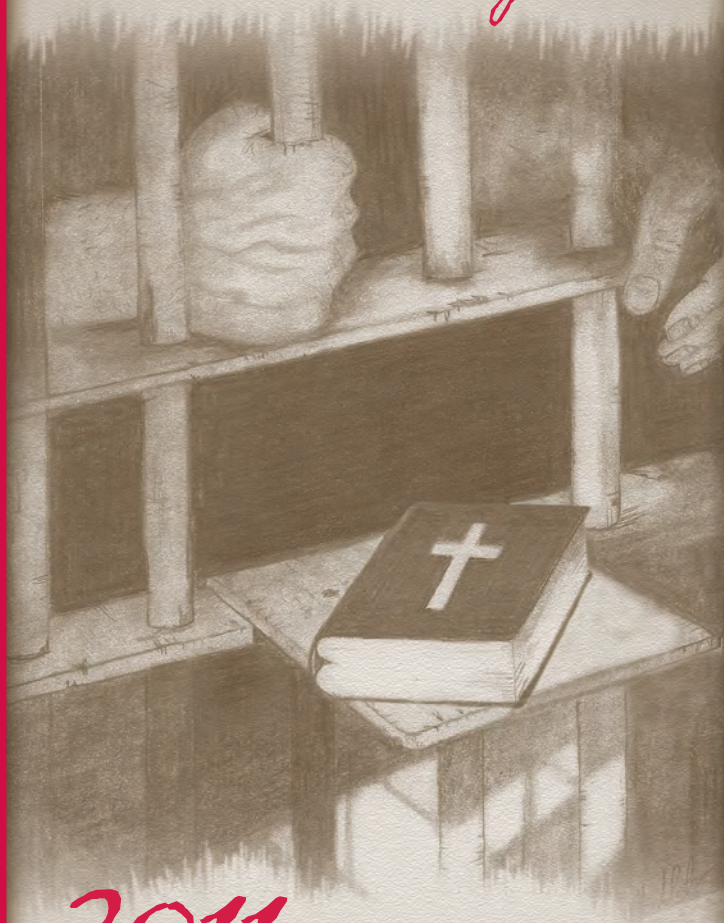


*Every Native American Nation.*  
*Christ's Kingdom.*



*2011*  
*Lenten Devotions*



**Lutheran Indian Ministries**  
*Christ's Kingdom—Every Native American Nation.*

*A Ministry of Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S.*



## Lutheran Indian Ministries

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The colors of this native cross represent the four major races of humankind – red, yellow, black and white. Together they comprise a cross, signifying that Jesus Christ died and was resurrected for all people. That theme is at the heart and core of our mission and ministry. The cross, coupled with the tag line, “Christ’s Kingdom – Every Native American Nation.” summarizes the ministry of Lutheran Indian Ministries.

Our mission is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with Native North American Nations, encouraging them to proclaim Christ’s Kingdom to their own and to others.

*Unless otherwise noted Scripture verses in this booklet are taken from The New International Version.*



## Lutheran Indian Ministries

*Christ's Kingdom — Every Native American Nation.*

*A Ministry of Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S.*

Dear Friend in Christ,

I am honored to share with you our 2011 Lutheran Indian Ministries Lenten Devotion Booklet.

Lutheran Indian Ministries. This name may surprise you. In this day and age of political correctness, you may question our wording. But, we Natives refer to ourselves and to each other as Indians. Let me reassure you, as a Makah – as an American Indian – this name sends a positive message of its own: We are Indians ministering to Indians. This wording reflects one of the great things God has been doing among American Indian, Alaska Native and First Nations people. He's been raising up Christian leadership from within. After decades – centuries even – of misunderstanding Christianity as a white man's religion, Native men and women are working hard to share the message of Jesus Christ.

For the past 25 years of Lutheran Indian Ministries, *Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S.* has been sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the far reaches of the north, including Alaska, and more recently in remote Native communities in the lower 48 states. God has blessed this ministry with opportunities to identify, recruit, train, equip and empower American Indian, Alaska Native and First Nations people for service in the church and in their communities. I am particularly grateful to see Native people becoming pastors and deaconesses. Your prayers and your faithful support have made this possible.

This booklet is our thanks to you for your faithfulness to this ministry. It has been a joy and a privilege, throughout the years, to be able to share our ministry stories with you and how lives have been changed through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Without your partnership this would not have been possible.

May you be encouraged in your own faith as you read and contemplate the message of these devotions.

God bless you!

