



# 2021 LENTEN DEVOTIONS



***Celebrating 25 years*** of raising awareness and financial support for urban ministries in the Greater Milwaukee Synod.

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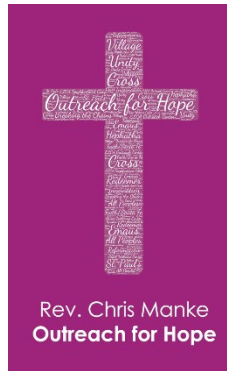
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**Wednesday, February 17**  
**Ash Wednesday**  
**OUTREACH FOR HOPE**

Hello, and a blessed lent to you today as we begin this journey, 40 days of Lent, and the weeks of Lent moving towards Holy Week and the Easter celebration on April 5. We take this

time during Lent to reflect, to think about how God is walking with us each and every day of our lives... and at Outreach for Hope we've created a different focus on this. Throughout the days of Lent, our focus is going to be looking at giving. "What does it mean to give?" That's the theme. "What does it mean to give?", and it's that question for us, as people of faith, to wrestle with during the days of Lent.



We've prepared videos for you-- 40 videos from our Ministry Partners, all the different ministries that are associated with Outreach for Hope, are many of our central city churches, doing incredible work. We have churches in Racine and Kenosha as well, and they'll be sharing reflections from their leaders there, talking about giving and what does it mean for them? And how does that get lived out in their own lives?

For me, as I think about giving-- my faith, my theology always starts with creation, starting with who God is. I wanted to read from Psalm 19. This is one of those powerful psalms that talks about God as creator: *"The Heavens Declare the Glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of God's hands. Day after day they pour forth speech, Night after night, they reveal knowledge, they have no speech, they use no words, no sound is from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth their words, into the ends of the earth world. In the heavens, God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a Bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion, rejoicing to run his course, he rises at one end of the heavens and makes it circuit to the other, nothing is deprived of its warmth."*

That sense of God as creator...how, when we think about giving, we realize that we have been given so much in each and every breath, and our health, and our living, our day-to-day, each day. As my father used to say, each day is a blessing. Recognizing that each day as we rise, we have been blessed with new opportunities, new choices, new hours in the day to live as people of God, to experience life and all of its beauty-- even with the cold that we are experiencing now. And maybe by the time we hit the end of Lent, it'll be beautiful again, we hope and pray.

We recognize that God blesses us each and every day with the goodness of life. Each breath, each movement, each reflection. We have time during Lent to take some reflection, and think about our own giving. How do we respond to the blessings God has given to us each and every day? With our strength, with our knowledge, with our gifts and abilities, that we may resemble what God has done for us, sharing those good gifts in our own lives?

And so as we begin this Lenten journey, I encourage you to really reflect on what does it mean to give for you. What does it mean to give in your time, talent and treasures, just as we've first been given?

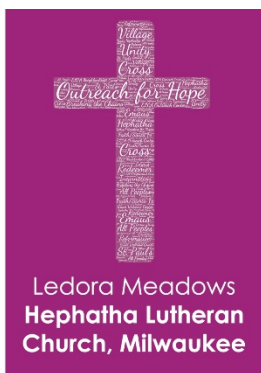
I'll end with the famous words from that same song, Psalm 19: "May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight? Oh, Lord, my rock and my Redeemer." May these words of our mouths, as we go through Lent, and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to God as we reflect on what it means to give.

God's blessings on this Lenten journey may be a powerful reminder of God's goodness in your life, of how God walks with us each and every day... and as we move towards the Easter event, may we be blessed to recognize and understand how much God loves us. Have a great Lent!

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Great and gracious God: In you we find our constant guide and advocate. Guide us to in turn be advocates for our neighbors, that we may seek to care and support one another toward a fuller vision of your blessed community. In Your name we pray, Amen.

*Rev. Chris Manke  
Executive Director at Outreach for Hope*



**Thursday, February 18**  
**HEPHATHA LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

*"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing." Malachi 3:10*

I'm sending love to each and every one of you. Hello, my name is Ledora Meadows. I am a full faithful member at Hephatha Lutheran Church here on the corner 18th and Locust. I love my church. I am a follower of Jesus. I love to give. I am a cheerful giver. I have been giving all my life. I was taught from a young age to always give, to always give love, to always show people that you care about them. I also have mercy on people.

I thank God for the children that I have in my home. I have been a foster mother for almost 35 years. I have adopted numerous children. I have had a whole lot of children in my home, about 50 children, and God is just so good to me, and we love to give, and I teach my children how to give. I teach my biological family how to give.

Giving is what Jesus did. His whole Bible and his word is about giving. What greater person could we ever follow than Jesus Christ and His giving, and I just love it.

Malachi 3:10 talks about giving with your tithe. He said Bring your full tithe to the storehouse, so the storehouse can have food in it. I love it. I always love to do it. And I also love to help out in my community where there are times when I have to pass our food - I go around and pass out food to different people. If I need to just clean the yard or whatever, I am truly a giver of God. I love it! I will follow Jesus always. God bless each and every one of you. Thank you.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear great and gracious God: You remind us of the goodness and joy that comes from giving. As we share and care for others - a joy wells up within our own souls - may the happiness in us be authentic and evident to the whole world, so that all people may know and understand that gladness comes first from you and your self-sacrificial giving. In your name we pray, Amen.

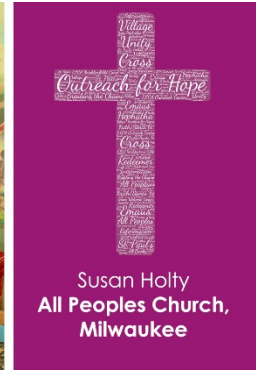
*Ledora Meadows*  
*Member at Hephatha Lutheran Church*



**Friday, February 19**  
**ALL PEOPLES CHURCH,**  
**MILWAUKEE**

See, this was the year of blessing in spite of COVID... Well, Linda Muth and I like to say because of COVID, perhaps. We have been trying for years to create a resource where our produce

stand where we give all of our produce out for free-- the kids decided that over six years ago, they didn't want to charge anybody or even ask for gifts. Well, we've been trying to get other gardeners and farmers to give us their leftovers. And for years they didn't really respond. Well, this year being COVID we suddenly received this inundation of people offering. Steve from St. Olaf's set it up with 13 gardeners and two farmers that they would give us their extra produce. And it was a lot! When I went out thinking we'd be harvesting the gleanings of the corn, I was told by the farmer that, "Oh no, one of our members from the church bought the seed so that I could plant them for you and a few other churches." Just for us! Not the gleanings, not the leftovers, but the first fruits.



With that, people who came to the stand would notice that, "Boy, you have a lot more vegetables and things we know you don't grow here." A lot of pumpkins and large squash. And we would share the story of St. Olaf and the gardeners... And then we found we had four more gardeners in our own community that were sharing! They had too many cucumbers or too many zucchini, and they were bringing them over to our garden table.

After eight weeks we stopped the produce bags [due to] the quarantine, and we went on to have two weeks off and then we opened up Tuesday through Friday, in the afternoons, noon to five to hand out produce. I was a little concerned about that, because with COVID and quarantines and people not being able to be around, how was I going to do this without being out there 24/7? Pastor Lindsey was very concerned about that! But then very quickly we found that we had neighbors who wanted to come and take turns, socially distanced, and they wanted to be part of it. And Kathy and Tammy and Shannon and Veronica... a couple from the church, [but] mostly neighbors, started showing up to take their turn at the table.

We had this little thing we called the COVID Shuffle and it was where we would bring up whatever the person asked for, and then we would step away so that they could

come up and get it and we wouldn't be within six feet of each other. It's really funny because it was in a time when people were very upset about social distancing and there was a lot of negative energy about that... and God provided this silly dance that we would do, and people would just crack up! And even our ladies from the Clara Mohammed School would come over, and they would turn to people and explain, "You have to do the COVID Shuffle!" And then they would stand there and they'd do the little dance forward for their produce and dance back... It was just fun to see a neat spirit come out of something that was so hard for so many people, and so scary...

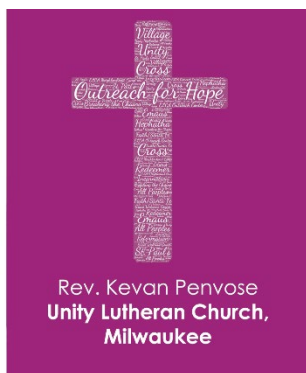
It's been a tough year! But God has definitely come forward and just shared blessings upon blessings... and as we say at the garden table, layers of blessings.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Gracious and generous God: We thank you for our many blessings. We remain ever grateful for your constant love, the gift of your Son Jesus, and the presence of your Holy Spirit with us. By serving our siblings, we serve you. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Susan Holty  
Garden Educator at All Peoples Church*





## Saturday, February 20 UNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, MILWAUKEE

As we consider what it means to give, I think of Ephesians 5:1-2, where scripture says, “be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant

offering and sacrifice to God.”

I’ve seen giving like this quite often at Unity Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. Recently, it was a guest who came to our Food Pantry. To honor her anonymity, I’ll refer to her as Avah. The next day after coming to Unity’s Food Pantry, Avah returned to Unity’s building. However, this time the building was vacant and dark. The temperatures outside were dropping close to zero. Avah had returned to sleep outside where our Pantry distributes food.

The next morning, a member of Unity named Chad came to shovel snow. This pandemic has brought challenges for Chad, but he’s also found new ways to give through his calling in Jesus’ ministry. When Chad spotted Avah, he introduced himself and struck up a conversation. Avah didn’t know what to do, or where to go for help. Chad gave her a blanket and a bottle of water. Then he called and asked me if I could contact Street Angels. I let him know that Street Angels would be there in an hour. Chad told Avah not to worry, because God was working to bring her help.

When Street Angels arrived, Avah exclaimed, “God sent angels to help me!” She joyfully dropped everything to go with them. They drove her to a safe and warm place to stay. Later Street Angels asked me to thank Chad for the relationship he developed with Avah, because that built up trust in her to receive from them the help she needed.

