give a hug, campers young and old are ready to hug their special friend.



Froggy hugs began several years ago to affirm campers. On Thursdays, each staff selects a camper in their group to receive a hug. As the campers are entwined in their special hug, the kids encourage the response by shouting out, "squeeze." There is no timidity in the response. Faces turn red, arms are quaking as the hugs tighten.

Once Froggy has given his quiet unconditional love, a name is picked from a hat and the selected camper gets to take Froggy home for the weekend. The campers are quick to remind that special person on how they are to care for Froggy. Froggy has been on many adventures including the Dells. On Monday the camper shares Froggy's adventures.

How does one show kids that Froggy hugs represent the amazing love of a God who showers unconditional love on them? The kids are reminded again and again that each one of them is a unique and special gift from God. The smiles on their faces, the light in their eyes, and the enthusiasm of their hugs speak of a God who is there for them all the time. They are loved! And they love! God is a delight!

*Let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and loves God. 1 John*

***Dear God, help us always to remember your arms are locked around us even when we don't feel it. Help us relax knowing we are yours. And knowing that, give us courage to be your arms as we embrace others and support each other. Amen.***

OUTREACH FOR HOPE hosts a Family Bike Ride on the first Saturday after Labor Day. In 2015, 356 riders rode 14, 20, 30, or 50 miles to support ministries serving in low income communities. Sponsorship for the riders and miles ridden raised over \$152,000 to support ministries that receive funding from OUTREACH FOR HOPE.

**Thursday March 17**





## Bold women

by Kayla Wright, age 17  
*Kayla attends All Peoples Church, Milwaukee.*

Bold woman, like the woman at the well  
I am a bold woman who's skin glows in the sun,  
it sure doesn't get sunburn.

I will yell black lives matter until the death of me.

I am a bold woman like the woman at the well.

I will scream and shout about how I think, I mean how I know that black girls rock.  
Not saying that all women don't rock. But I'm talking about the people who look like me.

The people who run the world like me, my black sisters.  
My phenomenal black sisters.  
You, you are my beautiful black sisters, and you, you mean the world to me.

***Creator of all, embolden us to stand for righteousness  
and always reflect your light. Amen.***

Fourteen of the ministries that receive funding from OUTREACH  
FOR HOPE provide a summer youth program for the children of  
the community.



**Friday March 18**





## Jesus, from the beginning

by Pastor Denise Mbise

*Pastor Denise serves at Atonement Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Racine, a joint ministry of two separate churches who now share ministry, staffing, and worship services at Atonement's facility.*

*The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ. Mark 1:1*

I grew up in the Lutheran church. My father was a pastor, my uncle was a pastor, my parents were missionaries. I grew up knowing about Jesus since the beginning. When I became a pastor in the ELCA, I understood my primary call to be to a congregation, a community of faith who knew about Jesus and had a desire to grow in their faith.



Last year at our after school program "God Squad" one of the staff came to me and said, "One of the kids told me today that they don't know the story of Jesus. They don't know the Christmas story." Every week we have God Time with the God Squad kids, a short time of story, song and worship. I needed to start from scratch. The story I had told them the week before - one of Jesus' parables - had no context for them because they didn't know the most basic story. Who is this Jesus we keep talking about? So we told the story.

This experience has made an impact on how I even begin to talk to people in today's society about faith, Jesus, the church and God. And it makes me think more deeply about how I've experienced God and Christ in my life and how I can share that with others. It is indeed the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.

***Living God, fill us with the Spirit of your Son Jesus Christ. May we see you in everyone we meet, in everything we do, in everything we hear and say. Grant us the grace to share your story and our story with those who are asking, "Who is this Jesus you keep talking about?" Amen.***

In its first twenty years OUTREACH FOR HOPE has provided over \$35 million for congregations and ministries faithfully striving to be the transforming power of the risen Christ in low income communities, and bringing the gifts of those communities to the whole Greater Milwaukee Synod.

**Saturday March 19**



## Power of faith in prayer

by David Nunley

*David serves All Peoples Church, Milwaukee, as the Minister of Music.*

About a month ago I was shopping at a store when my cell phone rang. It was my sister. I asked how she was doing, and she informed me she wasn't good. She had a mammogram, and the doctor called her with the results. He saw something on her left breast and asked for her to come in for a biopsy.

