

# Together in Hope: Stories of Partnership

2022 LENTEN DEVOTIONS



**Outreach for Hope** supports life-giving ministries that serve with the people of low income communities in the Greater Milwaukee Synod, ELCA.

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**Wednesday, March 2**  
**Ash Wednesday**  
**OUTREACH FOR HOPE**

**Rev. Chris Manke, Executive Director of Outreach for Hope:** Good morning and happy Lent! Today's our first day beginning our Lenten journey together, 40 days of Lent. And during this time

with our Outreach for Hope videos, we're going to be talking about partnership and how that partnership brings about hope. And so through this time, we're going to be sharing videos from our different Ministry Partners with Outreach for Hope-- people and leaders all over our Synod, helping to do God's work in this place.



As we go through this journey, with this theme of partnership, I want you to think about the different partnerships you have, and that can take on so many different forms. What does partnership really mean? Ultimately, I would sum it down to, it's about relationships. It's about the relationships that we form, and how those relationships, those partnerships, really do bring about hope, bring about a sense of goodness and love in our world. And so it reminds us why those are so important to not only continue to foster and build, but to think about how they are impacting our lives and how the relationships we have with others can impact the lives of others as well.

I want to tell you a little story about my journey. Happened to me when I was much younger, when I was just out of college and I was being a camp counselor, was doing one of the jobs we do as a camp counselor. And it was to watch the waterfront. The kids were swimming and I was one of the many adults that were there kind of making sure the kids were safe. Not a lifeguard, just kind of there, often watching the buddy board is kind of way it went. As I was there, someone came up and greeted me, and it totally took me by surprise. It was one of my old pastors. This person, Pastor Tom, had actually left the ministry-- had gone into watching his kids full-time, staying at home, being a dad, and was doing some other things --but because of that, was not in the ministry anymore. And totally took me by surprise. And I said, "Pastor Tom! What are you doing here?" He said, "Well, I came to see you." And we talked for a while. And as we talked, what he had said really sunk in. I'm like, "Wait a minute, you came to see me, you're not just here for business. You're not here to see somebody else-- another pastor, another friend of yours --you came to see me. You live about two hours away. And you drove all this way to come see me?" He said, "Yeah, I wanted to see how

you're doing. I wanted to see how camp was going. And I was excited for you and that you were having this journey as a camp counselor because it means so much in our faith life." (Many of those counselors became pastors eventually.) "And I just came to see you." I'll never forget that he did that for me. I'll never forget how out of the blue, uninvited, just came in to say hi. See how I was doing. The relationship meant a lot to me. And his care for me meant a lot to me. His ministry that day, even though he wasn't a pastor anymore, meant a lot to me, and it reminded me of the power of relationships, the power of caring for another. Often it's just asking, "how are you doing?"

And so as we go through this Lenten journey, I want to remind us about the relationships we have, and how we continue to think about them. I want to think about the partnerships that we have. Many of our ministries rely on these partnerships. And my encouragement to you, as we go through this journey, is to think about how you could form a new relationship, a new partnership with one of our Ministry Partners. We have some wonderful ministries in our Synod in our central cities. Go to our website, [outreachforhope.org](http://outreachforhope.org), check 'em out. We've got some videos that are talking about their ministries, they show it to you. You'll see this also through Lent. But it's a great way to live out your faith, caring for others, and I guarantee it will be a two-way street-- that as we care and serve we are cared for and served as well. We grow in our own faith just through those relationships. We learn so much not only about others but about ourselves as well. So my encouragement to you through these 40 days is to really think about the relationships that we have, how to foster them, how to grow them-- but also then how to develop new ones. And may God continue to teach us something new in that!

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

**PRAYER** | Great and Gracious God: Thank you so much for this new day. Thank you for Lent. May it be a time of reflection for ourselves. May it help us to draw closer to you. May it be a time when we continually work on our faith lives, our faith, our understanding of you and your love for us, and how we continue to build up and strengthen the relationships we have and create new ones, so that your kingdom may continue to grow. We thank you for all these things, and we thank you for the blessing of this day. In your name we pray, Amen.



Thursday, March 3  
**HEPHATHA LUTHERAN  
CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor Mary Martha Kannass:**

Greetings from Hephatha Lutheran Church on 18th and Locust, where we are so honored to be an Outreach for Hope congregation and a Strong Baby

Sanctuary congregation! Really, children saved Hephatha Lutheran Church. We had an opportunity some 30-some years ago to enter into what was then called "a redevelopment," which basically means get back to the outreach, get into the neighborhood, into the community. Strong Baby Sanctuary allows us the opportunity to do that outreach with a laser beam focus on the issue of infant mortality, especially among families of color. And it allows us to address that infant mortality with the city, with Ascension Health, and with scores of congregations that are part of the Strong Baby Sanctuary network. Hephatha has the opportunity in Strong Baby Sanctuary to take Mark Chapter 10, where Jesus blesses the children, takes them in his arm, prays for them-- we have the opportunity in Strong Baby Sanctuary to make Mark 10 come alive in our time, on our corner, in our city. [Turns to Edel] This is the Edel, who is a strong leader in our Strong Baby Sanctuary. Edel, let everybody know about that ministry!

**Edel Baptiste:** Hi! Like Pastor just introduced me, I'm Edel. I'm from Haiti, by the way. And being part of Hephatha means so much to me! And the only way for me to work in Jesus' footsteps is to help in the church in any way possible. So I joined the Strong Baby Sanctuary ministry, and it is just amazing! So we have the opportunity to help parents and help decrease the percentage of children mortality, infant mortality, especially in the Milwaukee area. It is so, so, so tough to see that you give birth to children and they're not able to live well, while the kingdom of God is for them, and for those who act like them! So we work with them. We provide formula, we provide diapers, we provide support, we provide trainings, everything that can help the power to take care of their children and push them to celebrate the first year. And it's just amazing for us to know that our children are not dying before the first anniversary! [Gestures at pile of donations] And as you can see today, this is the place in the gym where we usually do our distributions. And today, this is stuff that we just received from three different partners to help our ministry and we are so grateful! And we're so happy that we have partners that are working with us in this ministry to keep our babies safe! Thank you!

**Pastor:** [Smiles at young baby held by her mother next to her] We're so grateful to have Harmonii as part of our Hephatha congregation. This is her mom, Destiny. Destiny is my goddaughter; that makes Harmonii my grand-goddaughter! And Harmonii is the reason we have Strong Baby Sanctuary! [To Destiny] tell 'em a little bit about your daughter.

**Destiny:** Harmonii will be five months on the 20th. She's very outgoing. She's smart. She's very vocal. She loves to stare. And grab [laughs].

**Pastor:** Tell everybody a little bit about our lead-free ministry, why we use the [filter] pitchers and how you use one at home.

**Destiny:** We use the pitchers to protect the children and ourselves from getting lead poisoning. I use it at home by keeping her fresh clean water to make her bottles, so she can stay a happy strong baby!

**Pastor:** Strong Baby Sanctuary is really a partnership ministry. Yes, it's the City of Milwaukee. Yes, it is Ascension Health. Yes, it is the congregations that make up the Strong Baby Sanctuary network. But more than that, it's the hopeful connection that we share with our partners. Our mission partner congregations love to come into partnership with us to make sure that there are diapers, wipes and formula so that every family that's in Strong Baby Sanctuary knows those basics will be in place month to month.

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

**PRAYER** | Parent God: Like a loving parent, you desire for your children to also love one another and see the good in one another as you see in us. Bless us as your family to love and care for one another, sharing your grace and love with one another. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Friday, March 4  
**INCARNATION LUTHERAN  
CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor Char Guiliani:** Hi! I'm Pastor Char from Incarnation at 15th and Keefe. The question about partnership and how it brings about hope... We have an official congregation that we're partners with, we have an unofficial congregation that we are partners with. But this past summer, we had an unexpected partnership develop. A congregation reached out to us through Outreach for Hope to see if there was anything that their youth group could do this summer for their summer youth service project. And we needed our parish house scraped and painted. So they came and they brought their paint and their scrapers and their ladders. And they spent a few weeks here scraping and painting. And that partnership brought about hope. I saw that as hope because, you know, it was a partnership that was unexpected. It was a partnership that let us know that we are not walking this journey alone, that we are walking this together. And that gives me hope. That gives me hope that when we need something or when we want to share some good news, whatever it is, we can reach out to another congregation and share the news. That gives me hope, because we're not in this alone. And thanks be to God that we are never alone in this journey we call life, because we do have a partnership with Jesus Christ. Because Jesus has never left our side. We are always walking with Him. And He gives us hope. So blessings to you this Lenten season!



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

**PRAYER** | Loving Lord: Help us to remember that we are never truly alone, and that you are with us no matter what. Help us realize that you have blessed us to be co-creators with you in this beautiful creation, and that in working with you and with one another, a wonderful harvest will flourish. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.





## Saturday, March 5 ALL PEOPLES GATHERING CHURCH, MILWAUKEE

**Brian Bolling:** Hello! My name is Brian. I'm from All Peoples Gathering Church. And I'm the Food Dude, that takes care of the pantry. And last year when I talked to you, I had been pretty new at that job. And now

that I've been here for over a year, it's amazing. The generosity of the people that receive food, the number of people that they give food to that they don't want-- because they don't pick their food, we give them food, that's changing shortly. But at this point, the people that come pick up food are so generous, and they have so much hope as a community, it's unbelievable! And it's something that you can really only... Believe me! [laughs] Or you could actually find somebody, talk to somebody that actually goes to a pantry. And you'll be amazed what comes out of their mouth, the generosity and the heartfelt love that they have for Jesus and their Savior. It's unbelievable. And I just wanted to say thank you, for all that you guys do that are going to be listening to this! It is so appreciated! And remember that generosity breeds generosity.

**Isaiah 55 Food Pantry Participant:** Hope: Hoping that the families can be reunited in prayer, praying together, eating together, spending family time together. Hoping that gun violence can stop and domestic violence. Hoping car thefts can stop. Hoping homeless [people] can have shelter. Hoping we can all live in one accord. Hoping people don't lose their faith in God. Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Let's pray together and hope together, live, love and laugh!

**Rickey Carson, Food Pantry Participant:** Hope is the power to believe that anything is possible – a fresh start, a second chance, or to wish upon a miracle. With hope, there is that window of opportunity, or new light for reassurance that the possibilities are endless. And as long as you believe, anything can happen!