Giving of ourselves, imitating God, living in love, following Jesus. It’s noticing people and caring. It’s being involved in life together and developing relationships. And when that trust reveals the gift presented, it’s seeing that God is the source of all good gifts we truly need.

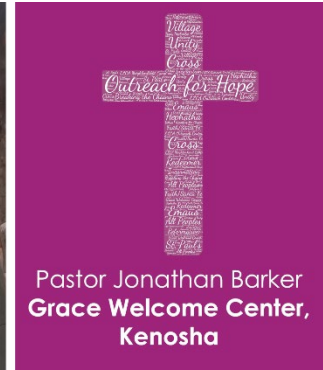
***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Gracious God, giver of all good gifts: Help us to be imitators of you, that by living together in your love, the gifts we share may be a sweet fragrance of praise and thanks to you through our savior Jesus. Amen.

Rev. Kevan Penvose  
Pastor at Unity Lutheran Church

**Monday, February 22**  
**GRACE WELCOME CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

Hello! This Rev. Jonathan Barker down here at Grace Lutheran Church in Kenosha. I'm the co-founder of Grace Welcome Center and Pastor here, and when I think about generosity, my generosity hero has always been Barnabas.



Barnabas sold one of his fields and brought the proceeds to the disciples' feet. And not only did Barnabas do this, but so did other members of the early Jerusalem church, the first that did this. And by their incredible act of generosity, we read that "there was not a single needy person among them" in the early first Jerusalem church.

I've always loved that story. I've always loved Barnabas. He's named "Son of Encouragement." I think about how encouraging generosity can be.

This past December, not only did we have roof leaks here at Grace, we also had boiler issues on three separate occasions in December. The third time we had it, I wish I could say I was standing firm in faith and so confident that everything would work out... but the third time in three weeks when the boilers were down, my own spirits dipped. I posted a video just begging for help to cover the cost of getting our boiler repaired.

And within five minutes, somebody stepped up and said, "I will cover the whole cost of the boiler."

That was one of the most encouraging things that has ever happened to me in my ministry. Their gift helped keep Grace Welcome Center pantry going, kept our breakfast program going, kept our diaper program going, kept our worshiping going — it kept it all going because somebody stepped up and was a Son of Encouragement like Barnabas.

Later, I learned that that person didn't really have a lot of money to do this. This was a gift of extreme sacrifice for them. Yet it kept our ministry going. And I could not be more grateful.

When I think about generosity, I think about the bold generosity of this person that brought this money forth for our boilers, I think about Barnabas. I think about how that encourages the ministry of God's people, encourages those doing the ministry, and I think about how God's kingdom continues to spread.

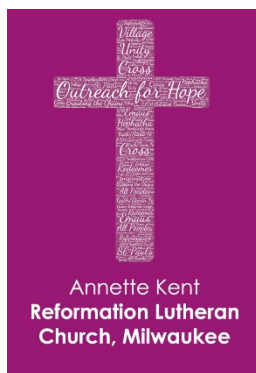
I thank everybody in the Greater Milwaukee Synod. There are so many generous, wonderful people in our synod who have helped not only Grace Welcome Center, but also so many other Outreach for Hope ministries.

Blessings to you during this Lenten season and during these challenging times with COVID!

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear Heavenly Father: You call us to be bold in our world. You call us to encourage one another in ministry and love, that your kingdom may spread and grow. Thank you, Lord, for your generosity to us. Help us to grow in your likeness, sharing your generosity and goodness with one another. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

*Rev. Jonathan Barker  
Pastor at Grace Welcome Center*



**Tuesday, February 23**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

Well, good morning. My name is Annette Kent.

I am here today to speak about giving. I believe giving is an important aspect of life. It's another way of paying it forward and being able to help someone else in need.

This year during the pandemic, I was able to help a family who was separated due to lack of funding to be able to have a roof over their head. I accepted one of their children in their home. For the last four months I've been taking care of her, and the young lady is very grateful. Throughout, there's so many ways that I can say thank you for her from her to me. It's just the point of giving back. She's grateful every morning. I'm grateful for her being there, and her presence has been able to help a family in need. It's just been a blessing to be able to pay it forward and every morning that she gets up and says thank you, her mom calls and check on her and lets me know how well I'm doing, and to be able to be in a position to help others.

So if you're ever in a position where you can give back, please try to give back-- whether it's just paying it forward, or paying for someone's meal, or just giving them back during hard times. I think that'd be a blessing to me.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Great and gracious God: We offer to you this day all the facets of our lives, whether it be at home, at work, or at school. We seek to be patient, to be merciful, to be generous, to be holy. Give us the wisdom and insight to understand your will for us and the fervor to carry out our good intentions. Amen.

*Annette Kent*  
*Member at Reformation Lutheran Church*

**Wednesday, February 24**  
**REDEEMER LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

*(Rev. Lisa Bates Froiland stands in front of a chalk board with the words 'give,' 'alive,' 'flow,' and 'stuck' written on it.)*



Hi, Lisa Bates Froiland here, pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. I'm going to be so direct with you today on the prompt of "what does it mean to give." For me and for our faith, to give is to be alive. To know that we are alive and have life is to know that God has gifted us to be on this planet with breath in our love and blood flowing through our lives. To be alive is to give because we have first received.

When I talk about generosity with my congregation, I often say that this is what it's all about: acknowledging what we have received, our response is to give. It's as simple as that. Nothing that we have is really ours; it's been given to us by God. Nothing that we are is really of our own doing, but it is God's giftedness and our cooperation with those gifts.

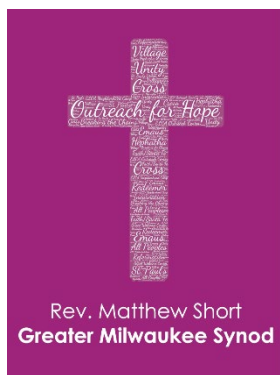
Sometimes, something gets stuck. Something's gunking up the works. There may be a lack of trust, a lack of patience with the fact that what we've been given needs to move along, and in our fearfulness we hoard. We get stuck.

Give now, give often -- because in that there is flow. In that there is breath. So as we breathe in and breathe out and as our blood flows to our heart and away from our heart, so also anything that we have (including dollars and cents) comes in and must go out. To give is to be alive.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Good and Gracious God: All that we have, and all that we are, come from you. You are in every breath we take. Help us to confront our fears and give generously to help bring forth your promised reign of justice, equity, and abundance. AMEN.

*Rev. Lisa Bates Froiland*  
*Pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church*



Thursday, February 25  
**GREATER MILWAUKEE  
SYNOD**

Hello! My name is Pastor Matthew Short, and I serve as the Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission on the synod staff.

When I think about what it means to give, I think it really means to recognize the connection with someone else. When I think about times in my past, when I've given a gift to someone that I really love-- like at Christmas or their birthday, when you get something for someone and you're really excited for them to open it, because you know they're going to love it.

I think back on those times, and it's never about the actual thing. I think it's about the connection with that person, the relationship. So when I think about what it means to give, I think it means to recognize the relationship, to recognize the connection.

That's part of why I'm passionate about the work that I'm called to do day-in and day-out as a partner with Outreach for Hope, and the 120+ ministries of the Greater Milwaukee Synod. Because really, a synod is a group of congregations banding together and recognizing the relationship, the interrelatedness.

I get a chance to interact every day with leaders who are making a tremendous difference in the world, and that difference is amplified by the fact that we do it together. So as I think about what it means to give, I think about the ways that we are connected to God's love, to each other, and to the world that yearns for that connection.

I'm so grateful to be in this with all of you. And so when I give the gifts I have to share, and you give the gifts you have to share, then there is sufficiency for all of us.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

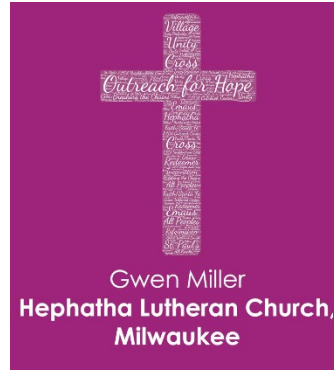
**PRAYER** | God, you have gifted each one of us, and bound us together for the sake of the world. Help us to offer what we have to give and honor what others have to give, trusting that together with you, we are enough. Amen.

*Rev. Matthew Short  
Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission at Greater Milwaukee Synod*



**Friday, February 26**  
**HEPHATHA LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

*"A generous person will be enriched,  
and one who gives water will get water."*  
Proverbs 11:25



As we enter the season of Lent, which is a time of reflection and preparation for Resurrection Sunday-- it is also usually a time when we make sacrifices in our lives, spend more time in prayer and set goals to be better in certain areas of our lives.

It is also a good time to focus on our ability to give to others-- especially this year, as we go through the struggles of this pandemic. People are hungry, some have lost their jobs and above all, have lost loved ones.

They are turning to the church for comfort and financial help. This is an opportunity for the church to sow seed with the potential of someone to grow in Christ, which ultimately, is the goal of the church.

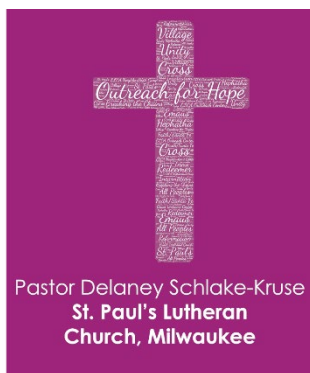
So if you have the availability or opportunity to increase your giving financially-- it would be a blessing to you, as well as a blessing to someone else in need!

Proverbs 11:25 says "a generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others, will be refreshed." Thanks be to God!

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear gracious and loving God: As we look around at our world, we recognize the difficulties our siblings in Christ are experiencing in our communities. Help me to reach out to those in need with the same loving kindness and generosity you have shown me. May your kingdom grow in love through me today. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Gwen Miller  
Member at Hephatha Lutheran Church



**Saturday, February 27**  
**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

*"Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will*

*find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy. And my burden is light.'"* Matthew 11:28-30

Hi! I'm Pastor Delaney Schlake-Kruse, and I'm the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church at 28th and Wisconsin Avenue on the near west side of Milwaukee. At St. Paul's, we have received a grant this year from Outreach for Hope that helps us to give hospitality gifts to organizations in our neighborhood.