Rev. Dr. Don Johnson  
Executive Director

1 Corinthians 15:57

## *Celebrating Lent*

*“But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Life is like Lent. It is difficult and very hard at times. But Easter Monday is coming. Yes we must go through this time of reflection and sometimes cleansing but know that we are victorious and have the greatest gift of all to celebrate in the end. Lent can be a deep spiritual experience to prepare ourselves once again for living in the victory of Jesus. In his inspiring book, “Surprised by Hope” (so inspiring I’ve used it elsewhere), N.T. Wright gives us important insights into the subject of the resurrection, how real it is and how central it is to the Easter season. He writes; “This is our greatest festival. Take Christmas away, and in biblical terms you lose two chapters at the front of Matthew and Luke, nothing else. Take Easter away, and you don’t have a New Testament; you don’t have Christianity; as Paul says, you are still in your sins.”

But, what about Lent? For me Lent is a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter and for the celebration and living of life itself. I go through Lent because I know Jesus is real. I am willing to go through the hardships of life because I know that Jesus has won the war. He has risen from death defeating every single power of darkness. And Jesus will set up his New Kingdom and we can rule with Him because He has indeed risen.

This past year I received a call from a former Deputy Chief. He was desperate concerning his son who was depressed, suicidal and lying in a hotel room. Jason (not his real name) had been flown out from his northern reserve for help but no one seemed to be helping. I was concerned as I drove over to visit this young man in his hotel room. Everything seemed so dark and the spiritual forces of darkness seemed so very strong. When I saw Jason lying there I thought to myself, “This young man is in trouble! This time it seems Satan has won.” Like in C.S. Lewis’s Narnia it seemed that the witch had won when she thought she had killed the good King Lion Aslan. But in that darkest hour a power much greater than the witch was working and Aslan was raised back to life. Because of the hope I have in the power of the Risen Lord, in faith, Linda and I counseled Jason and prayed for Him. He is now out of bed and back in school.

I love the way Wright states it. “Easter is about the wild delight of God’s creative power. It’s about the real Jesus coming out of the real tomb and getting God’s real new creation under way.” The hope we have is absolutely sure!

*Thank you Oh Father and Creator God! Thank you for going through the darkness and then into the light for us. Help us to discipline ourselves through Lent so that we may know you more fully and be inspired in new ways to serve you more completely! Amen.*

Rick Martin  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario

**THURSDAY • MARCH 10**

**Luke 4:18**

## ***Hurting Culture***

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

These words were Jesus’ text for His first sermon in His home congregation. He quotes from Isaiah, who describes the year of the Lord’s favor. Then Jesus says a remarkable thing. With all eyes riveted on Him He says, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” He was saying that in Him God’s favor has come. What was to be the nature of this favor? *Good News*. Good news for the poor, for the prisoners, for the blind, for the oppressed.

A group from our church was privileged to attend *Tribal Journeys 2010* in Neah Bay, Washington. The journey was hosted by the Makah Tribe. They are a people rich in history, going back 4,000 years. Since the introduction of western culture and treaties by the United States government, their rich culture has been dramatically altered, much of it to their detriment. To be sure, their hospitality and respect for the land produce great pride and joy in their community. But too many years of outside intervention have undermined the traditional family structure and produced chemical dependency, family dysfunction, and high suicide rates. Their highs are very high and their lows are very low.

Wester culture may mask some of these extremes, but the truth is that every culture struggles with issues of dependencies, poverty and crime. Jesus came to bring all peoples Good News. Good News of release from every power that imprisons us. That release does not come from within us. We know only too well that there are many demons in this world too powerful for us to overcome. Victory comes from the One who overcame all principalities and powers by satisfying their claim on us when He laid down His life for our sin. Jesus proclaims the year of the Lord’s favor. His message of peace with God through the forgiveness of sins breaks the bonds of our prisons, opens our eyes to His favor, and gives us power to overcome any demon that we struggle with in this life. Good News!

*Lord Jesus, visit me with your favor and release me from my demons. You are mighty to save. Hosanna. Save now! Amen.*

Rev. William Simmons  
Christ Memorial Lutheran Church  
St. Louis, Missouri

**FRIDAY • MARCH 11**

**Luke 15:7**

## ***Rejoicing in Heaven***

*“I tell you that in the same way there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”*

Jesus used parables when speaking with people to make a point or explain something that He wanted people to understand. He understood that we are all story people. That is often what helps us understand best. In Luke Chapter 15, Jesus talks about the one lost sheep that is pursued and searched for in order that the one lost in the flock would be found and saved and rejoined to the rest of the flock. He also uses the parable of the lost coin in which a woman that has ten coins, loses one and she searches her whole house until the one lost coin is found. She then invites the whole community to come and celebrate the one that is found. Finally, there is the parable of the lost son; he squandered his inheritance and returns home to his father broken, but is accepted with open arms and his return is celebrated. It reflects God’s gracious love for us who are lost and in need of His love and forgiveness.