**Food Pantry Participant:** Hope gives life meaning! Each day, my kids renew my hope in faith and love. To see hope in our community for a better future brings me joy. Each act of kindness from people All Peoples Gathering Church fill my heart with so much hope and love. Thank you guys! *"As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise You more and more."* – Psalm 71:14

**As you go about your day today, what does partnership 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 ways. May we grow in our giving and in our understanding of how giving helps us to grow closer to you, the author of what it means to give. Thank you for the blessings you have given to me, so that I would share with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Monday, March 7**  
**GREATER MILWAUKEE**  
**SYNOD**

**Bishop Paul Erickson:** I'm Paul Erickson, Bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod. The word 'Synod' is kind of a strange word, right? What it means in our church body, the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is that it's a geographical organization. So we have 120 churches in seven counties here in southeast Wisconsin, from Sheboygan down to the state line south of Kenosha, to the western edge of Waukesha County. And I get to be a part of a team, an amazing team in the Synod office, that oversees the work in the Synod. That's where 'Bishop' simply means 'oversight' in its original definition. And the word 'Synod,' in its original definition, simply means we're on the same road together. We're walking, we're traveling together.



And so I just want to lift that up as a way of saying that Pastor Jonathan Barker is an amazing leader. Grace Lutheran Church is an amazing congregation. But they cannot do it alone. Right? They need a lot of partners, they got to be together, walking together with all these folks. So we've got funders, we've got volunteers, we've got the elected officials, all of us collaborating and working together so that we can travel this road of justice and hope and reconciliation together. And my prayer is that you will continue to walk together in ministry, not just to the neighbors, not just to those in need, but with, right? We need everybody coming together to continue the path of justice and service so that the hungry can be fed. So that people who live in fear and anxiety about "where is that next meal coming from?" have a sense, like, "I know the answer to that question now." That they have a place where they don't just get some food and get treated as one more number on a long list of numbers that have to be dealt with-- but as human beings who have dignity, who have agency, who have the ability to engage in relationships, mutual relationships, that lead to a deepening of life for all of us. Because every single one of us can learn from others.

And that's why we do need to be kind, we do need to come together in this really, really painfully divided time. We need to listen, we need to work, we need to walk together so that miracles can happen. This is really America, the main race, right? You would never would have dreamed this years ago, when you show up here in 2016. You never would have dreamed any of this would have happened, right?

But think of the miracle in the spirit of the feeding of the 5000. That's one of the miracles of Jesus. Jesus did not conjure up food in thin air like he was Albus Dumbledore in Harry Potter. [laughs] He took what was there! Five loaves, two fishes of a young kid who had some food, he organized the people to sit down in groups, and he made them kind of get a structure to their system. And he took what they had, and it became enough, right? So that's what God does! God takes the gifts that are available here-- the money, the time, the resources --and he helps us organize, and helps us put it together. And something amazing happens. Because we're not alone. We're not just walking together with each other, but God is walking with us in the mix here.

And I just want to give praise-- not only to all of you, thanks to all of us --but thanks be to God for giving us the faith and the hope and the courage to keep moving forward! Yeah, these have been really two hard years, right? I have no idea what the next weeks, months, years are gonna look like... But I know that we're in this together. So I'm grateful for the partnership and grateful for the invitation. I'm grateful for each and every one of you. And I encourage us all to keep walking together. Whoever God puts in our way, they are our neighbor, they are the people we are called to love and walk with on the road to justice. So thank you!

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

**PRAYER** | Gracious God: Hope rises when we come together as partners, when we are centered on your love and goodness. Bless us in our efforts, that faith, hope and love would grow in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



**Tuesday, March 8**  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Thaurra Stallings, Neighborhood Youth Minister for Reformation:** I just want to just say thank you to our partners who walk side by side with us. We have one partner that goes out into

the community, walking with two young people from my church. She started just bringing stuff for the Neighborhood Store. But then, she started talking to two persons who had a great need. So she walk with them, talk with them, take them to the store, shop with them, give them advice, and be an advocate for them. When people cannot do stuff for themselves, she do a great job of walking with them. That's what you say about partners. When they come out of their shells and know they're working for God, you can just see the passion they have. [This partner] talked to people and let Reformation know, "this is not going right with that person," while we could work alongside with her on different things. So I just say, don't take partners for granted, because they are human beings like us, who wants to make a difference in a different community today. So I just say thank you, God bless you, keep up the good work! No matter what God got for you, He already got you in the palm of his hand. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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

**PRAYER** | Gracious Lord: May our partnerships remain grounded in love and respect. Help us to recognize the goodness in our diversity and how our unique gifts complement each other. We pray that through our collaborations, more people will receive your healing and wholeness. Bless the work we do together, so that an abundant harvest of your love, justice and peace will be known by all. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Wednesday, March 9**  
**GRACE WELCOME CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

**Pastor Jonathan Barker:** Hello! This is Rev. Jonathan Barker at Grace Lutheran Church, and the co-founder of Grace Welcome Center. And I'm so excited to be able to share a word with you all this Lent. One of my favorite learnings in seminary was about a simple word. It was about a word for 'another.' And it's in a wonderful book called "Jesus in Community" by Gerhard Lohfink. And this is not an exhaustive list of every time the word 'another' comes up, but let me read a few verses where this word that we maybe have never thought about, show up. *"Outdo one another in showing honor"* - Romans 12:10. Live in harmony with one another. Welcome one another. Admonish one another. Greet one another with a holy kiss. Wait for one another. Have the same care for one another. Be servants of one another. Bear one another's burdens. Comfort one another. Build one another up. Be at peace with one another. And the list could go on and on! And I love having this highlighted-- how often one another gets used, how often each other gets used. And it really has made me think about the scriptures differently. It just always pops off the pages.



And one of these moments where I think of a 'one another moment' here at Grace Welcome Center at our pantry was this past Thanksgiving week. We have a partnership with St. Mary's Lutheran Church here in town. And they have been sending students through the whole pandemic to help get our food out. As many of you know, the pandemic impacted our seniors more than our younger folks. And so we needed some help from some teenagers. And the very first week of the pandemic, they sent a group of four students over, and they literally were with us every week of the pandemic, up until they graduated from high school and went off to college! And one of these students, Brogan, he came back to help the week of Thanksgiving, and we were talking to him and he said, "you know, Pastor, I actually skipped a day of classes, because I wanted to say hi and see what was happening in the pantry. I wanted to be an encouragement to you all." And I just love that he's encouraging one another. He's living into Paul's words, into this idea that we are to help one another, support one another, love one another. And of course it's not just Brogan at St. Mary's, but there are people all throughout our city, our Synod who see not just themselves in a vacuum, but they have caught this vision of one another-ness. And I hope you all catch that vision of how we are better with one another, we are better together. Amen!

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

**PRAYER** | Dear God: May our partnerships be like a dance, coming together, moving as one, supporting one another through the complexities and the beauty of life. Bless us to be there for one another, that we may know the beautiful expressions that partnerships can take on. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.





**Thursday, March 10**  
**EMAUS ELCA, RACINE**

**Carol Yust:** Hi, my name is Carol Yust, and I'm the Director of Outreach here at Emaus ELCA in Racine, Wisconsin. Here at Emaus, we are fortunate to be in partnership with AMI and Healthcare Network, working together to provide

vaccinations for those in need within our community and beyond.

**Carol:** *[To AMI workers]* Who do you work for?

**Worker:** AMI.

**Carol:** What does it mean for you to be able to provide the vaccine for people?

**Worker:** For me, I feel like it just makes me feel thankful to be able to go out in the communities and help people who otherwise wouldn't have access to vaccines.

**Worker:** It makes me feel good that I can provide a service that is greatly needed and greatly appreciate it.

**Worker:** And seeing the community all come together and collaborate gives us hope and keeps us strong.

**Worker:** And making the world one shot closer to being back to normal.

**Carol:** And where do you work? Where are you from?

**Worker:** *[In Spanish]* We're from the Health Care Network here in Racine.

**Carol:** And what does it mean for you to be able to provide the vaccine for people?

**Worker:** *[In Spanish]* We feel very happy that we can provide help to the community so that they can be healthier.

**Worker:** *[In Spanish]* It makes me happy when people come to get the vaccine, not so much for their own health as the health of the community, for people who can't get the



vaccine. I like this a lot, that we can do this and offer that opportunity to the community.

**Carol:** So if I was to ask you in English, do you feel like you're providing hope for a community so in need?

**Worker:** Oh yes, of course! Yeah. It makes us feel really happy!

**Carol:** Thank you guys so much for what you do and for spending every day making a difference in the world. So thank you!

**Soledad Beltran, Emaus Council President:** In a time when things are so uncertain, remember... you can find hope everywhere, because God knows what you need, he provides everything to you. Wherever you go, no matter what you're doing, where you go-- He's there. He's both the person, the people, the place, perfect for you. Sometimes we need only us in getting your faith and say, "God is with me." And you can have everything with God.

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

**PRAYER** | Loving Lord: May we be stirred, moved, disrupted, and compelled by compassion and empathy. May we not grow weary in doing good and pursuing Your Kingdom here on this earth. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Friday, March 11**  
**HEPHATHA LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor Mary Martha Kannass:** Lenten greetings and Lenten blessings to all of Outreach for Hope from Hephatha Lutheran Church. Welcome to a moment inside of our sanctuary in this

holy season! Pastor Mary Martha, here, with Dawn Davis, whom I have known for some 25 years as a result of the mission partnership between Hephatha Lutheran Church and Bay Shore Lutheran Church. Hephatha has a ton of fabulous congregational mission partnerships that have just built us up in hope for our outreach within the community. And that has been hope-inducing for the partner congregations as well, there's a great mutuality to it. I like to think of Luke Chapter Five, that enormous catch of the fish, where the nets that were empty are suddenly filled. And it's too much for even one congregation to handle. Congregations, partners had to come in and help handle that catch of fish in that text in Luke 5. Those fishers, as Jesus called them, had to call out to their partners, "Come on over, bring your boat over, help us out here in this work of the great catch!" That's how I view the partnership. Dawn, it's been hopeful for you, too?



**Dawn Davis:** It has-- and so eloquent, I feel a little bit less than that. But no, I've been involved with Hephatha, like you said it's been 25, 27 years since I became a member of Bay Shore. And it's always been a focus of our social ministry team that we have. And it's always been such a pleasure serving lunches, you know, seven, eight times a year-- it just been, as far as hope is concerned, absolutely. With our diverse groups, whether it's at our church on the East Side, or whether it's here with Hephatha, it's always been an enjoyable experience and a pleasure meeting everybody. And it's been nice that I've been able to, you know, participate over there every couple of months by helping you guys out with some additional food items for your pantry, and for your Strong Baby initiative. So it's been a pleasure!