Our neighborhood is full of beautiful organizations and ministries who are serving the children of God among us - places like Neighborhood House, Pathways High School, the Department of Children and Family Services, and many houses of worship.

All of those places have staff people, and so this year we asked for a grant so that we could give the gift of hospitality to the people around us in things like coffee, or a basket of bagels, or some fruit, or just some gift that we can share.

Once a month, we'll choose a different organization to bring a hospitality gift with the help of Outreach for Hope. And so when I was thinking about "what does it mean to give?", I thought about this grant that we received this year, and these words from Jesus in Matthew, chapter 11- "Jesus said, Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy. And my burden is light."

One of the gifts that we receive from God, this gift that's promised to us by Jesus, is the gift of rest. This is something we receive in the Sabbath, every time we take a breath, and take a break, and stop worrying so much about productivity, and rest in the gracious embrace of God.

And so this year at St. Paul's, we are seeking to continue the work of Jesus by giving the gift of rest, of an eased burden to the people around us who are sharing their time and

talents and gifts with our neighbors in the gift of a hospitality basket. So what does it mean to give? To me, it means rest.

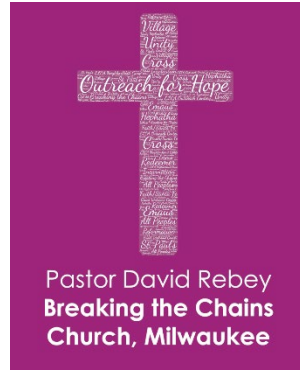
***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | God of hospitality: We praise you for the many ways people respond to the needs of their neighbors and seek to share your kindness with their communities. Encourage us, this season, to notice the weariness of those around us, and open our hands to share your blessings of kindness and rest with those we notice, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

*Rev. Delaney Schlake-Kruse  
Pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church*

**Monday, March 1**  
**BREAKING THE CHAINS**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

*"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return." Luke 6:32-33, 36*



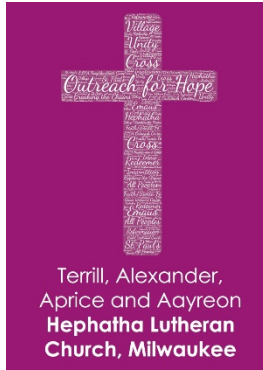
For the past several years, the ministry team of Breaking the Chains Church has assembled simple gift bags for distribution to the men incarcerated at the Felmers Chaney Correctional Center and the staff just before Christmas. The bags include simple things that most of us would take for granted and wouldn't even think of as gifts at all-- like a few cookies, peanut butter and crackers, prepackaged beef sticks, and a couple of stamped cards for the men to connect with the outside world. Otherwise, many of the men there are estranged from family and friends, and wouldn't receive any Christmas gifts if not for these simple "gifts."

Being incarcerated at Christmas can be a very difficult and lonely time. Some people might say that these men are criminals and are receiving the punishment they deserve. [But] I am always amazed by the generosity of people throughout the Greater Milwaukee Synod who volunteer to contribute to the bags while realizing that they will most likely never get to meet any of the recipients or hear how thankful they are when they receive them.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Lord Jesus: Help us to recognize that when we give generously to the least among us, expecting nothing in return, we are giving to you standing right in front of us. Amen.

*Rev. David Rebey  
Steering Committee Member at Breaking the Chains Church*



## Tuesday, March 2 **HEPHATHA LUTHERAN CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

### **PASTOR MARY MARTHA KANNASS:**

Greetings from Hephatha church and a blessed Lenten season to you. As we contemplate the deeper meaning of what it means to give, we are so happy for you to

meet our fine young men: Terrill, Alexander, Aprice, and Aayreon. Each one of these young men will share how they understand that deeper sense of giving of oneself to God and to others. There we find our true calling. And our meaning in Jesus Christ, who has given us all.

**TERRILL:** Giving for me is not only about giving money, but it also about giving your presence, cause it's a hard time in this pandemic, so even someone just seeing you right now, that's a way of giving. It is also about giving love, because a lot of people need it. They go through a lot of things, so by giving your love is also one of the things we can do.

**ALEXANDER:** Giving to me means just being there for other people. I've given blood, like five times since high school. It's just something that kind of comes naturally to me. It kind of makes you feel good.

**AAYREON:** Giving to me is basically giving your time to do something for others, or even just sitting down with them, and just talking with them. You could give your time to shovel snow, cut grass, or anything like that.

**APRICE:** I believe that giving is being able to give something to somebody and not believe that they are trying to take advantage of you or anything else - just wanting to be yourself and go out and give. It could be anything, any number of different things like giving blood, just giving your time, your effort, your hard work. That's what giving means to me.

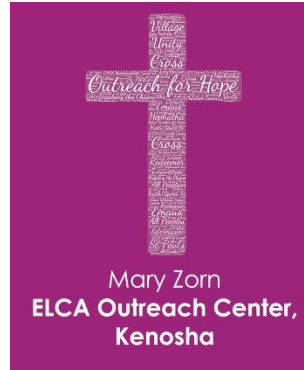
### ***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear Lord: May we follow our youth who show us the importance of caring for one another through our gifts of time, talent, and love. May our simple gifts give strength to those who need it in this world. Bless all of our efforts, that your goodness and love may grow in all of us. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Terrill, Alexander, Aayreon & Aprice  
Members at Hephatha Lutheran Church*

**Wednesday, March 3**  
**ELCA OUTREACH CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

*"You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."* 2 Corinthians 9:11-12



When I think of the Outreach Center, I think of [us as] a waystation. A man I love, Dr. Paul Farmer who works in Haiti, explained to Haitians that God gives but doesn't share. He says that God gives us humans everything we need to flourish, but he is not the one who is supposed to divvy up the loot. That was laid upon us.

I feel like that is what we do at the Outreach Center. We give from our and your abundance. It is always so satisfying to me to answer the question, "How much do you charge for that?" with the answer that everything we give is for free. We give abundantly because God gives abundantly. And I feel like that is our charge on earth, for all of us no matter what we are doing. I feel like we are the fortunate people here, to be the people to be able to give of God's abundance directly to the people who need it.

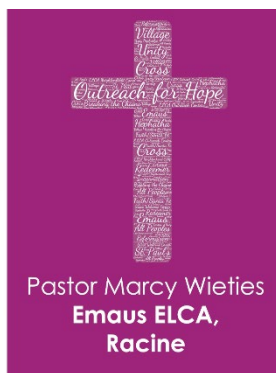
Thank you for that and God bless you all!

**As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?**

**PRAYER** | You give us everything we need to flourish. Just as we are abundantly blessed by you, may we recognize our need to share abundantly, that all people would know your good and gracious love. Amen!

Mary Zorn  
Administrative Assistant at ELCA Outreach Center





## Thursday, March 4 **EMAUS ELCA, RACINE**

There's a commercial on TV right now that I just really love. It shows two little girls sitting on the floor in their bedroom with a plate of Hershey's chocolate between them. And the announcer says, "Take a piece of

chocolate if you're the tallest. Take a piece of chocolate if you're better at eating your vegetables". And then the third question is the kicker. "Take a piece of chocolate, if you love sharing", and both little girls pause and one finally one leans forward and picks up a piece of chocolate and sweetly hands it to the other little girl. If only our giving was always that generous, and that heart, felt, and so joyful.

So often I think we view giving as an obligation. It's your responsibility as a Christian, right? But a sense of duty is not what motivates truly Christian giving. We give because God first gave to us so freely and so generously. We give because we've been so freely loved and forgiven. As James Harnish once wrote, "We give back to God, what is God's, so that through our gifts, the love of God can become a tangible reality in our world".

May your giving of money, of possessions, of time, of energy - truly reflect the reality of God's love in our world.

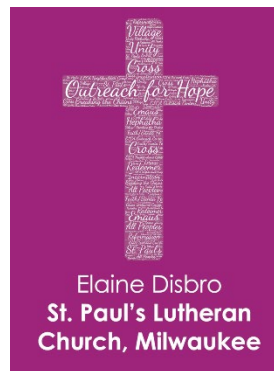
***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear great and gracious God: You give to us so freely and so fully. This is perfectly presented in the gift you have given us on the cross. May we resemble in our giving even a little of the self-sacrifice that you so freely have given to each and every one of us. May our lives and giving point to your story. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

*Rev. Marcy Wieties  
Pastor at Emaus ELCA*

Friday, March 5  
**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN  
CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

We were asked to reflect on the question, "What does it mean to give?". For me, giving has always been a form of commitment, a way to show my commitment to the people that are important to me, to the communities I am involved with, and to the issues and causes that I care about.

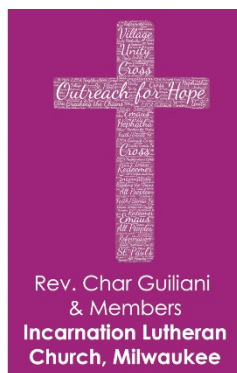


This year, I have been helping my congregation, St. Paul's Lutheran, by giving my time and some of my talents to help record worship services. We've been using a camera and technology equipment, purchased with Outreach for Hope funds, and we've now moved to live streaming on Sundays so more people can participate. So for me giving has been a way to both give back to my faith community and show my commitment to my faith and to my congregation in these challenging times. That's what giving means to me.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | God of generosity: We give you thanks for opportunities to notice our own gifts and talents, and where they intersect with the world you love. Open our awareness to recognize the ways we might share your grace in new ways, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

*Elaine Disbro  
Member at St. Paul's Lutheran Church*



Saturday, March 6  
**INCARNATION LUTHERAN  
CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

Hi! I'm Pastor Char Guiliani from Incarnation Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. We are located at 15th and Keith Avenue.