We are all familiar with these parables. They offer insight into the character of God’s goodness as well as our human frailty. Sometimes we get a glimpse of heaven itself as in the above text. How amazing that the heavenly hosts rejoice over even one repentant sinner!

We have a lady on our reservation who became very ill and was diagnosed with a rare disease. Her son is a strong boy of 12, who knows how to pray; but he was scared for his mother and it was uncertain whether or not she would make it. With much praying and the grace of God evident to bring healing, she pulled through. When she returned home from the hospital, her son ran to tell us, “God has saved my mother!” Such joy was reflected in his proclamation. How much greater joy when God brings us lost sinners to Him one by one! When we stumble and fall, He knows where to find us and when He draws us back to Him, there is much rejoicing in heaven.

I am so thankful for my life, my family, friends and most of all for God choosing and saving me! He pursued me until I couldn’t run anymore.

*Heavenly Father, Thank you for searching for every lost soul that needs to know you and receive your free gift of grace. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Cathy Benzler  
Port Angeles, Washington

SATURDAY • MARCH 12

Jeremiah 31:13

## *The Headman Dancer*

*“Then maidens will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.”*

The announcer had just called for all the dancers to clear the floor; it was time for an honoring. As I stepped out from under the arbor roof to seek a drink of water, a woman came up. She said, “I saw you dancing here two years ago and I wanted to give you this to dance with,” and she handed me a beaded cross. We spoke briefly and then she went to find other family and I tied the cross into my regalia.

Dancing is very important in these communities. It is important to life. In fact it has been said that we pray to dance, we dance to live, we live to celebrate, we celebrate to serve. And as things move full circle, dancing is part of that service.

No dancer dances alone; we always dance with the people, even if no one were around. A dancer carries family and friends and strangers. A dancer carries the sick and the crippled and the old and the mourning and all who cannot dance. A dancer carries creation, in regalia and in heart. A dancer dances unto Creator. We dance in prayer and in thanksgiving. I can never forget that in my regalia, for it bears signs of the Trinity and a large *IXTHUS*, a fish outline that confesses Jesus Christ, God’s Son and Savior, and now a beaded cross.

Yet for all the love and joy and community of the powwow, we still have incomplete dancing. Death still touches the people. Sorrow, guilt and shame burden many hearts. Confusion, worry and fear trouble many minds. Sickness, injury and pain torment many bodies. Evil, abuse and hardship plague many souls.

However, in the face of all this we can still dance because the true Headman Dancer has led the way. He has danced this earth to fill it with heavenly life. He has danced into the heart of the enemy’s camp. He has danced into death. He had danced on the serpent’s head. He has danced out of the grave. He has danced eternal, resurrection life into His people, for all people. He has danced into heaven to bless the heavenly dance floor for us.

And He will dance back to gather us into His eternal powwow. Here there will be no sorrow, no mourning, no suffering. All will dance; all will celebrate, all will be at peace. Our heavenly Father, our big brother Jesus, and the Holy Spirit will sing beautiful songs, and we will dance forever with Christ.

*Dear Father, your gift of dance is a great kindness to lift us up in the face of this world’s sorrows. Even when life weighs us down, fill us with your Spirit that our hearts would still dance as we await the great day when we will dance with Christ in the fullness of your glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rev. Dan Jacobs  
Crow Agency, Montana

## SUNDAY • MARCH 13

### 1 Corinthians 16: 13,14

## *Listen*

*“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.”*

It was good timing. I arrived in Fairbanks just in time for the Alaska Federation of Natives Gathering. The first meeting was the Elder and youth gathering. There were thousands of Native Alaskans in town. It was amazing to see the hearts of the people for the people. Like my culture they believe their most valuable resources are the Elders and the youth. One of the tasks given to the youth that week was to sit with their Elders and listen to the stories of their lives.