**Pastor:** Here's how the congregations become one, in a way, through mission partnership. We're having a Hephatha couple get married on Saturday, February 12. By the time you view this, the wedding will have already been. We're having that wedding inside of Bay Shore Lutheran Church, because in light of the pandemic and the number of people who will attend, we need a larger sanctuary capacity. And when we knew we had to do that, immediately the thought came, "we can go to Bay Shore." We knew that

before we asked, we can go to Bay Shore. When Dawn brings a Sunday lunch, which we know will happen again soon, we're talking about baked potatoes and meatloaf. We're talking about green beans and homemade desserts. Just meals that are prepared with love, that help us again bring in that catch of fish and have an abundance in Jesus Christ to share. Another thing, Dawn, that moves me every time I've been in worship at Bay Shore or seen a recording of worship at Bay Shore, Bay Shore prays for Hephatha. We appreciate that and the partnership so much and together we are hope filled!

**Dawn:** We are one church!

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

**PRAYER** | Faithful Teacher God: May we practice what we've learned from you – the importance of building up our relationships. May we strive in our daily lives to seek a deeper relationship with you, O God, and work to foster stronger relationships with our family, friends, neighbors, and fellow humanity. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



**Saturday, March 12**  
**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor Delaney Schlake-Kruse:** Hi! My name is Pastor Delaney Schlake-Kruse. My pronouns are she/her, and I serve St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. This year, one of our

ministry partners that brought a lot of hope to our church was actually Outreach for Hope. Our congregation participated for the first time in the Urban Internship Fund and welcomed Vicar Charlotte Linberry. As a ministry leader in our congregation, they are a seminary student, and we have the opportunity to accompany them as a congregation full-time for a whole year, which is underwritten by the program at Outreach for Hope. This has been an amazing opportunity for our church. Our church has learned so much about what it means to accompany a person, what it means to really welcome and affirm and love someone in leadership, and also to consider why we do the things that we do so that we can be clear with ourselves and with Vicar Charlotte about the reasons for those things. For me, this is the first time I've served as an internship supervisor, and I have had the best time so far! [Laughs] I love this process! I am grateful to Outreach for Hope for many reasons, but perhaps one of the most significant is: being an internship supervisor gives me an opportunity to reflect on why I do the things that I do in my ministry. How do those things intersect with my values, my theological convictions, and where do I see God showing up in the midst of them? This type of reflection makes me a better pastor, and it also deepens my faith. This work that I get to do alongside Vicar Charlotte is a privilege and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity. So thank you so much to our partners at Outreach for Hope, for this gift in our church, where we get to welcome Vicar Charlotte, a wonderful person who will be a wonderful pastor! And we all get to have a front row seat to this important part of their formation, simply because we are part of the Urban Internship Fund.

**Vicar Charlotte Linberry:** Hi! I'm Vicar Charlotte Linberry, and I'm currently serving as the vicar, or intern pastor, at St. Paul's, Milwaukee. And my internship is made possible by a grant from Outreach for Hope. And I've been able to do a lot of great things through my internship here. I've been working with the outreach team on a lot of their ministries within the city. And I've been talking to Pastor Delaney Schlake-Kruse about pastoral identity, what it means to be a pastor, what it means to be a pastor in a digital hybrid age, and really just how to serve best in Milwaukee and how to serve best in

God's great creation. So it's been a great partnership for me to be able to work with the people of St. Paul's and learn alongside them. I'm looking to finish my studies at Luther Seminary this fall, and then be ordained sometime next year hopefully, and then I'll be able to go out and use what I've learned here in my own ministry setting, wherever that may be. So I'm really looking forward to that!

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

**PRAYER** | Dear Loving Savior: May we be open to learning from whatever circumstances — endearing and challenging — may lie ahead. And whatever lies ahead for us today, may we know your presence in it. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Monday, March 14  
**ALL PEOPLES GATHERING  
CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor Lindsey Beukelman:** Hi! My name is Lindsey Beukelman, and I am the pastor at All Peoples Gathering Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And today, I just wanted to share with you a story from scripture that helps me to see hope, even in wilderness places.



So we're gonna be reading from First Kings, Chapter 19, starting in the fourth verse, if you would like to read along with me: *"But Elijah himself went on a day's journey into the wilderness and came down and sat under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die. "It is enough now, oh, Lord. Take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." Then he laid down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly, an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on a hot stone and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay back down again. The angel of the Lord came to him a second time, touched him and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise, the journey will be too much for you." He got up and ate and drink. Then he went in the strength of that food, 40 days and 40 nights, to Horeb, the mount of God. At that place, he came to a cave and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars and killed your prophets with a sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life to take it away." The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain, before the Lord, and the Lord is about to pass by." Now, there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks, into pieces before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him."*

This story is one that I think we hear quite often. A story of waiting for that still, small voice. But I just want us to remember that Elijah was in the wilderness, feeling totally defeated. Feeling like it would be easier just to die, it would be easier for at all just to be over. And my guess is that you have probably felt like that, much like I have, at some time during this pandemic, that-- I just give up! I give up, right? It's too hard. It's not working. Nothing looks like it used to look, nothing feels like it used to feel. And maybe it's just not supposed to be this hard. Right? And then, still, even in that place, when



Elijah is struggling to believe that there is purpose, the angel sends food and water, and makes sure that he has what he needs to fuel him for the journey. And even though he's still fearful, Elijah goes and kinda hides out in a cave and hears from the Lord, that the Lord will be passing by, right? The Lord is gonna come and give him direction and purpose. And he just needs to listen... And the Lord doesn't show up in any of the places that he's used to God showing up. God didn't show up in the mighty wind. God didn't show up in the earthquake, didn't show up in the fire. God showed up in the sheer silence.

It can be hard right now to find kernels of hope. Whether your life feels like the wilderness, or the world around you, hope can be hard to find. And instead we get an opportunity to look around, to pause and to listen in the silence. To know and trust that God will pass by. That God is ready to give us purpose and direction, if we are quiet enough to listen. So Beloved, I hope that during this holy 40 days of waiting and journeying, that you find fuel for the journey, fuel enough to keep you going. Even when you don't feel hope. And that in the midst of everything, you can find the moments of sheer silence that point you in the direction of God's purpose for you and for the world. Amen.

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

**PRAYER** | Oh God, please give me strength when I am weak, love when I feel forsaken, courage when I am afraid, wisdom when I feel foolish, hope when I feel rejected, and peace when I am in turmoil. Walk with me through the joys and struggles of this world, reminding me that I always have a partner in you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



**Tuesday, March 15**  
**GRACE WELCOME CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

**Leif Peterson:** Good morning! I'm Leif Petersen, Executive Director of Grace Welcome Center. Today's a big day for us and I'm just wanting to explain one of the partnerships is with Kenosha

Human Development Services, KHDS. We have good credibility on the streets of Kenosha here in uptown. People come to us in distress of all types. This morning, we've had a number of people coming to us that desperately needed food, they couldn't make it till next week's pantry on Tuesday. We frequently have individuals coming to us that are homeless. And that's where the partnership KHDS comes in. Because Louis is one of our KHDS worker. He's a very important person in this community. He knows where all the homeless people are hiding out in town. Many of them don't want to come in for help. And they're staying out on the streets. But when someone comes to us, we refer them to Louis, and he gets them enrolled in all the supportive services that Kenosha County has to provide. So he is a key individual that we are very blessed to have come down here every Thursday and/or Friday. And we toss back information on people we've seen, people he's looking for, because we-- especially in the wintertime --want them to get help. Last Friday, he was able to get someone who just had come to us and had no place to stay, had been on the street for several days-- He talked to him here, got him to the KHDS office, got him enrolled, and that night, he spent a warm evening in a motel room while they're sorting out the details of what types of assistance he needs. So Louis is a key member of our community and we're so blessed to have him partnering with us here at Grace Welcome Center.

**Louis Duncan:** My name's Louis Duncan. I work for Kenosha Human Development, I'm a Path Outreach Caseworker. My job is to go out in the community and connect with the homeless and bring them in for services. The ones with mental illness, I work with them continuously, and try to identify stable housing, connect them with resources, and help them end their homelessness. So my job is consisting of that. So I have a case load of sometimes 30, 40 people that I'm working with for that outreach in the community. So wherever the homeless is, I go to them.

**Interviewer:** That's awesome. So when you find somebody, what do you experience with that?

**Louis:** My experience with that is they say they've tried all resources, they can't-- nobody want to help them, can't nobody get them in [for services]. So what I usually do is connect with them, call the places with, get them in the shelter, and help them get off the streets.

**Leif:** Well, people come here knowing that they can be helped. The gentleman that came to us last week had been on the streets for several days. And he said, "Where should I go? Where can I get help?" And several individuals said, "Go to the church. Go to Grace Lutheran Church on Friday morning, and they can help you." And he walked over here not knowing anything about us. He was originally from out of town and he didn't know the resources here in the community. So he came to us on recommendations of people that hang out on 22nd Avenue. So we are giving hope to the entire community, because we tell them we can help them and that word on the street goes a long way.

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

**PRAYER** | Compassionate Lord: May we love our neighbor as we would want to be loved, so that we can continue to strive for that which we are called to embody: faith, hope, and love. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Wednesday, March 16**  
**BREAKING THE CHAINS**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Paul Streff:** I will try to attempt to relate my personal experience with Breaking the Chains ministry, and my relationship with the ministry, and its relationship to God, the congregation and the values within the blessings of Breaking the Chains program.



I was a participant to the Department of Corrections at [Felmers Chaney Correctional Center] and had the opportunity to attend the ministry. And I will say that its program and its people have been instrumental in my life because of the Holy Spirit. I was welcome when society placed us in less than a hopeful position. We had hope when it seemed that it was all lost. We felt love when it seemed as though no one even cared. I felt like a part of the assembly and now place value on a new moral character. There was assistance and studies, kindness, and a flood of support upon release. I received furniture, household supplies, and love from all within the congregation. It has affected my life in ways that are lasting. And Breaking the Chains is part of my heart that I hold close. I was welcomed into the assembly and have been blessed by the realization of the Savior and a future kingdom. When all seemed lost, the assembly fills the Beatitudes of all we are to become. I encourage your continued support to reach even just one more, as their Savior would find one lost sheep that was also loved. Thank you for your special ministry and all you have done.