A reading from Second Corinthians, the ninth chapter, the seventh verse: "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

I had the opportunity to ask some of our congregational members what it meant to them to give. Here are their responses:

*"Because we're all connected, and we're responsible for each other."*

*"When I give, I think I get much more than I give. So for me, it's important to give, because it is a two-way street, and in giving, we get so much more than we can possibly give, and it's a way to share God's gifts."*

*"In giving, it shows that we're one unit. We're not separated."*

*"I think giving makes you feel good, too. Helping other people, because God gave to me. It's a blessing when I give to God and other people."*

*"God gives to us so we in turn give to others. Nine times out of ten, we have more than we need, so why keep it for ourselves?"*

*"Since God created it all and gave us stewardship over it, it means that we've really created nothing. So everything we've got comes from Him. And we give, and all it is, is giving back a small amount of what He already gave us."*

*"Well, I think that we're just giving back part of what God has given us, and it makes you feel good for giving."*

*"It's important for me to give to live out my faith."*

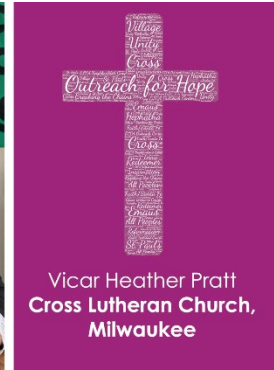
***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Gracious and loving God: We know you are the Creator and we are the created. Everything we have is a blessing from you. We thank you that we are all connected. We know when we give, we get so much more in return. We ask you to help us share the blessings and gifts you have given us, and help us live out our faith. We lift up our prayers to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Rev. Char Guiliani  
Pastor at Incarnation Lutheran Church  
& Members of Incarnation Lutheran Church*

**Monday, March 8**  
**CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH,**  
**MILWAUKEE**

I love being a part of this food pantry ministry because we've got a really wide range of people coming together-- from the city, from the suburbs, you name it --and we're all just coming together, serving. I love that when we're here serving, that there are also often people who are coming as recipients to the food pantry, who also want to serve. They're looking for ways to give back as well. I've already seen a number of ways that that happens. It sort of blurs that line between who's serving, who's receiving. We all want to serve. We all want to use our time, talents and treasures in ways that will help others.



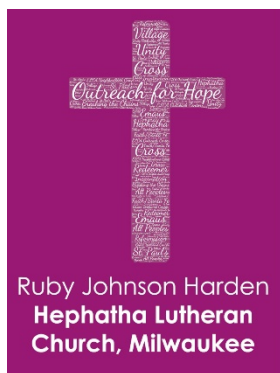
One of my favorite examples of that was with the Poor People's Campaign. We had said, "okay, let's bring some food, let's go bring some lunch over to this particular high-rise building, and we'll hang out." And everyone who was there said, "Oh, let me bring something too!" Everyone's bringing something to the table. And something that was particularly heartwarming was, in a building with people who-- you know, their money is really tight --and they found out that one of the ladies who lived in that building, that her dog had passed away. Well, every single person dug into their pocket, brought out whatever they had-- five bucks, three bucks, whatever it was -- and they chipped in so that she could cover the funeral costs for her pet.

You know, that's giving at its finest. It's caring about your neighbor, whether it's your literal neighbor in that example, or people who might live across the city from you. And just coming together and trying to be a tangible voice for hope through our words and our actions.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Abundant God: You made us in your image and breathed in us a spirit of generosity that is both gift and response. Move us, we pray, to give as we have received-- abundantly, generously, and joyfully --that our common ministry may ever bear witness to your unfailing grace. In the name of the Three in whom we are One, Amen.

*Heather Pratt*  
*Vicar at Cross Lutheran Church*



**Tuesday, March 9**  
**HEPHATHA LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**PASTOR MARY MARTHA**

**KANNASS:** Greetings from Hephatha Lutheran Church and a very blessed Lenten season to you. As we continue to receive so much from God, it's our

honor to be able to give to God and to humanity, particularly in the time of this pandemic. Please meet Ruby Harden, Hephatha member and a true giver in the faith.

**RUBY JOHNSON HARDEN:** Hi, I'm Ruby Johnson Harden, a member of Hephatha Lutheran Church for 50 plus years. My purpose in life is to give to others. I was brought up giving, and all through this virus pandemic, I have been giving - working at food pantries, finding ways to get food to people, finding ways to help people get clothing, and the things they need. I think giving is our 100% purpose of being a true Christian. Thank you and blessings to you in your giving.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear Lord: We receive so much from you each and every day. Bless this day that we may have opportunities to share with others our time, our talents, and our treasures -- that all may have enough, and that we may be doubly blessed to walk with each other. Thank you, Lord. Amen!

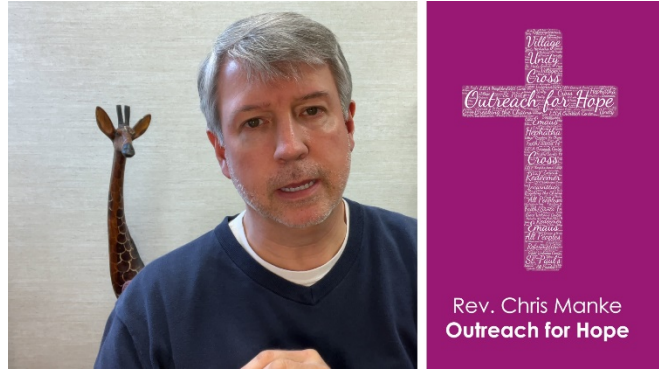
*Ruby Johnson Harden*  
*Member at Hephatha Lutheran Church*



## Wednesday, March 10 OUTREACH FOR HOPE

Good Morning. For our devotion today, I wanted to think a little bit about what it feels like to be in need.

Professor John Dominic Crossan tells a story of when he was teaching in seminaries. He taught [in] seminaries around the world. [At] three different ones, specifically-- one in America, one in Russia, and one in Tanzania. And he tells about sharing the prodigal son story, and then asking people about it.



So I just want to read this section from the prodigal son story from Jesus: So Jesus says, there was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So the father divided his property between the two sons. A few days later, the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country. And there, he squandered his property in dissolutely living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him out to his fields to feed the pigs. The son thought he would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything to eat.

What does it mean to be in need? When John Dominic Crossan asked his students in these three different countries, "Tell me about this story? What is it about this young man that has him in such great need?" In America, they all pointed to the fact that "he had squandered his property in dissolute living," it says so right in the text. And we can give all sorts of definitions to that.

When he was in Russia, he asked that same question to his seminary students. He said, "So what is it about this, that the young man is suddenly finding himself in need?" And they all pointed to something completely different. They pointed to another part of the text where it said that "a severe famine took place throughout that country." In Russia, they had had many famines. They knew what it meant to be in great need, needing to be fed.

When he went to Tanzania, he asked his seminary students there that same question: "What is it about this story that finds this young man in great need?" And they all pointed to a whole different part of this same text, and they said, "because no one shared with him."

I had a chance to be in Tanzania several times. And I've seen how people share. The people in greatest need have so little-- maybe they're a widow, or maybe they found themselves in a very bad physical state where they're [physically disabled] and cannot really take care of themselves. People take care of one another. They help each other through all that they go through.

I experienced this in my life. One time, my father developed Leukemia out of nowhere...and was in great need. And I remember that sense of need to have my father healed. Unfortunately, he was never healed this side of heaven, but we knew that great need. There was nothing we could do to take care of my father, nothing we could do to help heal him. We had to lean on the doctors and nurses, we had to lean on the medicine, we had to lean on so many of our friends and our church. People cared for us and helped us through that incredibly difficult time for about six months.

That feeling of being in need, it's a helpless feeling. You can't do anything about it yourself. You really, truly need, as the text says, to rely on others-- and just as this younger son experienced, we felt that as a family as my dad was dying. And I remember the appreciation we had for people who took care of us, who helped us, who in so many small ways made such a difference for us.

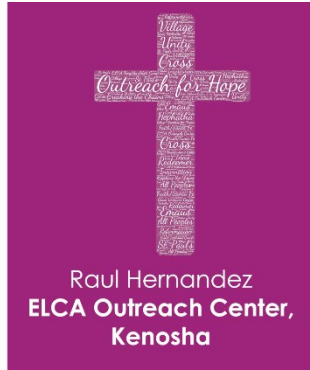
Giving is about that, isn't it? It's about sharing and caring and being there for one another. Sometimes, it's about being there for people we've never met. It's a calling for us as Christians, as people of faith, to remember when Jesus taught us "to love one another as we would love ourselves," to care for others and to reach out and be there for one another.

As we go through Lent - this question keeps coming up for us - What does it mean to give? What does it mean to be in need? As we think about the needs of our siblings in Christ all around us, we are reminded through our simple actions, to reach out and care for one another just as Jesus has already done for us.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear great and gracious God: We thank you for this new day, this new opportunity for us to think about how we can help someone else that's going through a great need today. We've experienced it in our own lives-- times where we've needed that help. We know how our siblings around us have helped us, and how you have helped us. O Lord, bless us to be able to return the favor in our small acts of kindness and love. We thank you, and we lift up your name for all that you do for us today, and tomorrow, and every day. May we continue to be the church and care for one another in great and small ways. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Rev. Chris Manke  
Executive Director at Outreach for Hope*



**Thursday, March 11**  
**ELCA OUTREACH CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

*"And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"*

Matthew 25:40

Good Morning! My name is Raul. I work at the ELCA Outreach Center-- I run the Legal Advice Program.

My verse is from Matthew 25, verse 40: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

My story is that I found a glove to go out and help out for a donation. It was a mitten. That mitten was really warm for my hand-- and I came back looking for it a week later and I couldn't find it. Then a month later, Danielle was going through some other gloves and she happened to find the other mitten. That tells you how much we have here, and how much we receive here, and that we have an abundance of stuff here! Come and check us out and visit us!

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear King Jesus: As you warm us with your abundance, bless us that we may be a warming presence for others. In your good and gracious name we pray, Amen.

*Raul Hernandez*  
*Volunteer at ELCA Outreach Center*

**Friday, March 12**  
**VILLAGE CHURCH,**  
**MILWAUKEE**

Selfless service is not only a job or task to be done. It is an act of healing, of opening hearts, and of radiating love.