After she finished telling me what happened, I said, "Debra, lets pray." Whenever my sisters call me with anything that doesn't sound good, I take them immediately to the throne. Debra and I talked some more, and then said our goodbyes. I contacted my church family and friends and asked everyone to please pray for Debra.

Even though what the doctor found was small, and even informed my sister that he was 98% sure it wasn't cancer, the fear factor was still present. My sister is strong and has incredible faith. Another thing that helped is humor. My sister has a GREAT sense of humor, and even had the doctor and the technician laughing during this time!

I must admit there is power in prayer. Even while I prayed with my sister over the phone while in the store I felt God's presence. I felt that warmth, that peace and assurance that only comes from our Father. During this time before the biopsy I continued to hold my sister up in prayer. We have Midday Prayer every day at church from 11:00 to 11:30 AM. I constantly asked the people to remember my sister in prayer. I believe that while we wait during difficult times God wants us to focus on him; not the problem or situation. God is BIGGER than any problem or difficult thing we may ever face. We praise and thank God in the face of adversity, not just when everything is going great.



While at work one day, my sister called and said that the biopsy was complete and no cancer was found! Praise God! I sort of knew, and felt in my heart that she was going to be fine.

God has a way of giving us that blessed assurance that God is in control of everything. God is our Father and wants us to cast all our cares on him because God truly cares.

***Dear Lord thank you for always being there and answering our prayer. Sometimes we agree with your answer. Sometimes your answer is not easy to take. Help us to trust in your love no matter what. Amen.***

Donations to OUTREACH FOR HOPE help to support four congregations that have medical clinics and parish nurses available at their site.

**Monday March 21**



## A chance encounter

by Nikkeya Berryhill

*On Wednesday evenings, worship and the Eucharist are offered to those who attend the Soup Kitchen at Unity, Milwaukee. Nikkeya is the Soup Kitchen Coordinator.*

A couple of months ago, one of our members met a woman named Tanya on a bus. While the women chatted, she began to tell Tanya about our Outreach ministries, and how proud she was to volunteer in them. She then invited Tanya to a Sunday service.

That weekend, Tanya showed up for worship. During Pastor Kevan's sermon, he asked for volunteers to participate in a skit. Tanya raised her hand and asked, "Can I volunteer even though I'm not a member?" Pastor told her yes, and she went to the front to act out a part in the sermon.

As the days went by, we began to see Tanya everywhere. She came to our Wednesday outreach and eagerly asked to volunteer in the Food Pantry. The next week, she came back to church and then attended our Sunday night Journey Group. She has joined our scripture discernment team and a few weeks ago, became a member of Unity.



Tanya's presence is powerful at our church. She makes a huge impact wherever she goes. Her deep relationship with Christ is evident in the way she speaks and interacts with others. Her wisdom comes out whenever she speaks. It has truly been a joy to have her as a part of our congregation.

Who knew a chance encounter on the bus, could turn into such a blessing for an entire church?

***Jesus, we see you everywhere -- people in the store, people on the street, people on the bus. Let each encounter be an opportunity to be a blessing to each other. Amen.***

Many "campers" living on the streets on the South side of Milwaukee appreciate the warm welcome and the many ways they are cared for at Unity. Besides the Soup Kitchen, there is a food pantry, clothes closet, and clinic.

**Tuesday March 22**



## Bread of Healing--Men of Faith

by Pastor Michelle Townsend de Lopez with permission of Donnie and Deborah.  
Pastor Michelle serves the people of Cross Lutheran Church, Milwaukee.

A group of men from the Wednesday AODA group meet monthly to discuss neighborhood social issues. These include the need for jobs with a living wage, affordable housing, access to healthy food, access to health care, mental health care, and AODA treatment. These men are led by a parishioner from Cross, and include staff members Easter Dethrow and myself.

The involvement of these men is heartfelt. They have been at rallies in Milwaukee and Madison promoting social justice and the need for better AODA and mental health treatment in the Central City of Milwaukee. It is a joy to watch them in their journey of recovery as they have a cause to support and are as passionate in their support as they once were in their addiction. This activism and wanting to give to the community has led us to develop a Men's Wellness Group in collaboration with Walnut Way twice monthly.