Now considering the work of Breaking the Chains, I'd like to include a prayer through the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, for it is all a part of the same giving... The prayer is:

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

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



**Thursday, March 17**  
**EMAUS ELCA, RACINE**

**Pastor Jaime Dubon:** Hi! I am Jaime Dubon, guest pastor for Latino ministries at Emaus Lutheran Church. Emaus is one congregation with two expressions: one Anglo and one Latino. Both groups have cultural differences--

among them, language and their diverse ways of living out their Christian faith. But we all are one community of believers. And this makes Emaus a unique congregation. We always come together as a community of faith in partnership with other congregations and organizations to bring hope and serve our neighbors.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, we have continued to offer a contextual, contemporary and participatory worship experience through the different social media, and even in-person. Worshiping virtually or in-person has been an encounter with God and with one another, to nurture our faith and build up the body of Christ. Emaus has also provided continuing pastoral care to the entire community through phone calls, text messages, prayers online and in person, home visitation, and even occasional in-person celebrations. Coming together in person is always more relevant to the Latino community since we are a family- and community-oriented culture and highly relational.

Children are also part of Emaus' strength. In this sense, we provide an after-school program. We offer a one month Neighborhood Camp during summer. We have a Sunday School class and a first communion and confirmation program, so that children start off on the way they should go, so that even when they are old, they will not turn from it.

In conclusion, my brothers and sisters, we come together as a community of faith. We grow as the body of Christ, and we establish partnerships in order to serve the community and bring hope to everyone.

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

**PRAYER** | Creator God: You call us to work together. You have created us different, diverse, and beautifully unique. Bless us to see with new eyes and an open heart the blessed differences we see in one another, that in coming together, we can be more than we are alone. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



**Friday, March 18**  
**INCARNATION LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Scout:** I'm volunteering here for my Eagle Scout project at Incarnation Church, and I'm essentially making 'bee hotels,' which is a place for solitary and rogue bees to stay at while they pollinate and so they don't die off.



**Rosie Williams:** I'm Rosie Williams, and I've been planting here, growing the flower garden for many years. And so I enjoy it and I have lots of flowers in my backyard. The planting continues!

**Pastor Char Guiliani:** Oh, it's beautiful back there!

**Nancy:** And I'm Nancy, I volunteer here when it's nice out.

**Scout:** Because I want the bees to be around, I want 'em to stay. If they don't have this hotel, they kind of just die, they have nowhere to be, so it's good for the plants here and good for the general area around Incarnation Church. It benefits the both of us. So their plants here, we can put in new plants for them and they'll make it look even greater, and the bees will help keep it pollinated and it's just a dual partnership.

**Pastor:** Yep, and we're looking forward to these 'bee hotels' with the gardening that Rosie does, and Nancy's volunteering, and the Eagle Scout here that's gonna be putting up the 'bee hotels.' We're really looking forward to it!

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

**PRAYER** | Dear Creator God: You have shown us how collaboration is the essence of life. All of creation works together - the wind, the soil, the bees, the flowers and trees. Everything supports each other through the circle of life. Bless us in our partnerships as well, that we may support one another and allow growth to happen in our world. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.





**Saturday, March 19**  
**ELCA OUTREACH CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

**Raul Hernandez:** Hello! My name is Raul Hernandez. I'm here at the ELCA Outreach Center. I've been here for almost three years. My job here is the legal advice coordinator. And I would

like-- first of all, I'd like to thank Outreach for Hope for all their support. And my partnership here is, I work with attorneys around the community here in Kenosha and Racine County. And we are fortunate to have John here today, he's one of our partners. John is a retired judge. He's gonna tell us a little bit about what we do here.

**John:** Thank you, Raul! Yeah, I've had the good fortune of being able to volunteer here since 2014. I like the concept of the legal clinic that allows people to come in with their legal issues and talk to an attorney. That discussion usually leads to some sort of understanding of whether the legal claim has any merit. And if it does, where it's best to take that legal claim, whether to hire an attorney or to seek to do it alone, pro se and small claims courts specifically. Over the years, many interesting issues have come up. And hopefully we provided some guidance for people that need that legal assistance. And I think the division that Raul has created between family law and other types of cases-- such as small claims, actions, landlord-tenant, debt issues, and what have you -- is a good division of labor amongst the attorneys. Because in my background, as a judge and as an attorney, I have never done any family law, so it's best that I not wander into that area, and we have expertise going in both directions. So again, thank you ELCA for providing this opportunity to volunteer, and I'm glad that the clients that come in do I think get a great deal of satisfaction.

***As you go about your day today, what does partnership 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, sharing our time and talents for the good of others. In your precious name we pray, Amen.

**Monday, March 21**  
**GRACE WELCOME CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

**Pastor Jonathan Barker:** Hello, it's Pastor Jonathan Barker down here at Grace Welcome Center, and I am in our recently donated walk-in freezer! And this story of how we got this freezer



reminds me of one of my favorite scriptures. When God's people are freed from slavery under Pharaoh, they end up needing to cross a wilderness. And they have all sorts of adventures and trials in the wilderness. And in one moment, they end up needing to fight a battle. And God tells Moses that if he keeps his hands up, God's people will win. But as soon as his arms drop, they will start to lose. And as you can imagine, Moses gets tired pretty quick. It doesn't say this in scriptures, but I'm sure his shoulders were on fire after five or 10 minutes of holding them up. And Aaron and Hur end up stepping in (his right and left hand men), and they hold up his arms.

And I've always loved this story, because how do God's people go from bondage to freedom? How do they go from slavery to abundance? They have to go together. There's no one person all stars, it's all of God's people working together. And the way we got this walk-in freezer is the same thing. We had to have people step up. We had St. Mary's Lutheran Church give a seed gift. We had an anonymous donor hear about the seed gift and say, "I'll make up the difference." We had Kerry, one of our volunteers, say, "I will spend weekends poring over instruction manuals and looking at YouTube videos to figure out how to build it and getting a team together." And then we have people that come every Monday and Tuesday to load food in and out of here to make sure that food is for everybody in our community. And so this journey from hunger to being fed, this journey from scarcity to abundance, it's a journey where we need one another, it's a journey where we are better together. Amen!

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

**PRAYER** | Faithful Lord: Often in our struggles, we recognize that we can't make it by ourselves. Help us to remember these lessons so that we will reach out to one another in our need, so that together we will help raise each other up. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



**Tuesday, March 22**  
**HEPHATHA LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Deanna Branch:** My name is Deanna Branch, I'm one of the members of COLE, the Coalition On Lead Emergency. And a proud member of Hephatha Lutheran Church. My main

reason for joining is because my son is a victim of lead poisoning in Milwaukee. And I want to share his story with everyone to bring awareness to the issue, and to help with the cause of getting the lead out of Milwaukee in any way that I can. I've been helping with my church and the Coalition on Lead Emergency to meet with the mayor. Speaking at the Council budget meetings. I've had the pleasure of meeting with the Vice President Kamala Harris to discuss the lead issue. And just doing anything that I can to bring awareness to the lead issue Milwaukee. Me and [my son] Aiden even created a book, a children's book, to help kids understand the severity of the lead issue. Just to get the lead out of not just Milwaukee, but everywhere. And I'm just so glad that my voice and Aiden's story is really being heard and understood. And I really see that there's a cause of change coming. And I'm glad to be a part of it. I'm glad that I got Aiden's story out and just making a difference. And I really think I'm actually doing something to accomplish something with sharing our story. And it was a really hard story for me to share. And it was even harder for Aiden to go through that. But I'm glad that that negative turn into a positive thing. Now we're making a change for the better for all the children, so that nothing ever happens to them as far as what happened with Aiden. So I'm glad that we were a part of that. And I will always love to share Aiden's story to make a positive impact on the world. Definitely. When I first shared my story, I was embarrassed thinking that I was just on my own and just facing the causes of... I can't believe this happened to my child. But after sharing my story, everyone really just gathered around me and my son and they embraced him. I didn't feel ashamed any longer. Because I've realized just how common the problem was it was happening to so many other people. So it was just like an eye opening experience for me. I was not alone in this. And I felt like me sharing my story really helped other people come to me and say, "this has happened to my child too. I'm suffering through it." You're not alone. You're not a bad parent. This is something that we all can work on a change and it's really gave me the confidence, or mainly Aiden gave me the confidence. But sharing his story gave me the confidence to meet new people. And so just realizing that I wasn't alone in that story, it needed to be out and I'm glad that I shared it. And I met so many

amazing people along the journey. And built very great friendships and communication with sharing Aiden's story. So this has really been a blessing.

**Deanna Branch and sons Aidan and Jaidyn:** Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is discord, union. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is sadness, joy. Where there is darkness, light. Oh, the Devine Master, 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. It is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

**Pastor Mary Martha Kannass:** *[Gives Deanna framed photo of her speaking with Vice President Kamala Harris.]* So Dave Bohl had these made for you. He wanted to make sure you had a set so that your sons could have one, so there's duplicates there as well.

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

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

**Mary Zorn, Administrative Assistant at ELCA Outreach Center:** Hi! I'm Mary Zorn. I work at the ELCA Outreach Center in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a partner of Outreach for Hope and the Greater Milwaukee

Synod. We really appreciate everything that Outreach for Hope has done for us and continues to do in our community. When I think about community, I've given this a lot of thought because we've been in existence for almost 25 years now. And what 25 years does is, it gives us the time to develop relationships. And those relationships bring about things that are so essential to working with the less fortunate people in our community.



I think about the verse from Ecclesiastes 3:11. It says, *"God has made everything beautiful in its time."* And for me, time gives us the opportunity to heal. And it gives us the opportunity to create relationships that we can continue with. We have a relationship now with lots of different organizations like Shalom Center, like Grace Welcome Center, and other places where we share volunteers. Some of us volunteer at those places as well. These relationships give us the opportunity to be here for people. And what that develops in our community is trust. When people see us crossing the divide, working with our partners, they know that they can trust us. And when they know they can trust us, they'll come to us. And they'll get help for things that maybe they didn't realize somebody would help them with. And people can come and open up to us in a way that they wouldn't do in other places.

Time builds community, it builds partnerships, it builds things for us to be there for people. It's something that I'm very proud of the Outreach Center for. I'm glad that we're here for people when they don't have anyone else, a family when they don't have family. Sometimes I say to people to consider our clothing closet like a big family where you're getting hand-me-downs from other people. It is where we learn to share. It's where we learn to give and where we learn to take. So it's a really good thing to be part of. We appreciate all that Outreach for Hope and everyone in the Greater Milwaukee Synod does for us, and we hope that you are all blessed by what you do for us as well, because we know that it's a blessing. [Laughs] And it really is more blessed to give than receive it. We appreciate everything that you've done. Thanks!

**As you go about your day today, what does partnership 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. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.