Back at our motel, on the first night, I saw an Elder from Barrow sitting in the restaurant. I went over and asked if I could join him for dinner. I introduced myself in our traditional way, by my parents, grandparents and where we are from. He knew, then, that I also, was an Indigenous person. He asked me what I was doing in Alaska and I told him that I was a missionary for Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S. I told him that we were thinking about accepting a call to come to Alaska full time. He knew about our organization and was very interested in our vision of raising up the people to serve in the context of their own cultures. I asked him if he had a story from his life that he could share with me.

He told me he is eighty-four years old and that when he was just twelve years old, living in the village of Barrow, they were experiencing a very bad winter. He told me his people were starving. They had only one seal to eat and it was divided amongst the people. He said that the snow was twelve feet deep and they couldn't dig deep enough to get to the wood for fires. They were freezing to death. I could see that he was still traumatized by this event. Tears were rolling down his face. Almost in a voice that was pleading he said, “We needed help!” He said that the government hired him that year to herd Reindeer. He said that he didn't do it for the money. It was only twelve dollars a month. He did it because he knew, this way, he would never starve again.

I spent two more evenings sitting with Wesley. We talked a little and sometimes we just sat together in silence. The last thing he said to me was, “We still need help David.” I couldn't help but think was it God calling us to Alaska through this man's cries?

I've fallen in love with these people. I am watching to see the Lord move in the hearts of these people. It's a scary thing to think about uprooting our lives completely to follow the Lord to Alaska. But I can hear the Lord calling us to be strong, to stand firm in our faith, to take up our cross and follow Him.

*Lord, help us to clearly hear your voice. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Rev. David Sternbeck  
Neah Bay, Washington

## MONDAY • MARCH 14

Acts 16:32-33

### *Family Faith*

*“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house...immediately he and all his family were baptized.”*

When I first met with Al, he told me he had been visited by Jehovah’s Witnesses for several years. He liked the Bible pamphlets they brought him, but he still had confusion and questions in his mind. As we spent several hours going through God’s Word together I could see the light come into his eyes and the joy dawn on his face as he began to understand what Jesus had done for us through His birth, death, resurrection, and ascension. Before long, Al was relating to me conversations he was having with his friends about the Lord.

“So many people are really afraid of dying, and they don’t know what to think—they just don’t have a clue!” said Al.

As we began to speak about having a baptism for Al, he asked if we could meet together with his grandchildren whom he is raising in order to tell them about what Jesus has done.

“I would like them to be baptized, too!” exclaimed Al.

So one evening we got together for a simple supper and then sat together in the living room to talk.

I started with a question for the children, “Why do people die?” We talked about how God created a good world, but death entered it when people sinned by disobeying His Word. Then I read them portions of God’s Word about how Jesus, God’s Son, came to die for us so our sins could be forgiven and we could not die but have eternal life.

Al asked, “So what do you think, kids. Do you want to be baptized with me?”

Eleven year-old Daniel responded quickly, “Yes!”

“Me too!” added eight year-old Sereya.

So that evening at their kitchen table, with a large bowl of water and the promises of God’s Word, Al and his grandkids were baptized.

How natural it is for us to want those we love the most to hear and believe the saving news of the Gospel of Jesus. How glorious when a family can take the step of faith together into the body of Christ!

*Lord Jesus, thank you that you came to bring salvation for all through your suffering and death. Bless all those in my family and let your kingdom come for each one of us. And may your Good News spread through us to others too! Amen.*

Rev. Mark Peske  
Bemidji, Minnesota

**TUESDAY • MARCH 15**

**Ephesians 5:25-26**

## ***Making Preparations***

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”*

We have just recently celebrated the marriage of two members of our small congregation. They went to the court, got their marriage license, marriage certificate and met the pastor for counseling. When they finally set a date for the big day and announced it to our Bible study group, the bride-to-be expressed concern about the meal, decorations, and what not. The ladies who were there quickly reassured her that she did not have to worry about any of that and that we would take care of all that needed to be done. The couple-to-be just needed to show up.

I like to cook, so I took it upon myself to cater the meal. When at three o'clock on the morning of the wedding I found myself still cooking, I thought of those people who do this type of thing for a living. I appreciate them and respect them more for the work they do. In our lives today, we find that we all do a lot of preparing. We worry about the future of our children and prepare them for the world. We prepare daily for work, school and play. It's good to prepare but we can go too far in our preparations.