Many of the men from the Wednesday AODA group think they can sing. We have been very accommodating and have allowed the men to share a song or two during the Wednesday bible study. It seemed to be a natural off-spring to incorporate this group of men into a Men's Chorus. They practiced a few times and have sung at a Sunday worship service at Cross. It is always a leap of faith when one counts on a participant in the AODA Wednesday programming, however on this Sunday, twelve men showed up at Cross at 9:30 AM to sing. They sang from their hearts, in fact, they didn't want to stop singing. There wasn't a dry eye in the congregation that Sunday, it was so moving. The plans are to continue the Men's Chorus and have them sing at Partner congregations. It was a joy to see men who were once completely absorbed in their addiction, now be completely absorbed in their praise and worship of God.

Every Wednesday we have four men who come from the Cheney Center, which is a pre-release center of the Correction Department. These men help with the meal and also the packing and distribution of the pantry bags. Many of them express gratitude to be at Cross and also have used the services of Easter, Linda, and myself for counseling and job leads as well as prayer and encouragement. Many of them express their gratitude and tell us they will return to volunteer when they are released from the Department of Corrections. It is a rare gentleman who returns and if they do, it is just for a short-term. Since January, a gentleman has been volunteering with preparing for the Wednesday meal, serving during the Wednesday meal, and assisting during the Food Pantry distribution as well as attending the Men's AODA group. He does all these services with an attitude that is rare, always a smile on his face and a willingness to help with whatever may be going on. The complexity of the task doesn't seem to matter to him. He seemed to appear out of nowhere, but after some checking he was recently released from the Cheney Center and has decided that his journey or recovery and a new life would include volunteering at Cross. He does this to keep on the right track and to give back to Cross, "who gave him so much while he was incarcerated". It is a joy to watch him, he is amazing.

***Dear Friend, help us to remember to reach out to those incarcerated. There are bars around us all; we are incarcerated by hate, guilt, fear, and our desires. Tear down the walls that separate us and make us one in you. Amen.***

Cross Lutheran Church's efforts have grown to include the Bread of Healing Empowerment Ministry with meals, Bread of Healing Clinic with medical and dental services, bible study, a job readiness program and AODA support groups.

**Wednesday March 23**



## A Terrific Tuesday story

by Sylvia Figueroa

*Sylvia is Co-Director of Racine's Lutheran Church of the Redeemer's  
Terrific Tuesdays Program.*

I want to share a short story about the great experience of giving and the satisfaction of bringing peace and joy to a needy family.

As a staff person of the Terrific Tuesday program, I was requested to choose a needy family from my program to give out some money for Christmas food, clothing and presents. We agreed on a family that was in a real financial need and I went to visit them. As soon I got in the house I noticed that it was an attic and this family was living there with no heater and no food.

I immediately told them that they were chosen this year to be given money from the church to use how they wanted.

I was surprised when the mother apologized and ask me if instead of money I could give them food and she told me that she really appreciated the money but she doesn't have a car to go to the store to buy food in the cold weather, especially because she has to take the city bus to go to the store.

I contacted another staff member for advice because she knows this family from school and we went to buy food, clothes and some presents for each one of the family (the mother, 3 girls and 1 boy). We got a heater for them and some people donated toys for the little kids and clothing for all of them.

The happiness and appreciation of this family touch my heart in a grateful manner and encourage me to continue to work hard in making the difference in someone's life each year.

I believe that this is a great feeling and that it is what we are here for-- to share and know God's grace and love in all our actions.

***Heavenly Father, keep us strong in our giving. Sometimes we become overwhelmed with the need, but each word of support, each prayer, and each gift of money can make such a difference in a person's life. Fill us with the love of Christ so that we might share that love with others. Amen.***

During an average week, the churches and ministries receiving funding from OUTREACH FOR HOPE welcome 5,036 people through their doors, to join in the many opportunities, connections and spiritual support being offered.

You can support the ministries you are reading about by sending a donation TO OUTREACH FOR HOPE, 1212 S. Layton Blvd., Milwaukee, WI 53215, or [www.outreachforhope.org](http://www.outreachforhope.org).

**Maundy Thursday March 24**





## Daisy and Gloria

by Pastor Mary Martha Kannass

*Pastor Mary Martha serves all who worship at Hephatha, Milwaukee.*

The kingdom of heaven dawns in our midst through the gift of the children God entrusts to us. We find this to be true at Hephatha over and over and over again.

Two of our newest Hephatha children are sister babies Gloria and Daisy. Born about a year apart, these sister babies have been snatched from the jaws of addiction and mental illness into which they were born, by two sister young adults of our congregation.