**Thursday, March 24**  
**EMAUS ELCA, RACINE**

**Nancy Smith, EASY after-school program staff member at Emaus ELCA:**  
Hi! I'm Nancy Smith. And I'm in the kid's library at Emaus Lutheran Church. And the kids sitting around the table today are in the after-school program.

When they came in this afternoon, they were asked the question: what is your hope? And what I have in my hand is a talking stick, and they're going to pass it around and share, "What is your hope?"

**Child:** My hope is to have my dad to heal.

**Child:** Mine is to take care of your family.

**Child:** Mine is for people to stop bullying people.

**Child:** Mine is to help sick people to get well.

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

**PRAYER** | God of Hope: May we not be held captive to our circumstances and fears, but rather, may our faith speak both honestly and bravely to our realities. Stay near to us as we seek to walk with you, day after day, moving closer to that which you call us to be. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



**Friday, March 25**  
**REDEEMER LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor Lisa Bates-Froiland:** *[Leans over a large soup pot]* Randy, that smells amazing!! And it is a Sunday and we're preparing here at Redeemer to serve the Noon Run Lunch to whoever's hungry and comes by our doors from noon until one this afternoon. But Sunday isn't the only day that we are here sharing and learning from the people in our neighborhood. *[To Randy]* you're here on Thursdays as well!



**Randy Sikkema:** I'm also here on Thursdays for the food pantry. One of the things that we are really excited about with Outreach for Hope is how they are helping people between the Sundays. So it's an all week, multiple congregations helping us out. And we have so many people in society today that have decided to move out of these neighborhoods. And they've been able to do that. And they're leaving behind so many people that maybe don't quite look like them. So the whole goal here is to bring people back in, and mingle with the people in the neighborhoods and get to know them and get to know their needs. And Outreach for Hope does a great job not only for raising money to allow us to do that, but also finding people that will come here and share with us.

**Pastor:** And this all comes from a place of faith and groundedness in Scripture. And so I have to also point out, Randy, that you are my most faithful 6:05-in-the-morning-participant in morning prayer on Facebook Live. So I would invite anyone else to join us as well, because it's great to start off the day rooted in prayer and in Scripture. And those are our marching orders. Right, Randy?

**Randy Sikkema:** Correct! In the book that Pastor Lisa is using and shared with all of us is "Common Prayer for Radicals." And it really makes you think about life and what you're doing in life and what the will of God is doing for your life. So it's an awesome book, and it's an awesome time that we spend together. So thank you!

**Pastor:** And it just so happens, Randy, that those books were also gifts of Outreach for Hope. So truly, we didn't even plan this part of our devotion, but the Holy Spirit breathes through partnerships and blesses us along the way. I hope you have a great day.

**Randy:** Thank you. Enjoy the soup! *[Randy and Pastor Lisa smile and laugh.]*

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

**PRAYER** | Great and Gracious God: Through your Spirit, you give 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.



## Saturday, March 26 REFORMATION LUTHERAN CHURCH, MILWAUKEE

**Stephen Marsh:** My name is Stephen Marsh. I am the transitional consultant here at Reformation Lutheran Church. I've been here since June of 2021. And don't know how long I'll be here because we are in the

process of going all-in, in terms of Reformation. One of the interesting things about Reformation for me is that, I've never met a congregation that had so many partners! They have so many partner congregations that it's almost unreal. That is just so wonderful, that for so long, so many congregations have been participating with the ministry of Reformation! And these congregations have spent lots of time just kind of trying to find out where they could be the most help for Reformation's ministry. And that's just a very hopeful sign for the ongoing of any ministry. Reformation also has partners here in its neighborhood.

Most of the partners that it has are not close by, in terms of here in the city. But in this Washington Park neighborhood that Reformation is in, they have partners, but we need to develop more partners. The purpose statement that we just came up with is that, you know, Reformation exists to do a holistic ministry in partnership with other organizations in the community, for the people of the community. And so as many partners as Reformation has, Reformation needs more partners in terms of the local scene so that we can be closer to the ground, in terms of what we can do with partnership.

But Reformation has done tremendous things with partnership! Partnering with Siebert Foundation, partnering with the Synod, partnering with other congregations. It's just... it's just tremendous. And it's just a very hopeful thing, kind of like the partnership between the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, or the partnership between Jesus and the disciples, you know. We don't often think about all of the things that go into those partnerships. And partnering can be hard, but to continue to keep at it, like we are doing here at Reformation, is very hopeful. We are going on in terms of this ministry here. It's a very important ministry here in Washington Park. And we are appreciative of all of the partnerships that we have, those that we have and those that we are going to have, because we believe that God is taking Reformation from where it is, to where God wants it to be. And we're sticking around for that ride.

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

**PRAYER** | Heavenly God: As our Creator, you know us better than anyone else. Throughout our life, you have helped us form relationships. Remind us that you are at the center of these connections. Help us resolve any conflicts we may experience and continually remember to forgive as we are forgiven. May we look to you for wisdom and guidance, love and hope. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Monday, March 28**  
**OUTREACH FOR HOPE**

**Rev. Chris Manke, Executive Director of Outreach for Hope:** Good morning and happy Lent, again! As we make our way through Lent, I hope you've been enjoying the videos that we've been viewing from our different Ministry Partners of Outreach for Hope!



I'm here today to tell you a little story about partnership. And as I started Lent, I talked about how partnership really is about our relationships. This partnership I want to tell you about began in around 2005. It was a partnership that was created by our Greater Milwaukee Synod with the Diocese in Meru, Tanzania. At that time, they had a pastor who had been on the Diocese's staff, Elias Kitoi, and he and his family, for a number of very complicated reasons, needed to get out of the country. And our Synod partnered with the Meru Diocese to allow him to come here as a missionary to us. Which seemed strange to me at the time, because that's not how things were usually done then. But the longer he was here, the more I realized how I needed to hear his voice. I was fortunate because, even though I knew nothing about Tanzania at the time, St. Matthew's, where I had been serving for a number of years, was chosen as a place to be in partnership with the Diocese, and to have him serve on our staff there half-time. And through those couple years, then-Pastor Kitoi worked at St. Matthew's and ministered to us. And the two of us got to be closer and closer, our families got to be closer and closer. I really grew to love him, his family. And then through that time, we did a trip to Tanzania together. And those relationships with people in Tanzania continued to grow and blossom and flourish, to the point where I was able to go back a number of times and continue to grow my relationships with people at Sing'isi [Lutheran Church] in Tanzania and the whole Diocese there. It was such a great example of, to me, of how those relationships that we begin, continue to blossom and grow and connect us with other people, connect us with other organizations, to the point where we are even countries coming together. And that's what I believe God wants of us. He wants us to start with those relationships, to get to know each other, to see each other with our differences, our cultural differences and our diversity and the beauty of that. And then that sense of understanding the world from a different perspective, understanding the world that God has created in its many faceted ways and the beauty that is there. So it's been a true joy and pleasure to have gotten to know now-Bishop Elias Kitoi and his family, and really get that sense of how our ministries are all interwoven together. And

that's all because of the relationship that was founded so long ago in 2005. I look forward to the next time I get to go there! I hope you'll think about going to Tanzania. It's a wonderful place and wonderful people.

And we give thanks to God for how God continues to build up the partnerships that we have that strengthens each other, as we see the world in different ways through each other's eyes and ministries, and that we are blessed. We are blessed with each other and those relationships and partnerships that God forms in us.

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

**PRAYER** | Dear Great and Gracious God: We give you thanks for these partnerships you've created in us-- founded on relationships and getting to know one another, and the joys and even the struggles as we walk together through this life, getting to experience life from another person's perspective and learning about how they see the world. Bless us in our ministries, in our relationships, in our partnerships, that we may continue to strengthen each other and even more importantly, grow closer to you. We thank you for all these things. In your name we pray, Amen.



**Tuesday, March 29**  
**HEPHATHA LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**David Slinde:** My name is David Slinde. I'm from West Bend. I'm a member of Our Savior's, West Bend, and also an associate member here at Hephatha.

**Nancy Slinde:** Okay, and I'm Nancy Slinde. Our Savior's and Hephatha. We've been associate members of Hephatha for about five or six years. And we continue to grow in our love for Hephatha. And we want to tell you something, we--

**David Slinde:** We're bridge people between our two churches, and we're very proud of it. Because we've linked these two different congregations together. But yet, we're all the same. Today, we're here delivering some diapers for the Strong Baby Sanctuary. That's a program we became aware of when it was initiated. That's very close to our hearts, because we had four children. We know the difficulties of having babies, and sometimes mothers need support.

**Nancy Slinde:** And whatever we can do to help support this ministry is very important. Because it helps the families, it strengthens the church, it strengthens the neighborhoods, it strengthens the world. And that's kind of what we see as a big, big mission. So through donations from Our Savior's, through relationship building with a Strong Baby Sanctuary on Zoom, there are things that we can be connected with. We feel that the association with Outreach for Hope also is very crucial for this. Because of our partnership with Hephatha, because of our relationship with Hephatha, we continue to be blessed. We continue to grow in faith. And hopefully we can be a blessing to the mothers, to the children, and to the church as a whole. And to Pastor Mary Martha too!

**David Slinde:** I think Outreach for Hope gives us the opportunity to really to come together to be one church. So whether we have different locations, we are mobile, we can travel we can... what does that guy say on the Viking Cruise? We can be curious! And we go to other churches within our great Synod and see other people, see different ways, worship differently. But yet we're all the same and we're all one.



**Nancy Slinde:** Right! So we know that Hephatha seeks new ways to serve the neighborhood, to serve the members, to protect the babies. And it's always-- Hephatha is very inclusive for many many reasons, many many kinds of people. We are grateful for this relationship with Hephatha that brings people together for the kingdom of God!