My name is Charles Williams and I am a member of Village Church. Village Church has a presence in the community through giving. With [Interchange] Food Pantry, for example, we help families get nutritious food to help them sustain. The pantry is available on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. During the pandemic, guests have been able to visit the pantry twice a month.

We also have helped out with something called Power Shift. Power Shift is providing a place for police officers and people visiting bars in the area to come for rest, food, and conversation in the evening. Power Shift would run on the first and third Friday of the month from 10 pm to 3 am. Area restaurants would provide food for the visitors in addition to donated items from members of the congregation.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Great and Gracious God, giver of all we have and hold as stewards: Grant the people of our church a deep and abiding awareness that all things come from you – our health, our incomes, our jobs, our talents, and our generous impulse. Help us to help each other in this grace of giving, for you are the lover of our souls and call us to nothing less than transformation through you. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Charles Williams*  
*Member at Village Church*



**Saturday, March 13**  
**GRACE WELCOME CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

Giving is a small word with a huge impact.

Giving-- volunteering your time to help a non-profit, is priceless.

Giving. When you give of yourself, good will come of it.

Giving. You will impact someone's life, and at the same time impact your own.

Giving. It doesn't matter if you buy goods to donate, give a monetary donation, or volunteer with your time. What matters is that you do it.

I decided to volunteer because I was at a place in my life where I wanted to give back. Volunteering filled that void. I heard about a place that was helping the homeless, and I was given a phone number to call Pastor Jonathan Barker. He was so happy to hear from me, and he was so full of life, I thought at that moment, when I hung up the phone, that I have to go now. Because if I didn't, I was going to disappoint him, and I'd feel horrible about it!

So on a Friday, I drove to Grace Lutheran Church, and I pulled into the driveway. It took me a minute to get out; I was hesitant. In situations like that, I'm slightly shy. But I made myself get out, and I went inside. And I loved it. I loved everything about it. The guests — I love speaking with them, and I really enjoy working with the other volunteers.

So, four years ago, walking through those doors changed my life.

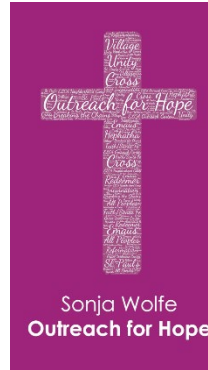
***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear good and gracious God: As we offer our small gifts of love and care for others, may you bless our simple motivations that these acts of kindness may grow into a tidal wave of love for our siblings in Christ. May your goodness spread through all of us and share your love with the world. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Denise Russell*  
*Food Pantry Director at Grace Welcome Center*

**Monday, March 15**  
**OUTREACH FOR HOPE**

**REV. CHRIS MANKE:** So this evening we're joining together with Sonja Wolfe, one of our Outreach for Hope board members. Sonja and I have had some conversation about giving, and Sonja-- what were your thoughts that you wanted to share?



**SONJA WOLFE:** Well, I've been thinking about it since we first talked about it, and I've just had a hard time putting my head around what I feel about giving-- just because I've had a lot of personal challenges lately. And it's just been really hard for me to think clearly about that. And I think during one of the conversations I had with you and a few other friends, I realized that part of giving-- something that I'm really hard at doing --is receiving. As caregivers, we don't do a lot of receiving or taking. We give, give, give, and not just because we're trying to be saints or whatever, that's just part of who we are.

**CHRIS:** It's hard to receive, isn't it?

**SONJA:** Yeah, it's so hard! It's because you don't think that's what you need. You know...being able to stop and say, "Wait a minute, I think I need to humble myself, and not just feel like I can do it all, and I don't need help in return." And I've had some really hard struggles, especially in the last several weeks with a lot of changes going on, and I really needed help. And because I wasn't in the receiving state of mind, I wasn't taking the blessings all around me that God continues to walk with me, and putting the things that I needed in my path. But because I wasn't thinking that, "Wait a minute I need to receive," I was shutting off my blessings.

**CHRIS:** Yeah, that's a great way to say it-- shutting off the blessings.

**SONJA:** I think that once I remembered that I needed to let go and let God, I felt better, I immediately just felt peace.

**CHRIS:** It's a two-way street, isn't it? Giving is a two-way street. It's not just a one-way. It's being open to that receiving as well. Recognizing that we are united, we are a community, and to give is also remembering to receive? And I like what you said, being humbled to it, being open to it, and that it's a blessing to receive.



**SONJA:** Yeah, that's right. I'm fighting things that I don't need to fight. Wrestling with things I don't need to wrestle with, because it's not my problem.

**CHRIS:** That's a good reminder for us today. Right? As we think about our day, we want to help others, be those who want to give to others-- but it's also remembering that we need the help as well, and being open to receiving and thankful for it, that God blesses us over and over again.

**SONJA:** Over and over again, every day all day.

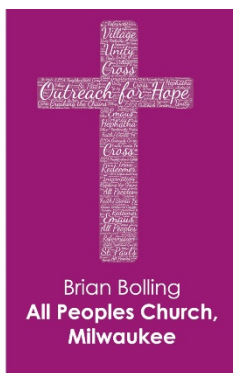
**CHRIS:** Yeah. Well, thank you. Thanks for sharing!

**SONJA:** Thank you for allowing the blessings to flow my way as well!

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Loving Lord: You have called us to be your people, poured out your goodness on us, and called us to be stewards of all that you have entrusted to us. Give us grace to enjoy all your gifts to us, and to handle them with integrity, because they come from you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.

*Sonja Wolfe  
Board Member at Outreach for Hope*



**Tuesday, March 16**  
**ALL PEOPLES CHURCH,**  
**MILWAUKEE**

The generosity that I have seen since I've started working with the pantry program here at All Peoples Church has never been more apparent, especially since the COVID pandemic hit. The

amazing generosity of the partner churches that we work with has been amazing.

You can see behind me the amount of food that we've been able to get. We've been giving out 50 to 100 bags of food every week. We had one point of time in April and May, where we actually got a grant from somebody because our St. Vincent DePaul hot meal program, which serves meals five days a week, shut down. And we got a food truck and had six weeks of hot meals that were served due to the generosity of people and partners, and the network of folks from St. Vincent DePaul, and from us.

It's just been an amazing journey for me as I'm entering into the pantry world, and really am glad to see and know so many people care. And that's what it's all about.

You can't mention generosity, I don't think, without also [mentioning] appreciation and gratitude. Gratitude from the people that receive the generosity has just been amazing. They're so appreciative, and it's been just a wonderful journey for me.

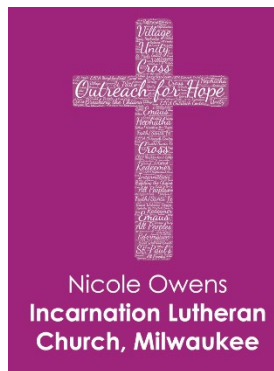
***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Generous and loving God: We come to you in thanksgiving, knowing that all we are and all that we have is a gift from you. In faith and love, help us to do your will. We are listening. Speak your words into the depth of our souls, that we may hear you clearly. Amen.

*Brian Bolling*  
*Pantry Volunteer at All Peoples Church*

**Wednesday, March 17**  
**INCARNATION LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

*"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." Luke 6:38*



I bring you greetings from Incarnation Lutheran Church. I am Nicole, the director of God Bless to Kids Spot and the Bread of Hope food ministry.

In Luke, chapter six, verse 38, it tells us, "give and it will be given to you".

We all have different gifts. We were all given different abilities and different talents. I believe that one of my greatest gifts is the spiritual gift of giving.

It's a wonderful way for me to worship God. When I think of all that He has done for me, I feel that it's an obligation of mine to give back, and I do so by helping others. Whether it be listening ear - I've been a mentor to our youth, providing a safe place for them to be when times are safe and allow for us to be together. Whether it be giving clothes, or food, or providing other resources. I give of myself as a genuine desire and a genuine want to help those that are in need.

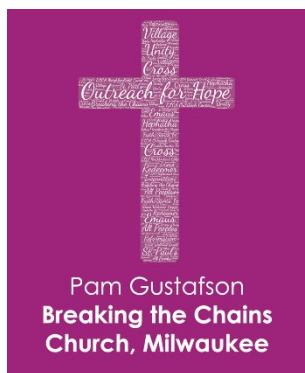
I've learned over the years that I actually get more out of giving than those that receive.

I feel a sense of satisfaction, and I feel that it's very rewarding to be a giver and to be generous. Whether it be of your time, your possessions, your talents, your abilities, your skills. I believe if you do so you will also get that sense of satisfaction.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear great and gracious God: You remind us that giving is more than just about our money. Help us to give of our very selves to meet the needs of others around us. As we give, you remind us of how we are blessed in return. May you continue to encourage us in our self sacrifice, that your goodness and love may grow around us each and every day. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Nicole Owens  
Director of God Bless the Kids Spot &  
Bread of Hope Food Ministry at Incarnation Lutheran Church*



Thursday, March 18  
**BREAKING THE CHAINS  
CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

*"Contribute to the needs of the saints;  
extend hospitality to strangers."*  
Romans 12:13

Hi! My name is Pam and I am a volunteer with Breaking the Chains Church. The question for today is, "What does it mean to give?"

Roman's 12 verse 13 says "When God's People are in need be ready to help them."

Breaking the Chains Church helps with spiritual needs by worshipping and conducting bible study inside the Felmers Chaney prison. As part of the weekly services, people from outside the prison develop relationships with those inside. We continue the relationship after they are released.

When inmates are released, a new chapter of their life story starts. There are new chains to break. These chains are finding places to live, unemployment, transportation, and reconnecting with family.

One returning citizen was released last February and with the same job he had in prison. His future looked good. Then along came COVID. A month after he left Felmers, he was laid off. In addition, his hearing aids failed and the place that could fix them was outside of the bus line. To spend time with his children, he needed help transporting them from their mom's house to his house. Breaking the Chains [Church] volunteers stepped in to help!

Embracing a lifestyle of true generosity is difficult. The Bible reminds us over and over again to be generous, but it doesn't really define how generous.

Maybe we should then look at Jesus's own words and actions. Breaking the Chains [Church] uses Matthew 25 as our guide: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." Giving to others is an extension of Jesus's ministry.