Sisters Natalie and Elisha grew up at Hephatha and now are helping Gloria and Daisy grow up. Sisters Natalie and Elisha are also helping Hephatha grow up. Sisters Natalie and Elisha are becoming adoptive mothers to sisters Gloria and Daisy. Mother Natalie brought daughter Gloria to the baptism water on Christmas Day in 2014. Mother Elisha brought daughter Daisy to the baptism water on Christmas Day in 2015. The sister babies are baptized sisters-in-Christ.

They are wrapped in swaddling clothes, dripping in the Christmas water of holy baptism, and have been laid in the manger of the hearts and faith of sisters Natalie and Elisha; and they have been laid in the manger of the faith and hearts of Hephatha, where God is making the last first in front of our very eyes. Baby Gloria can receive Holy Communion bread already. Her sister Daisy is not far behind. Baby Gloria is alert and watching our every move. Baby Daisy spends much of her time asleep. Mothers Natalie and Elisha are definitely awake. And they are waking us up as well—waking us at Hephatha up to the power of faith active in love.

Thanks be to God for these sisters—all four of them—and for the blessed way God has brought them together and uses them to renew our faith at Hephatha.



***Dear Father in heaven open our hearts to receive all your children as sisters and brothers in Christ. Thank you for bringing us together and being our loving father. Amen.***

Did you know that donations to Outreach for Hope help to support eight congregations that welcome people from the community through their doors for a weekly meal?

**Good Friday March 25**





## Burned but not consumed

by Rhonda Hill

*Rhonda is Director of Discipleship in her position as Assistant to the Bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod--ELCA and a member of All Peoples Church, Milwaukee.*

Southern trees bear strange fruit  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root  
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze  
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees  
-Lyrics from Strange Fruit

*There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up. Exodus 3:2-3, NIV*



The legacy of Blacks in America has been one of defeat and triumph, pain and resilience, filled with wonders and miracles. Much like the burning bush, we have not been consumed by the fires of this life. In this season of penitence may we as a nation embrace the invitation to repent for the violence done to Black bodies.

May we join in the chant that echoes the resilience of a people, refusing to be consumed, "Black Lives Matter". While we wrestle with the death of the flesh, may we remember the promise of resurrection. It is this resurrection promise that allows us all to walk in the power of redemption.

***Father, thank you for this season to reflect and remember, to repent and receive forgiveness, to allow your Holy Spirit to illuminate what is in our heart. Thank you for the reconciliation, redemption and resurrection we find in Christ Jesus. Amen***

\*\*\*\*\*

In 1995 OUTREACH FOR HOPE was established to provide support for the congregations of the Greater Milwaukee Synod - ELCA that were rich in ethnic and economic diversity, but were struggling in the midst of low income communities to remain strong in order to provide support for the people of the community and to be advocates in the battle against poverty.

We hope you have been blessed with these deeply personal stories that share how the Holy Spirit works HOPE in the midst of the lives of God's people.

Blessed Easter!

**Holy Saturday March 26**



## **Thank you for making the OUTREACH FOR HOPE devotions part of your Lenten experience.**

This collection of personal stories written about 'hope in the midst of life around them' would not have happened without our authors. We are grateful for their willingness to share their stories and their faith.

OUTREACH FOR HOPE supports ministries that are at work in some of the poorest communities of Southeast Wisconsin, where hope is crucial for the challenges faced there. The authors of these devotions are witnesses of that hope to the people around them, and to the rest of us who hear their stories.

You can join a Facebook discussion of each devotion as it comes out. On Facebook search for 'Lenten Devotions -Outreach for Hope.'

### **You are part of these ministries when you donate to OUTREACH FOR HOPE.**

Consider what might be your sacrificial offering to remind you of the great sacrifice that Christ made for us. Your gift will also serve to connect you with those for whom every dollar counts, as they struggle each day with the oppression of poverty.

**Make a donation today to support**

**OUTREACH FOR HOPE**

**1212 S. Layton Blvd.**

**Milwaukee, WI 53215**

or

**Donate online at [www.outreachforhope.org](http://www.outreachforhope.org). Click 'Donate Now.'**

**To learn more about the organization**, the ministries supported by OUTREACH FOR HOPE, arranging for special gifts or to make OUTREACH FOR HOPE part of your legacy, go to the website above or contact:

Rev. Jim Bickel, Director  
414-671-1212

[jim.bickel@milwaukee-synod.org](mailto:jim.bickel@milwaukee-synod.org)

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