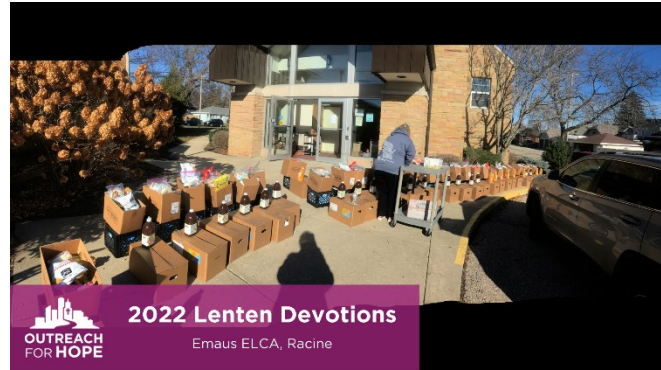
***As you go about your day today, what does partnership mean to you?***

**PRAYER** | Good and Gracious God: You call us to experience the fruits of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Bless us as we work together in your kingdom, that the fruits of your Spirit may grow and flourish in our partnerships and in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Wednesday, March 30**  
**EMAUS ELCA, RACINE**

**Carol Yust, Director of Outreach at Emaus ELCA:** Here at Emaus ELCA, we continue to strive to meet the needs of our neighbors. During the pandemic, we asked ourselves, "how are we being called to bring hope to a community in

a time of crisis in isolation?" Realizing that the pandemic had created food shortages and families were struggling to put food on their tables, we felt a strong call to serve our neighbors by providing nourishment for body, mind and spirit. Through partnership with FaithWorks Food Pantry, Kingdom Manna, Threads of Hope, Outreach for Hope and many others, we have been blessed to provide food, books and clothing to those living on the margins. It is with great hope that we all continue to strive to be the light of Christ that shines through the darkness, bringing favor to the least, the lost and the lonely.



**Carol Yust:** *[To Ramiro]* Where do you find hope?

**Ramiro Flores, seminary student for Emaus ELCA:** [It gives me hope] to be part of the church, and to work together to be the hands and feet of Christ.

**Carol Yust:** So today, I leave you with one question: Where do you find hope? If you struggle to answer this question, I say to you, look no further than the cross.

***As you go about your day today, what does partnership 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. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



**Thursday, March 31**  
**ELCA OUTREACH CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

**Mary Zorn, Administrative Assistant at ELCA Outreach Center:** So Willie, we're doing the film for Outreach for Hope. And we have a partnership with them, and I wanted to talk about some

of the other partnerships we have. And one of the partnerships we have that you are such an integral part of is our GED classes. And just wanting to know how that's going and how it works here, just to let people know what we do and how it's done in the partnership that we have with Kenosha Unified as well.

**Willie Collister, Childcare Assistant at ELCA Outreach Center:** What I know of, it is going well. We give them free books and we are in the classroom where they teach and everybody join together and enjoy it. Students graduate and come in every night and it is going well.

**Mary:** Who can come to the GED classes?

**Willie:** It is open [to the community].

**Mary:** They have it in English and Spanish?

**Willie:** They have it in English and Spanish

**Mary:** Who teaches the classes?

**Willie:** Miss Lena Cooksey teaches the English and then Carmen Delgado teaches the other one.

**Mary:** I know they have childcare, who provides the childcare?

**Willie:** We have three childcare providers who watch the kids. We are getting around 6 kids right now. With COVID going on, they limit [the number of kids] and some [GED students] are leaving their kids at home. Kenosha Unified provides the childcare.

**Mary:** Pat Demos is a big part of reason we are a success. And the childcare room is.

**Willie:** The kids watch the games and movies, and the little kids, and they watch them, and the kids go up to about 14 years of age.

**Mary:** We reserve that room just for childcare, which is really nice.

***As you go about your day today, what does partnership 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 Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Friday, April 1  
**REFORMATION LUTHERAN  
CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Nicholas Schoob:** Hello! My name is Nicolas Schoob, and I use they/them pronouns. I am currently serving as bridge pastor at Reformation Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. And kind of

what I find the most interesting through partnership is drawn out of a story that actually happened during my time at Cross, which was that there was a death in another congregation that had rocked many of the congregants. And they wanted deeply to be able to have a repast space where they could be together as a family to grieve and to hold each other up. And their congregation just didn't have the space for it. But what was really amazing was that Cross did. And so to be able to offer that space to be part of the distant family of one another, to provide an environment where grief could be experienced, and where people can hold each other up was an amazing ability to be part of the body of Christ, across miles.

And that is at the center of what I see in the narrative of being called together as creation. That we together are very good. That this is a chance for us to reach out to one another, and build a body of Christ that's actually functional [laughs]. Because on our own, we can only do so much. We can only reach so far. We can only do so many things. But when we all join together, all of those places where we don't have those gifts are filled by one another. And to me, that is exactly what we're called to be as partners, as co-creators, and as Beloved Community under God.

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

**PRAYER** | Healer God: Bless us with your love and care as we struggle with health concerns and grief in our lives. Help us to walk together and support one another in our sorrow, so that we might heal together as one body in Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.





**Saturday, April 2**  
**REDEEMER LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor Lisa Bates-Froiland:** Hi, Lisa Bates-Froiland here from Redeemer Lutheran Church. And this congregation has been on a journey, a long journey that partially started in

2017, but really ramped up in June of 2021. It's time for this old beautiful church to have some renovations, get after some deferred maintenance, and to build anew for ministries in the next century, including a mental health assessment clinic, and a new dining hall and kitchen that can serve the neighbors, the congregation and be a reception place for the congregation and for the entire Synod, really, you can come and join us when it's all finished!

That journey sometimes has seemed a little bit like the Israelites wandering through the desert and really wondering, from where will our nourishment come? Where are the dollars going to come that can do all of this? It's a very ambitious amount that we are raising. The first part, \$2 million, from this little congregation that most people thought would close 10 years ago. But behind me and above me is a [paper] chain that extends from one side to another. And every link on this chain represents \$5,000 pledged or received toward the project from the congregation and its friends. So as it goes across, we're almost finished with the \$2 million that we're seeking. And we just have 13 more links to go! This has taught us of the abundance of God, the Holy Spirit breathing through the generosity of this tiny but mighty congregation. I hope it inspires you today during your journey through Lent.

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

**PRAYER** | Generous and Loving God: We come to you in thanksgiving, knowing that all we are and all 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.



**Monday, April 4**  
**ELCA OUTREACH CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

**Karl Erickson, Executive Director of ELCA Outreach Center:** Hi, and welcome to the Outreach Center! First of all, we want to thank Outreach for Hope for all their support. This is our 25th anniversary of the Outreach Center. And I know in 1997, we received a grant from Outreach for Hope that got us started, so thank you for that. We just wrapped up a Bible study here. I've got Debra here, and I've got Kelsey. Debra is a longtime member of the Outreach Center, she's been coming for a long time. And Kelsey is a UCC pastor who just led a wonderful Bible study. We have Bible studies on Tuesday mornings and Thursday mornings at nine... Probably shouldn't call it Bible study-- it's probably more like a faith discussion, we get into some deep conversations. Debra gonna just tell you a little bit about what we talked about.



**Debra Watson:** Hi, my name's Debra, and I've been coming here for Bible study for a long time. And I enjoy Bible study. And they give me a lot of hope and a lot of love, and a lot of understanding 'bout God. And I just love coming here. This is the place to come when you get all kinds of problems with yourself, you can talk to somebody here at the Outreach Center, and they love everybody.

**Karl:** Thank you, Debra! Kelsey, anything you want to add?

**Rev. Kelsey Beebe:** Well I've been doing Bible study here every Thursday for about a year, and gotten to know Debra and a bunch of people. And it's my favorite part of the week, because I feel like it has grown my faith and deepened my faith and I've learned so much from the folks. Like Karl said, it's a conversation, and so I feel like I'm hearing people's insights who walk a different life path than I do. And, you know, today we talked about loving your enemies and forgiving people-- which is hard! But, you know, there's such amazing insight here and just a wonderful opportunity to grow our faith together.

**Karl:** We have a lot of different partnerships around here, and having Kelsey come in every Thursday morning is a wonderful one that we take advantage of every Thursday morning. So, again, we thank you for your support and God bless you all!

***As you go about your day today, what does partnership 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.



**Tuesday, April 5**  
**GREATER MILWAUKEE**  
**SYNOD**

**Rev. Matt Short, Assistant to the Bishop for Evangelical Mission:** When Pastor Chris from Outreach For Hope asked me if I would offer one of these daily devotions, my mind started

spinning around the theme. “Together in Hope...Stories of Partnership.”

I can tell you that every single day in my role as part of the synod staff, I see inspiring stories of partnership. I see congregations who used to almost act like competitors for the same crowd now embracing each other as ministry partners. I see lay leaders in our congregations, and their incredible joy when they get to meet with lay leaders from other congregations...and they realize they are not alone, and they steal ideas and enthusiasm for ministry from each other. It’s a powerful reminder that we are all in this time of rebuilding together, and we absolutely DO have what we need to be the church in a faithful way in 2022. We have this transformative grace of God, and we have each other. In the end, that’s all we need.

And honestly, for all of the pain, struggle, and loss that COVID brought to us...and I don’t want to minimize that for a second... But I do have to say that these difficult times have actually, on a grand scale across the synod, helped reveal just how much we need each other. So I have seen an increase in stories of partnership.

I could tell you about All Peoples in Milwaukee and St. Olaf in Rubicon, an urban church and a rural church, who have worked together on an awesome program they call “plot partners” where fresh produce is shared. I could tell you about the churches in Kenosha that worked together during the pandemic to create online confirmation resources together, so that they didn’t all have to duplicate the work. I could tell you 1,000 stories of how God has been bringing people together, but most of those stories aren’t mine to share; they are yours.

I do want to tell you about one particularly beautiful moment I got to see just a couple of months ago. Starting in the Fall of 2021, we began a monthly 60-minute zoom session that’s open to anyone in the synod that we call “I’m Curious About...” Each month, there’s a different topic, and we interview a different leader about something that has them energized for mission, and then we break into small groups to talk about it.

Well, a couple of months ago, when we ended the breakout rooms, two lay leaders who were in one of those breakout rooms together were still laughing about something when they came back into the big room. As we all checked in with each other about how the conversations in small groups went, these two women were just clearly energized by their chat. They had decided they would stay in touch, and steal ideas from each other, and maybe even have their churches work together on something. They made a point of saying how great it was that God used this simple zoom session to connect them, because they were feeling rejuvenated for their daily ministry because of it. It's those moments that inspire me. Those moments that remind me of the ways God calls us to be the church together.

I want to close with a brief reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 1, verses 3-5. Paul writes this of his partners in the gospel in Philippi: *"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now."*

Dear siblings, what a blessing it is to share in this gospel with you. We need each other and God is busy weaving us together as partners...for the sake of the world. Thanks be to God for that gift!