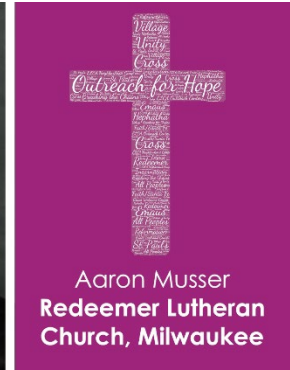
***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Mothering God, Heavenly Father: Help us to be ready when people ask us for help. Help us to be sensitive to people's needs and give even when they don't ask. Help us to see both the sinner and saint in our incarcerated siblings. Do not let the worst moments of a person's life define them for the rest of their lives. Help us to give in the radical way you gave to us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

*Pam Gustafson  
Volunteer at Breaking the Chains Church*

**Friday, March 19**  
**REDEEMER LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

Hi, my name is Aaron Musser. I am the Director of Music and Media at Redeemer Lutheran Church, and I'm also a current seminarian at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.



Thinking about giving, I can't help but think about the Prayer of St. Francis that goes, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace," because there's a line in the second part of the poem that says, "For it is in giving that we receive." And that line is really the core of the second part of the poem's meaning. But that first part of the poem talks about all of the ways in which that shows up in our life-- so I wonder for this reflection today, if we can switch the order of this poem, and really just meditate together on the meanings of St. Francis:

*O divine [God], grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

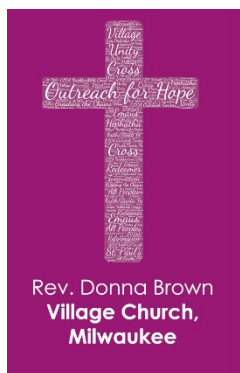
*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.*

Amen.

**As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?**

Aaron Musser  
Director of Music & Media at Redeemer Lutheran Church





**Saturday, March 20**  
**VILLAGE CHURCH,**  
**MILWAUKEE**

Hi! I'm Donna Brown. I'm Pastor at Village Lutheran Church. And for me, giving is something that should be habitual. It's kind of like working out or, for me, running. It should be

something that, just through repetition, has become part of my life.

And I think that's what we really work at at Village Church-- is having giving just be part of the cycle of what we're doing. We do a monthly song about the food pantry that's at our church: A member puts words to familiar tunes, and every first Sunday of the month, we sing that. We celebrate it. It's just in the rhythm and the fabric of what we do.

So especially during Lent, when we're working on those things of our faith-- the prayer, worship, in whatever way we're doing it in these pandemic times --that giving is just natural, practiced, what we're doing. It's habitual for us. I encourage you to think of giving in that way!

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Eternal God: We pray that we will make stewardship a way of Life. We acknowledge you as the source of all we have and all we are. Help us to place you, our loving Creator, first in our lives by becoming more prayerful, more focused on loving and caring for our families and our neighbors in need, and by becoming less preoccupied with material things. Help us to hear your call to be good stewards, caretakers, and managers of all your gifts by sharing them for your purposes. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Rev. Donna Brown*  
*Pastor at Village Church*

**Monday, March 22**  
**EMAUS ELCA, RACINE**

Hi, my name is Barbara McCloskey. I'm a member of Emaus [ELCA] in Racine.

The other day, somebody asked me, "What is giving?" Well, the first thing I had to do was go to the dictionary. And

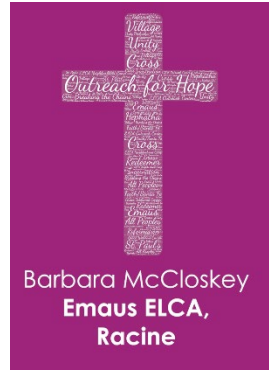
I looked up the word. It said it was "one, a charitable gesture; two, a philanthropic Act; or three, generosity." With that said, I think it's really a lot more than that. And here's why.

As a young girl, I was involved in Girl Scouting, which is a program embraced by our parochial school. Throughout the years of age seven to high school, we learned about giving through service projects, which were always part of our activities. The projects were as simple as making tray favors for residents of a nursing home, or making handmade Valentine cards for people who needed to know that other people cared about them. At Christmas time, we baked cookies, placed them in Christmas card boxes, wrapped them up in colorful paper, and then presented them to the older shut-in's in our village, while we serenaded them with a Christmas carol. Little did we know, we received a gift, too, by doing the small kindnesses. We learned giving is about receiving.

When we reached out and gave of our time and talents, we always felt better afterwards. Jesus said, "the poor will always be with you." And I think he inferred that it is the responsibility of others who have been blessed with more to share with those who weren't as fortunate as we were. Jesus also said, "What you do for the least of my brothers, and you do for me." I believe that's why it feels so good to give.

Now, so many years later, I look forward to every Tuesday morning when a group of us mask up and drive to a food warehouse with our SUVs to gather meals for hungry families in our city.

This food ministry is feeding hundreds of people who might not have enough food during this isolating pandemic. This service is a cooperative effort of many people, and several organizations, and I feel really happy that I can help in a small way.

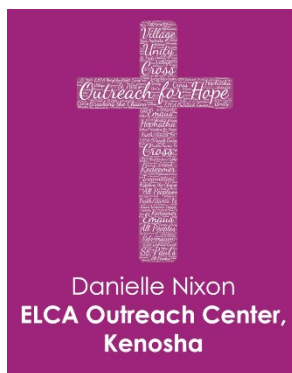


Tuesday morning gives me the thrill of giving, because we're not only delivering food where it is needed; we are offering a sense of hope to the recipients to hang on one more week in this devastating time in our history. By giving our time and our talents, and our money, we can prove to others that there still is a lot of good in the world, even though right now there's so much talk to the contrary. After all, showing kindness and caring to someone is a true expression of God's love. And we all need that.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Great and gracious God: By your Spirit you work in us both the desire and the strength to fulfill your purpose in our lives. Grant us the grace of generous hearts and open hands that our living and our giving may be acceptable in your sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Barbara McCloskey  
Member at Emaus ELCA*



**Tuesday, March 23**  
**ELCA OUTREACH CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

*"And be kind to one another,  
tenderhearted, forgiving one another,  
as God in Christ has forgiven you."*  
Ephesians 4:32

Giving and forgiveness are connected.

Giving is the root word of forgiving. And it is almost safe to say that they are based and rooted from the same thing. Generosity with financing, generosity with forgiving, comes from one source: compassion. If you go over to Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as Christ God forgave us."

At the [ELCA] Outreach Center [in] Kenosha-- I'm actually going on my 14th year --I have been asked many times, "What's the key or how do you do it?" And just being able to give without expectation, but sometimes you run into situations where you feel like, "Am I still being compassionate?" And you have to ask yourself questions, compassionate questions. What do you see when you come across a need? That's very, very important. Do you live by a calendar or blessings? Do you often need mercy but refuse it to others? Do I pride myself of never being taken advantage of?

And that's where I'm gonna stop, because each day at the Outreach Center, when I leave out the door, I have to take all my stresses, and all my worries, and I have to leave it right here. So when I set the alarm and leave, anything that happened that day is left here and start fresh.

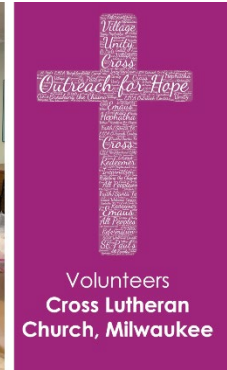
***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Great and gracious God: We see your boundless grace in every part of creation, and most especially, we see it in Jesus. Pour your grace into our hearts, so that it overflows in our lives and makes us generous people. Amen.

*Danielle Nixon*  
*Assistant Director at ELCA Outreach Center*

**Wednesday, March 24**  
**CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH,**  
**MILWAUKEE**

**CHUCK:** Yeah, so I'm Chuck from Christ our Savior Church out in Sussex. We come down every second Wednesday of the month. And because of COVID, we've kind of switched-- normally we'll prepare our meal down here, but we just started preparing chili. So we've got bags of containers with chili, cornbread and sides to go along with it. And so that's what we're doing now. You know, with these times going on and--



**REV. CHRIS MANKE:** Sounds delicious!

**CHUCK:** It's a great ministry. It really is. I've gotten to know a lot of good people, everybody down here over the years. They're kind of family to us.

**CHRIS:** What would you say to some of those questions? Why do you-- Why do you serve?

**VOLUNTEER IN PACKERS SHIRT:** I help people. I'm a good, hard worker. I love people, and people love me. And I just want to help!

**VOLUNTEER IN BLUE SHIRT:** Even though I am real tired at the end of the day, it's a good tired. Makes me feel good, just helping people.

**CHRIS:** You guys do a lot of work here. Look at all these bags. (Yep.) So all these bags are going to people that are need. (Yep.) Well, that's really nice. I'm sure they're gonna really appreciate it. (Yep.) So the tiredness is worth it. (Yep.) Because you know, you're helping people. (Yep.) That's great! Thank you.

**YOUTH VOLUNTEER:** I was here to help give back a little, and I really like doing charity work with food, because everyone can relate to being hungry. Especially helping give back to the people that are less fortunate that don't always have a meal to come back home to. It's nice to help give back and help them get that meal.

**CHRIS:** So tell me about your experience and why you keep coming back? Why do you help?

**CROSS MEMBER:** I've been a member of this church like, this has been my only church home. And Pastor Michelle knew I was coming up for retirement and she said, "I got a job for you." And then I started doing coat shopping in the pantry, and then I found that I liked it, and I look forward to coming in and helping out. It's kind of got to be a good habit.

**CHRIS:** So it gives you something in doing it. You feel good about it. What kind of response do you see as you do this from other people?

**CROSS MEMBER:** You know, people are really grateful for the food. And I also volunteer at the adult center, and the older elderly people are very grateful also. And I noticed when the people come through there a lot of people out of work and stuff, and a lot of people with kids who need food, so I think that's really good to help.