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

**PRAYER** | God, you are the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Where the messages from the culture divide us, we pray that you unite us. Where the difficulties of this moment weigh us down, we pray that you lighten our load. Give us partners for the road, and bless us all so that we may together be your blessing in a world that desperately needs it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Wednesday, April 6**  
**ELCA OUTREACH CENTER,**  
**KENOSHA**

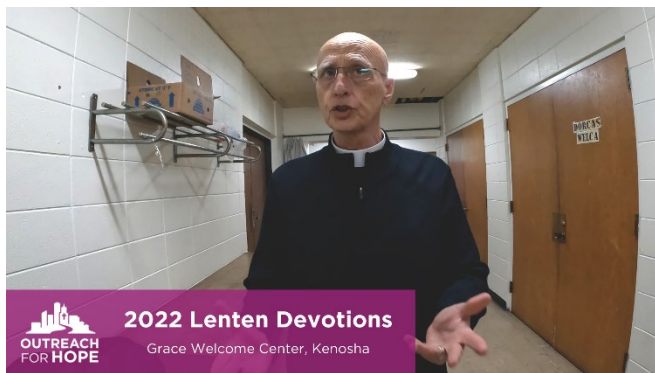
**Danielle Nixon:** Hi! My name is Danielle Nixon. I am the Assistant Director at the ELCA Outreach Center. Today I would like to talk about how to socially connect in a time of social distance. COVID has caused the world to be completely disconnected from one another. The Outreach Center provides fellowship. Fellowship provides encouragement. Biblically fellowship means holding something in common grounds. A lot of the clients here see us as family, friends, coworkers, teammates, neighbors, and that was what was missing. At the Center, you can be here without any reason.



Ecclesiastes 4:9: *"Two are better than one, because they have good rewards for their toil."* God has placed people in our life to help, and I truly do believe that. There's many people that will never walk into a church but always go to our Bible studies. We partner up with other ELCA churches, and they are able to come in every Tuesday and Thursday, and provide Bible studies. Many clients will never walk into a church but they will walk into the Center. None of us are meant to journey through life alone. Whether it is a spouse or family member or girlfriend or even a caregiver, for nothing will be impossible for God then. Thank you.

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

**PRAYER** | Great and Gracious God: May we be aware and sensitive to the presence, guidance, and power of your Holy Spirit. Remind us that we are not alone...and that we also can't do it alone. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Thursday, April 7  
**GRACE WELCOME CENTER,  
KENOSHA**

**The Rev. Kevin Stewart:** My name is Kevin Stewart. I serve as Missioner for Community Engagement for the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee, which covers a third of the state.

**Interviewer:** And so what's been your partnership here with Grace Welcome Center? How has that come about?

**Rev. Stewart:** It's come about because of a deep friendship with Leif Peterson here at Grace Welcome Center, that we developed when I was assigned to Racine at the Hospitality Center. And Leif extended an invitation to me to come and learn and meet about Grace Welcome Center in the early years... a place of welcome, of warmth, connection. And so I did. I remember the early years when it was just a dream, and it was developed organically. And thinking that, if they dream and work hard, that something good can happen. It was very organic, very Spirit-lead. And so it's been exciting to watch people come, and the smiles here that people could gather. And to watch this place just grow unexpectedly-- the support and rallying around the people who are served here, our sisters and brothers who have served here --by members and organizations and representative of the faith community, the nonprofit community and foundational world. There's a story that's being told here in the lives and the smiles and the faces of people who come, the volunteers. Those who are served are sisters and brothers. And so I think when people come here, there's a feeling to it. You can tell your story on social media, but I think that you need to be here to feel the energy and the excitement, and people support that. Because I think that at the end of the day, this is about one-on-one, making a difference in one person's life, one day at a time, and doing that again and again and again, to every person who comes here.

**Interviewer:** That brings hope?

**Rev. Stewart:** Yes, that someone cares! You know, especially in this pandemic, who among us has not been isolated in some way? And so to be able to come together, and that human interaction, that human connection, the fist bump, a look in the eye... it can make all the difference in the world. And when somebody in action and word says, "I care about you. I love you. Can we just say hello to one another?" It gives hope.

***As you go about your day today, what does partnership 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.



Friday, April 8  
**ALL PEOPLES GATHERING  
CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Child from All Peoples:** What give me hope is my parents love me and stand behind me.



**Child from All Peoples:** One thing that gives me hope is knowing that people in my life supports me.

**Xavier Thomas:** Hi! I'm Xavier Thomas, Youth Director at All Peoples Gathering Church. What hope means to me is something that's inside of me that can keep me going. Never stop-- take breaks, take care of myself [of course] --but something that keeps me kicking. I think faith and hope run neck and neck with each other. So if I maintain my faith and the hope, we'll be there. And what gives me hope is... basically, yesterday. The day before always gives me hope for the next day. I'm alive again and whatever was being worked on could continue to be worked on... Life. Seeing my kids grow every day.

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

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



**Saturday, April 9**  
**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Vicar Charlotte Linberry:** St. Paul's, Milwaukee has a partnership with Neighborhood House, a local organization that provides a number of youth and family programs, as well as a

twice weekly food pantry where participants can choose what they need from a menu of available items. Several members of our congregation have been able to go and work at the pantry, and we've also collected clothing items from our members and from our partner churches to share with our neighbors there.

**Nancy Day, Outreach Committee Chair at St. Paul's:** Hi, we're here today at Neighborhood House from St. Paul's and we're helping out. We've brought wonderful, nice things. We've developed a partnership. These are donations from Galilee Lutheran Church in Pewaukee, and we are blessed to be able to bring this to Neighborhood House and hand out to people so they can stay warmer this winter. It has been wonderful working with Neighborhood House. They have a wonderful program and we're very happy to come here and volunteer and learn about all the wonderful things they do in the neighborhood.

**Suzie Moylan, Outreach Committee member at St. Paul's:** I'm here to talk to you about the idea of partnership. We've been working with Neighborhood House for many months. And one thing that I have found is the people that come to benefit from this program are from all different walks of life. And some of them are living without heat, without much food, mostly have shelter. And I have been having many conversations with them, and the one thing they reminded me is that even though they might not have heat, or they might not have enough food, they have friends and they have God, and that we're all not so different, that those two things keep them going. And I've just found that so inspirational.

***As you go about your day today, what does partnership 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. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Monday, April 11 – Holy Week**  
**INCARNATION LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor Char Guiliani:** Hi! I'm Pastor Char from Incarnation Lutheran.



Partnership and how it brings about hope: Today I had the opportunity to meet with a family from our congregation. And I asked them that question, "partnership and how it brings about hope." And they shared the story of their long life together, their marriage. They've been married for many years. And how that partnership has given them hope. It's given them hope through hospital stays, and births of children and all of that. And they, they knew that they weren't alone. They knew that they could care for each other and love each other when each one of them needed the other the most.

I also had the opportunity to see the hope in the eyes of a grandmother and her new grandson. There's definitely hope in that, a hope in a wonderful future for her grandson. And that's a partnership. And this grandmother has a partnership with her daughter, who is the baby's mom, and they are working together and that is a partnership of hope. It brings about hope. Hope that the child will grow up in a loving family. Hope that they can reach out to each other and be there for each other whether it's in good times or whether it's in bad times. And that's what partnership is about. It brings about hope. We are not walking this life journey alone. So, blessings to you during this Lenten season.

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

**PRAYER** | God of Unfailing Love: May we be filled with love for each other that reflects your love for us - patient and kind, not envious nor boastful nor rude, seeking to lift others up in how we honor them, reflecting the love we have received from you - so that your love may grow in this world through us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



## Tuesday, April 12 – Holy Week GRACE WELCOME CENTER, MILWAUKEE

**Stan Livermore, member of Spirit Alive Lutheran Church, Kenosha:** We're here from Spirit Alive Church. My name is Stan Livermore. This is Pastor Kevin Beebe. And we are very proud and pleased to be able to

be partners here with Grace Welcome Center and have done so for some number of years. We've been here to cook breakfast, we've been here to carry food-- Oh, my aching back! --And I'm getting old for that part now! [laughs] And just really pleased that we can be a part of this community and serve in the way that Christ gave us an example of how to serve. It starts with the basics, taking care of physical needs.

**Pastor Kevin Beebe, pastor at Spirit Alive Lutheran Church, Kenosha:** Yeah, back in 2019, when I first arrived in September as the pastor here at Spirit Alive, it was very much like-- I think of the first disciples on the Sea of Galilee, I think of the moment I got here and our church was hungry to do something in our community. And I met with Pastor Jonathan and he said, "Come and see! Come and see the Messiah work." And so we did! We decided to start cooking breakfast once a month. And that's our specific day, but a lot of our members show up just weekly now, almost daily when there's breakfast, and we have people showing up to be at the pantry. And we're about to start a new food fundraising program called "Food on the Fourth" to raise specific food for Grace Welcome Center out of our church. It's been a partnership that, for me as a pastor, reminds me that it's not just about our individual churches trying to serve our individual communities. But here, Grace and Spirit Alive and St. Mary's and Lakeside and Lord of Life and Trinity-- I think I got everybody --we all work together to serve Kenosha as one unit. Oh, and St. Paul's, I forgot St. Paul's! [We all] work together as one church to serve the community, rather than us all trying to do it individually, which I think is a much more wholesome model of the church going into the future. It gives me hope!

**Stan:** Well, I suppose one of the first thoughts on hope that comes to my mind is going back to pre-COVID days, when in our dining room here we might have 75 or 80 folks coming in as our guest to join us for breakfast. And there's community organizations here. Shalom Center is here talking about housing needs. We have a dentist who's here making appointments and travel arrangements to get people in for dental attention. We have barbers and hairstylists here setting up appointments to get folks tended to for their needs in that way. It was just such an amazing thing to see so many pieces of the community coming together! Now of course, COVID's challenging that. We're serving outside. But we still have the ability for folks to come in and get a shower. We still have the opportunity to get clean under clothes. We still have the opportunity to get people winter boots, wear coats, winter hats. We have other partners helping with that-- the ELCA Outreach Center is huge on the clothing aspect, as well as infant care, pro bono legal

services, tons of other things they're doing in the community. So there's a lot going on that can really instill hope. It has instilled hope for us!

**Pastor:** I think I notice, too, the hope of relationship that's created in a place like Grace. Like much of our Synod, our urban centers have experienced white flight and have experienced a condensing of poverty in the center as communities that are wealthier start moving to the edge. And that includes a lot of the people who would call our ELCA Lutheran churches home. They move to the edge or they've been made disconnected from parts of our city that's really at the heart of our town. And so to see these relationships go both directions, of people coming into a community they normally aren't and seem to be no longer a part of, and finding new relationships. And the opposite being true, of people making these connections. Spirit Alive as a partner with Grace works with a nonprofit called the Garden of Eatin' here in Kenosha, and we help plant and raise a garden, when you can do that, just a block north of here, and we raised produce for the pantry or anyone in the neighborhood who wants to pick it. And in that time, we've made relationships with a neighbor who supplies all the water for the garden, and lets us fill the water tank. And the other neighbor across the street who comes and mows the median because we don't have a lawnmower out there. And we've held barbecues out there and have the neighbors barbecue with us and come and spend the day. If anything gives me hope about this place, it's not just that people are being fed with food or they're finding a shower. It's that Grace has been a hub for our churches to help rekindle relationships here in Kenosha, between all peoples regardless of race, gender, economic status, to be a full body of Christ in one location.

***As you go about your day today, what does partnership 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.



**Wednesday, April 13 – Holy Week**  
**REDEEMER LUTHERAN**  
**CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor Lisa Bates-Froiland:** *[Looks at Jeff]* Hey, Jeff Bray, Director of Music at Redeemer Lutheran Church! *[laughs]*



**Jeff Bray:** *[Looks at Pastor Lisa]* Hi, Pastor Lisa, pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church!

**Pastor:** Hey, you know, the Outreach for Hope Lenten Devotions this year have the theme of how the Holy Spirit breathes through partnership. And once I heard that was the theme, I remembered a certain morning that you and I were collaborating together. And it was before you even came on staff. And it was in the aftermath of something that's become really central to our story and our unfolding story here at Redeemer. It was the death of a man who was sleeping on our steps. His life was taken by another in a way that spoke to all of us about the need for mental healthcare in this neighborhood. But we had a worship service that was needing to happen to bring the body of Christ and the neighborhood together and to grieve that loss. Do you remember what we did that morning?

**Jeff:** I do. I remember it pretty distinctly. I remember that we had planned to do a dramatic reading of the prodigal son reading, and we actually had people set up to do that. I have a dear friend in North Carolina that has written a really nice setting of the prodigal son song called "Prodigal Son." Sam Hensley. And I had planned to use that song. But when you let me know, that Saturday morning, the tragedy of Johnny's murder on the step, it became poignant to me that Johnny was the prodigal son, and that we were able to bring the lectionary readings for that weekend and the tragedy into alignment with one another to help the congregation grieve, and how the Spirit works in partnership. I mean, the way it happened, I think, was just the Spirit needed to do the song, but also to play around with some other themes like with Jesus loves me, and Jesus remember me. And that kind of set the seed for some really interesting future partnerships with you and Aaron [Musser, Redeemer's former musical director].

**Pastor:** The gifts of our faith in music and in Scripture that morning helped to speak to an unspeakable tragedy. For sure. And the prodigal son, this man who had spent most of his life being homeless, wandering about, had gone home to his Father God, and we were sure that he was being welcomed. And that was a message that spoke to us and



spoke to the room. And now that song has been in my head all day, and I wonder if you could share a piece of it?

**Jeff:** So just to set the context, "The Prodigal Son," the lyrics are from the perspective of the Father, of God, of the one who yearns for reuniting in family with his son, with his wayward son. So here's the angst, that God is really yearning for so... *[singing and playing piano]* "Oh, every night I'm sleeping less. Emotions settin' in, I guess. But if he comes back down that road, will I be strong enough to welcome him home? I will be strong enough to welcome him home... Welcome home, my prodigal son."

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

**PRAYER** | God of Harmony: In the music of life, you remind us of how beautiful we can sound as we combine our voices together. Continue to remind us that our melodies are a compilation of the notes that you first gave to us. May the music of our lives bring glory to you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Thursday, April 14 – Maundy  
Thursday  
**BREAKING THE CHAINS  
CHURCH, MILWAUKEE**

**Pastor David Rebey:** Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Pastor David Rebey. And I'm here this afternoon in the sanctuary at Redemption Lutheran

Church with my ministry partner, Pam Gustafson. I also serve, in addition to the pastor at Redemption, at Breaking the Chains Church. And that's what we're here to tell you about today.

**Pam Gustafson:** And I'm Pam, I'm a volunteer with Breaking the Chains, and a member of Cross Lutheran Church.

**Pastor:** So Breaking the Chains is a worshiping community inside the Felmers Chaney Correctional Center in Milwaukee. Throughout the pandemic, we have remained connected to the men who are incarcerated there. Even when we were unable to enter the facility due to COVID. We were sending them recorded services. For a while we were doing Zoom worship with them. Recently, we were able to re-enter the facility and we're now doing hybrid worship with them, with some of our volunteers joining on Zoom, while I and a couple others out there in person.

**Pam:** And I'd like to speak from Jeremiah 29:11, which says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, pleased to give you hope, and a future." And people who are incarcerated spend a lot of time thinking about the future. Their loved ones are also affected, thinking about their past experience and hoping that they will have a future life with their beloved. Hope is all they have.

**Pastor:** Felmers Chaney is a pre-release minimum security facility for men who have spent time on a journey through the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. It is their last stop before they re-enter the community. It's a place where they rekindle their hope, they are able to reconnect with their family and friends, go to school, get a job, and most of them actually are able to find safe and affordable housing before they are released. And our role is to walk with them, to accompany them, and to give them hope as they prepare to come back into our community.

**Pam:** What's really interesting is that many of the men are reaching out to us to help with their spiritual needs. Pastor Rebey officiated a wedding this fall, and both Pastor Rebey and I attended a funeral for Lee, a person who we met through Project Return.

**Pastor:** One of the members of our community was recently released just before Christmas, and he has a job, he has a good apartment, and he has actually joined my congregation at Redemption Lutheran.

**Pam:** Another of our regular attenders, Ernest, asked to be transferred to the Kenosha facility, as that is the community where he wants to have his future. He still talks to Pastor Rebey frequently.

**Pastor:** And recently, Ernest told me that there was no pastor or spiritual care being provided there and put me in touch with the captain. And very recently, we have started a new ministry site for Breaking the Chains at the Kenosha Correctional Center with Ernest and his friends there.

**Pam:** And Ernest was a giver, as well as a receiver. After my sister passed away from COVID, he sent me a condolence card that really touched my heart. I felt the Holy Spirit coming from him.

**Pastor:** Earnest has been an inspiration to all of us. The Holy Spirit is definitely at work through him, giving him hope and sharing the hope that he has gained through being a member of Breaking the Chains with his fellow citizens at the Kenosha Correctional Center.

**Pam:** Ernest has shown us that hope is not just a dream. It is an action. Worshipping with Breaking the Chains Church moved Ernest to bring hope into another facility.

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

**PRAYER** | Dear Great and Gracious God: Thank you for your plans of hope for our futures. Help returning citizens to never give up hope for a return to their families and their communities. Let us be a sign of your hope, to the share the hope and love that Jesus has shared with us with men who are trying to transform their lives and are prepared to successfully re-enter our communities. All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Friday, April 15 – Good Friday**  
**GREATER MILWAUKEE**  
**SYNOD**

**Bishop Paul Erickson:** Hi! I'm Paul Erickson, Bishop of the Greater Milwaukee Synod. Thank you for taking the time during this Lenten season to listen to these reflections and stories on the value of partnerships that bring us together in hope!



One of the biggest challenges that we will face as a church and as a global community, as we enter this next generation of life together, is how to figure out what we're going to hold on to and what we need to let go of as we live into the future that God is preparing for us. Now, one of the buzzwords that you may have heard a lot recently, and which you may continue to hear is 'innovation.' Now, we know that we need new ideas to figure out how we're going to enter into God's future. But let me be clear, I do not believe that 'innovation' means that someone, somewhere is going to come up with the idea or the solution that will somehow save us or fix us. Innovation happens best when it is the result of collaboration. This is sometimes referred to as 'creative abrasion,' in which different ideas or proposals come up against one another. And while the temptation might be to decide which idea is the better one, true innovation happens when something new is developed out of the give and take, and the exchange of ideas. You see, none of us is smart enough to figure out what needs to happen by ourselves. We need each other. We need to listen and wrestle and wonder together about how God is leading us and guiding us into whatever comes next.

God is indeed creating something new. Let's discover it together!

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

**PRAYER** | God of Peace: As we attempt to discern where you will lead us, help us to remember that none of us has all the answers. Teach us how to truly listen to one another, so that we may work together to turn our diverse ideas into a shared path towards your Beloved Community. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



## Saturday, April 16 – Easter Vigil **OUTREACH FOR HOPE**

**Rev. Chris Manke, Executive Director of Outreach for Hope:** Good morning, one final time! It's our last Lenten devotion. I hope you've really enjoyed these times, getting to know our Ministry Partners of Outreach for Hope.

They're all such wonderful people and doing just incredible things! But as we've been reflecting on this theme that we've had-- you know, how partnership really brings about hope --we've heard so many different stories about [the partnerships] and the ministries.

And it just really makes me think about how a partnership is about our serving. We often talk about "God's work, our hands" ... how when we come together, and we give our time and our talents in those partnerships, coming together as the people of God, it's amazing the things that we do together, walking side by side, accomplishing God's work, like that phrase says, in our midst. It's wonderful to see those stories of partnership come about in our serving!

And then of course, partnership in our giving, as we share our tithes and our treasures. I'm always amazed what comes about of that. All the work that happens as we share the gifts that God has first given us, so that the work of ministry can continue to grow and be supported with our finances, so that ministries continue to flourish and grow and build and strengthen.

And then, of course, as we've been talking about, as I've been emphasizing, partnerships are about relationships. And of course, God is the one who has formed those relationships in us. And as we say, the church is all about relationships. The church is the family of God, coming together, not only sharing our giving and our tithes and our time and our talents, but sharing our care and our love for one another, walking together through this life with its joys and its celebrations. And also, yes, through the really difficult days. God has formed us as the family of God, so that we can be together. So that we can have another on our journey together-- celebrating and crying, weeping together through all the stuff that life has in store for us. We thank God for reminding us that partnerships are about relationships, as we give our treasures and give our time and energy to one another, we are blessed. Blessed through the partnerships, blessed through the relationships, blessed by God so that we might know

a fuller life. So that we might know the joy that God has in store for us. So that we might see the world from a different person's eyes, growing in understanding of what God wants for this world, what God is calling us to do in this place, and to help one another as we go through this life.

And so I hope you've had a blessed Lenten time, hopefully drawing you closer to our God, so that you may know God's love for you, for all of us. And so that once we really truly know that, we might turn and take another person's hand. And so I wish you a blessed Lent, and as we move into Easter, a blessed Easter. That we might continue to move forward as the people of God, celebrating and giving thanks for all that God has for us, for each of us. And that that love, that grace, that mercy might continue to flourish and grow in all of us. Blessed Lent and Easter to you! In Jesus' name, Amen!

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

**PRAYER** | God of Unconditional Love: 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. May we be humble in our triumphs, steadfast in our trials, and faithful in the mundane moments of life. Guide us in our efforts to walk humbly with you. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.