**CHRIS:** That's great. Well, you do a lot of good work here. So thank you!

**CROSS MEMBER:** --And it's fun!

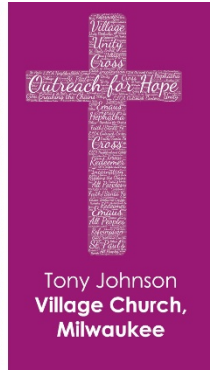
**CHRIS:** It is. There's something about working together as a team and as a community and for a good cause that really does make yourself feel good. Joy comes in giving, right?

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Great and gracious God: We offer our gifts of time, talent and possessions to you as a true act of faith, to reflect our love for you and our neighbors. Help us to reach out to others as you have reached out to us. Amen.

*Volunteers at Cross Lutheran Church*





**Thursday, March 25**  
**VILLAGE CHURCH,**  
**MILWAUKEE**

Hi! I'm Tony Johnson and I'm with Village Church. And what giving means... one of the greatest things a human being can do is serve others. The truest form of selfless service is when

we give without wanting anything in return.

And here at Village Church, we have a presence in the community by offering up opportunities like our Monday Nights Sacred Roots, where we build relationships between our church and the area servers, bartenders and local small businesses.

We also offer up our facility for a non-profit theater group called Windfall Theater. And in addition to that, we offer our facility for gallery night and day. Both the Windfall Theater and gallery night happen about four times per year.

We also offer Christmas Eve dinner, where people in the community can come congregate, enjoy a nice meal and see a great program. We also house the International Institute of Wisconsin, which teaches local immigrants and refugees transitioning into the community.

And as we look to the future, we are working on building stronger relationships with our local campuses like MSOE, MATC, and Marquette in partnership with our campus ministries.

Thank you! Enjoy Lent!

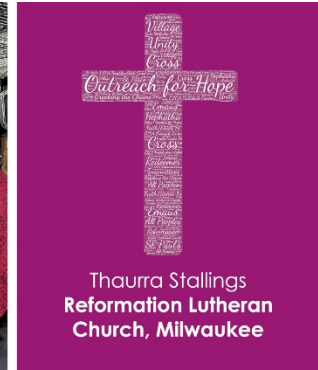
***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear great and gracious God: Help us make your priorities our priorities, and to put our faith into action. Help us plan to "give back" the talents, treasures and time with which we have been blessed. Help us plan to serve our church, our community, and our world with your gifts. May we serve you and pray with a joyful spirit of mind and heart. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Tony Johnson*  
*Member at Village Church*

**Friday, March 26**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**THAURRA STALLINGS:** Hi! My name is Thaurra Stallings from Reformation Lutheran Church. This year [at our neighborhood store], we're giving infant clothes to give out to new mothers



expecting babies. It brings people dignity. They get a chance to shop in the neighborhood store as if they were going to another store. They know they don't have enough money to spend, so we make it a very low cost, and if they don't even have enough, I will just give it to them. You know, we just-- we want people to be sustained in life, so they can do a little better for somebody else. And that's why we are here at Reformation. We pass the torch over to somebody else.

**REV. CHRIS MANKE:** Why is the neighborhood store important? What does it do for people? So people donate and they give?

**THAURRA:** Oh yes, they can give what they have: blankets, sheets, baby clothes. That's our main thing. We want to reach out, we want the mothers to be healthy, not have to worry about, "Do I have enough clothes to dress my baby? Do I have a car seat? Or do I have a walker?" But we also do household items-- microwaves, as you know, small appliances.

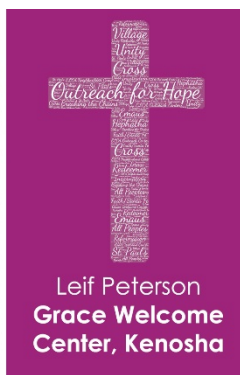
**CHRIS:** The things that they give really do make a difference?

**THAURRA:** Yes, it really makes a difference. You know, if somebody started up in a new home or they had a fire, that's almost like starting all over. We ask for good quality items for the neighborhood store. We have young mothers and fathers, [and we want] to honor them, to help raise their child needing clothes or any items. We have stuff in the neighborhood store at low costs, so we want to give back, because I believe everybody needs something [so] they can share with someone else.

**As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?**

**PRAYER** | Oh God, our loving Creator and Giver of all good gifts: Bless our ministries, strengthen our faith, and grant us a spirit of Christian stewardship, so that we may give generously of our time, talents and treasure to spread Your kingdom here in our churches and throughout the world. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Thaurra Stallings*  
*Neighborhood Youth Minister at Reformation Lutheran Church*



**Saturday, March 27**  
**GRACE WELCOME CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." Matthew 13:31-32*

Good morning, Greater Milwaukee Synod! I am Leif Peterson, Executive Director of Grace Welcome Center. A lifelong Lutheran, I was raised in Milwaukee on the South Side, Unity Lutheran Church, originally. I've come full circle and am now serving in Kenosha at Grace Lutheran Church. This is an extremely wonderful ministry as we serve the greater Uptown area and those in Kenosha who are desperately in need of help.

Today I want to talk to you about giving. One of our long-time supporters, County Supervisor Andy Berg, had some time available. He was planning a vacation, and he wasn't able to go through with it, so he thought, "Let me help Grace Welcome Center." And he planned "Freezin' for a Reason." He didn't know the name of it; he didn't know exactly what was going to happen. But he came to us and said he would like to camp out. We worked with him on this idea. He got three other individuals who slept with him outdoors in tents for three nights.

This week, you can see the results of that behind me. We have at least 6,000, maybe 8,000 pounds of food. And behind Pastor, there are also toiletries, feminine hygiene products, all sorts of things that we need and we go through all the time here at the Center. So his little idea, if you want to think of it, is: Jesus talked about, is your faith as strong as a mustard seed? It was a small idea at first. And really, once planted, it got nurtured and it grew into this. A simple idea grew into thousands of pounds of food, which will help us each week for some time to come.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear great and gracious God: You give to us out of a spirit of generosity. In that same spirit, may we respond to our neighbors' needs just as you gave to us, out of a sense of self-sacrifice for the good of others. May all have enough today, tomorrow, and beyond. In your precious name we pray, Amen.

*Leif Peterson*  
*Executive Director at Grace Welcome Center*

**Monday, March 29 – Holy Week**  
**GREATER MILWAUKEE**  
**SYNOD**

Hi! I'm Paul Erickson, Bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod.

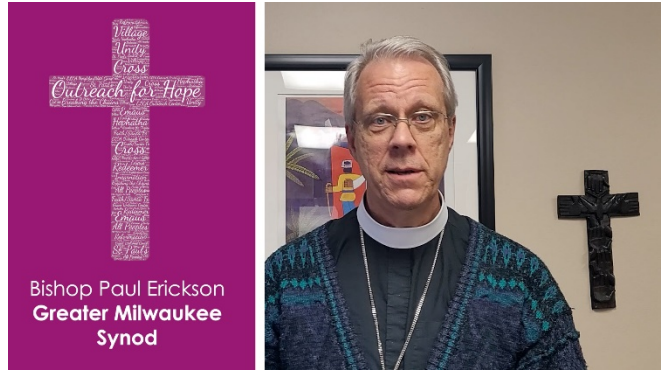
When I think about what it means to give, I think about the people who first taught me about generosity: my grandparents, Gladys and Henry Boyer. They grew up on neighboring farms in Southwestern Minnesota, and though they worked hard their entire lives, they were never very wealthy.

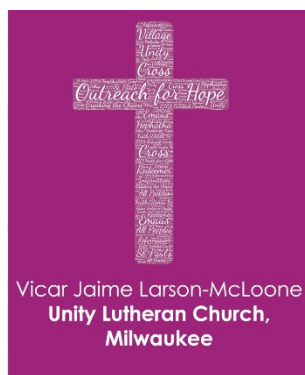
But, whatever they had, they shared. They delivered Meals on Wheels well into their 80's; charter members of Atonement Lutheran Church in New Brighton, MN, they made sure that their offering check was the first one they wrote each month; and they taught me that none of us really owns anything. Everything we have is entrusted to us only for a while, and it's our job to take care of it while we have it, and to share it as soon as we can. Everything I am, everything I have, is a gift from God, given to me to give to someone else. Giving is the joy of living.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | O Lord, Giver of Life and Source of goodness: We know that all we have is received from your hand. You call us to be stewards of your Abundance, the caretakers of all you have entrusted to us. Help us always to use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously. Send the Holy Spirit to work through us, bringing your message to those we serve. May our faithful stewardship be a witness to the love of Jesus Christ in our lives. We pray with grateful hearts in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

*Bishop Paul Erickson  
Greater Milwaukee Synod*





## Tuesday, March 30 – Holy Week UNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, MILWAUKEE

*“So we, who are many, are one body in Christ and individually we are members one of another.” Romans 12:5*

“Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.” You probably recognize that as NOT from the Bible - but from the 1980s movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. But when I turned my thoughts to what it means to give, that's where my mind went. This quote speaks about the gifts of time and attention.

Even with the limitations Covid has placed on us, I witness people giving their time and attention through Unity's food pantry. I see a volunteer who has paid close enough attention to remember who likes carrots, or a volunteer who notices the presence of children and adds an extra box of cereal. Guests who notice when another is struggling with a bag or a car door, and offer to help. A guest who will wait, even in the cold and dark, for someone else to show up so they can share a greeting and check in. A guest who inquires about my family in Minnesota.

These experiences remind me that, whatever you have to give, the best way to give it is attentively, intentionally. To give in some way that honors or creates relationships.

To give in this way is to acknowledge that everything we have comes from God, not just for our own sake but for the sake of our neighbors, fellow members of God's family. To give in this way honors the body of Christ as Paul describes it in his letter to the Romans. Intentional, relational giving, whether the gift is tangible or intangible, honors the truth that “we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another” (Romans: 12:5).

To give is to sustain this beautiful body of Christ that surrounds us and includes us. So stop. Look around. Appreciate. Give. Receive.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

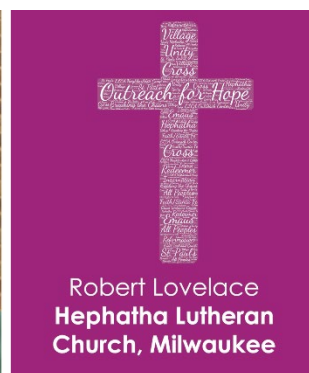
**PRAYER** | Generous God: Thank you for all that you have provided. Thank you for relationships through which we have the opportunity to give generously and receive abundantly. Amen.

Jaime Larson-McLoone  
Vicar at Unity Lutheran Church



**Wednesday, March 31 – Holy Week**  
**HEPHATHA LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

Good morning, people. My name is Robert Lovelace. I'm a member of Hephatha Lutheran Church on the corner of 18th, and Locust in Milwaukee. I've been a member at



Hephatha Lutheran for eight years, and I was a member of Cross Lutheran Church for 25 years prior to that. Today I've come to talk about giving and how giving has affected my life. I'm here to say that I've been learning to become a giver. Being under Pastor Mary Martha and Pastor Joe Ellwanger, I found out that you cannot out give God, and my life has been so blessed, after I learned what giving really was. I've learned that you can never out give God for God is continually blessing you.

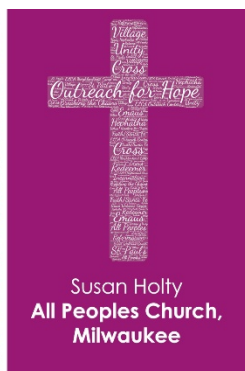
I believe that to whom much is given, much is expected. And I've learned by being in the church, I love serving the Lord and hearing his voice. He's given me much and I have much to give, and God has shown me the joy of giving. I'm a volunteer school teacher, I do volunteer work with the youth here at the church. I volunteer as a gardener here. I enjoy giving and it's such a pleasure to give when you know that God is watching over you and God is continually blessing you. You can't help give to the Lord and I truly believe that giving has been the biggest thing in my life. I've learned to give to my family, to loved ones, and the more you give, the more God can give to you. And that's all I can say-- My life is so blessed from learning the gift of giving. AMEN!

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Dear great and gracious God: By giving to others, we experience life from a new perspective. We see that we have much to give, because you have blessed us in so many different ways. May we grow in our giving and in our understanding of how giving helps us to grow closer to you, the author and pioneer of what it means to give. Thank you for the blessings you have given to me, so that I would share with others. In your holy name, Amen.

*Robert Lovelace*  
*Member at Hephatha Lutheran Church*





**Thursday, April 1 – Maundy Thursday**  
**ALL PEOPLES CHURCH,**  
**MILWAUKEE**

I'm the Garden Educator at All Peoples Church, and I've been here nine seasons now, coming up on my tenth. But I really wanted to focus on this last season, with COVID.

When COVID first hit and we had the quarantine, I went to Pete's Fresh Fruit Market and spoke with their manager, Videll, about being able to resource their produce for our people here. We wanted to set up a site where people could come and they would get pre-made bags of produce and dairy each week on Wednesday. And that went on for eight weeks. Pastor Lindsey was able to get us a grant for that, so we were fully funded. And Videll from Pete's Market gave us a wonderful deal on all of our produce-- usually at cost and sometimes below. For me that was just the epitome of the beginning of COVID, and the outreach of gifting from so many... that they would do that even though they needed to be making the money. That they would care about the community. And when we received more funding and said we could pay regular price, Pete's Market said, "No. We want to keep taking care of the community."

That was just the beginning. I say that because we started to come up with an idea around here that it was the 'layers and layers of blessing'... from COVID. And it went on to be things like Ramona, one of our neighbors who was blessed by some of the produce, asking if she could help out in the garden. She loved the zinnias. So she spent the next two months planting zinnias in each of our beds along the edges so the butterflies and bees would pollinate. It was delightful to see her out there, especially since Ramona shared that she had to take her medicine the night before if she wanted to be able to walk and bend well enough to do it-- but it was very important to her! So that was very special.

And with that came layering and layering! We had Pam, who wanted to come help in the garden because she could no longer help at the other place she was working. And she would come and she would just do random acts of kindness! Anything I would leave on a list for her. She would harvest product or clean up the hoses-- even into the winter, she was coming every Tuesday.

The layering continued. We had Dr. Tom who wanted to come harvest, and do some crazy things that nobody else would want to do. We had a couple couples from St. John's in Brookfield come out. And I love the fact that Mr. Miller wanted to repair our garden boxes that were falling apart. So he would come and his wife, Mary, would pull weeds wherever she could find them (and we have quite a plethora!). And then he would choose a box or two that he wanted to repair. Such a blessing! When was I going to have the time? And who was I gonna find to do that? Well, God provided again.

Well, as I told Pastor Chris, it's very likely that I will forget many stories of the layering. But it still comes up to my whole crew... when they're out there, something will happen and they'll say, "Ah-- layers of blessings!"

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

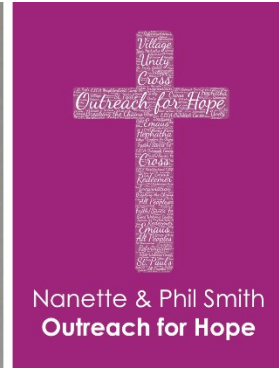
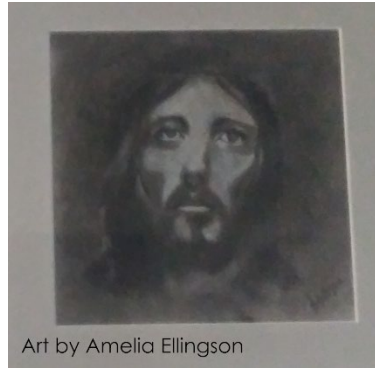
**PRAYER** | Creator and Giver of all that is good: Blessed by your grace, may we show gratitude by sharing what we have been given, as we seek to be your faithful stewards. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Susan Holty  
Garden Educator at All Peoples Church*

## Friday, April 2 – Good Friday OUTREACH FOR HOPE

*"But to each of us grace was given  
according to the measure of Christ's gift."  
Ephesians 4:7*

*(SUNG) Amazing Grace how sweet  
the sound  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found  
was blind but now I see.*



*Amazing Grace* is my favorite hymn. The music and lyrics speak to me to give me hope in spite of my difficulties. I have bipolar, and mood swings can make my life fatiguing. But music! God gave me this gift-- one that has saved me.

I began as a little girl singing in church choir, school choir, then took piano lessons for nine years. I also took ballet and tap lessons (involving more music!). When I was 11, I began playing French Horn, which was truly God's gift to me. I ended up playing professionally for 20 years!

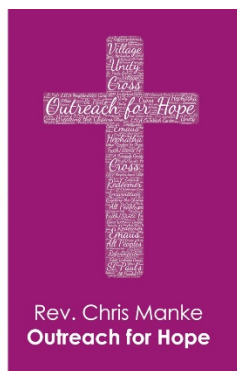
I truly feel blessed and (still) always feel that I was worshipping Him through music. Although unable to play my horn any longer, God's gift is still with me-- when I give lessons, sing at church, play handbells, or recorder. I want to share how the Lord gives each of us a gift of grace. It comes in different shapes and sizes, but we need to recognize and thank Him for all He has done.

*"Not what we give but what we share  
For the gift without the giver is bare;  
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three  
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and Me."  
The Vision of Sir Launfal, James Russell Lowell (1819 - 1891)*

**As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?**

**PRAYER** | Extravagant God: We thank you for the amazing grace and mercy given so freely to us. Give us grateful hearts that we may share your love.  
AMEN!

Nanette Smith  
Supporter of Outreach for Hope



## Saturday, April 3 – Easter Vigil **OUTREACH FOR HOPE**

I had a really strange dream the other day. This is not a good dream-- this is more of a nightmare. In my dream, I woke up in a strange place. I had barely anything with me. I had no phone to call anyone, no wallet, no money, no

resources to draw upon all the things that we expect to have with us in case of emergencies. And as I found myself in this place, it was cold. I was really struggling. And I was getting hungry, and didn't know where to turn. I couldn't think of anybody to call. I didn't seem to have a memory of friends or phone numbers or any way to get myself out of the situation. This was really a horrible experience.

[Then] some people came along in my dream and helped me. They offered their phone to make some calls. They called some resources to get me what I needed, and there was that sense of thankfulness for what they were doing.

[When] I think about this dream, I think about how difficult [it is for] people all around us in our own communities. Many experience this same kind of struggle, as they have very little resources to draw upon whether it's [because of] the pandemic, or just all the circumstances of life. [They] have found themselves like [I did in] that dream-- not sure where to turn, and what to do or who to call, and really needing to lean on others for support and care.

It reminds me of a quote by Father Gregory Boyle, the author of *Tattoos On the Heart*-- he's someone that worked with and helped gang members get out of gangs by showing them God's love, care and compassion. As he dealt with people that were often struggling under the weight of poverty, he said, "Here's what we seek. A compassion that stands in awe of what the poor have to carry, rather than standing in judgment, and how they carry it."

Stand with compassion, in awe of what the poor have to carry. Can you imagine the great difficulty that so many of our siblings in Christ go through each and every day? Not sure where to turn to feed their family? Can you imagine what it must be like to not have the resources to feed your family?

This theme that we've been going through is talking about generosity. How do we think about caring for our brothers and sisters all around us? How do we think about the generosity we've experienced ourselves? The gratitude we have when people help us-- and what does that mean to then turn and share that same kind of generosity and gratitude with others? That we may truly understand ourselves as linked together, walking together, through the good and the bad of life, helping each other, walking the road that is before us.

So as we reflect on that today, let us think about all that we've been blessed with and how God has called us to also be a blessing to others. May you have a great day today, and I hope that God continues to use you to be a blessing in this world that needs it so desperately.

***As you go about your day today, what does giving mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Disturb us, O Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves; when our dreams have come true because we have dreamed too little; when we arrive safely because we have sailed too close to shore. Disturb us when with the abundance of the things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the water of life. Stir us to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas, where storms will show your mastery; where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes and to push us into the future in strength, courage, hope and love. In your name we pray, Amen.

*Rev. Chris Manke  
Executive Director at Outreach for Hope*