This attitude of wanting to be ready for things has seeped into the church. Have you ever heard someone say, “I need to get right with God.”? Some people think they need to do something before they find themselves acceptable before God. When I have been lax in my devotions, I find myself wanting somehow to make up for the time lost. It takes a while before I realize that God has made up for all that is lacking. Our verse today reminds us that God has done all the preparation for our salvation. If we try to prepare ourselves and somehow try to make ourselves right before God, we will only fail. God's word is clear that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We must be willing to accept the fact that God's wedding gift to us is the reassurance of forgiveness through His Word and Sacraments. This is, indeed, good news. Through faith in Christ we have the assurance that we do not need to try to please God in order for God to love us. Jesus has made everything right between us and God. May we, this day, find peace in the love of God and be assured that all has been taken care of for our salvation.

*Dear Lord Jesus, we give you thanks for the love that you have for us. We thank you that you have prepared a place for us in heaven. We ask that you would please work in us faith by your Holy Spirit that we might accept the good gifts that you have given us. Calm our hearts before you that we might have peace, knowing that we do not need to earn your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Park Timber  
Northern Cheyenne Reservation  
Lame Deer, Montana

*“And the Gospel must first be preached to all Nations.”*  
Mark 13:10

CHRIST CAME TO SAVE ALL PEOPLE OF EVERY NATION, INCLUDING EVERY NATIVE AMERICAN NATION. AND THAT’S OUR MISSION.

## Raising Up Native Americans to Reach Native Americans

At Lutheran Indian Ministries our focus is to identify, recruit, train, equip and empower native people for ministry in their communities. Thus our ministry of help, healing and sharing the hope of the Gospel to Native Americans can be carried out by an increasing number of clergy and lay leader field staff who are American Indian and Native Alaskan. They know what it’s like to be both Christian and Native American. They know what Native Americans face because they themselves have confronted the same brokenness and wounding that has resulted from many years of neglect, forced change and the isolating reservation system.

And these Native clergy and lay leaders often use traditional languages, music and stories to share Christ’s message of love, compassion and redemption.

Bible studies, workshops and leadership training are designed specifically to encourage, enable and equip Native believers to not only take ownership of their Christian faith, but to take it to the rest of the world, and especially to their own people.

Instability resulting from centuries of culture clashes and neglect now translates into alcohol and substance abuse, high rates of suicide, and generations of poverty — a curse passed on from generation to generation to individuals and entire communities.

Add to these the fact that our mission fields are



*Continued on page 12*

## *Christ's Kingdom—Every Native American Nation*

typically hard to reach — both physically and spiritually.

And today it is estimated that less than 5% of Native American people know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

### **You Lift the Bowl**

In Matthew 5, Jesus tells us, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”

The generosity and faithful prayer support of caring Christians like you is what makes the ministry of the Lutheran Indian Ministries possible. You lift the bowl and uncover the Light of Life found only in Christ for all Native people to see. You help to put it on the stand to give light to all the “houses” of every Native American tribe and nation.

*Please consider providing a generous gift of support today to help us continue shining the life-changing light of Christ's love into the hearts of Native Americans.*



**Psalm 51:1**

***A New Start***

*“Have mercy on me O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.”*

In today’s Scripture, the psalmist pleads with a merciful God for forgiveness. This particular Psalm is attributed to David, written after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then caused the death of Uriah. The prophet Nathan was sent by God to remind David that he had violated God’s law; this Psalm is David’s response. We can identify with the psalmist’s desire for cleansing when we become so wrapped up in our earthly lives that we forget God’s presence in our lives. We become encrusted with worries and fears that weigh us down and steal away our joy. We may even commit sinful acts in defiance of God’s will.

Psalm 51 is a reminder that forgiveness and a new start begins with a contrite heart and a willingness to confess our sins to God, who, in His compassion is willing “to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all our unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

The psalmist invites us to celebrate a new beginning, today or any day, starting from this point forward with a clean slate and a “new and right spirit.” God embraces us once again with arms wide open when we repent of our foolishness and ask God to purify us again.

*Dear Father God, you grant us forgiveness through the sacrificial suffering and death of your Son, Jesus. We give you thanks and praise. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Patricia Main  
Haskell LIGHT House  
Lawrence, Kansas

**THURSDAY • MARCH 17**

**2 Corinthians 4:6**

***Down But Not Out***

*“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”*

There is lots of pious godlessness around. Christian missionaries in many parts of the world see people performing very pious rituals. These people are reverent and devout. But often there is no faith, no love toward God or toward humanity. Verdict: “We are very devout (Hindus, Buddhists, animists, whatever) but we don’t believe anything.”

Many people in the U.S. use the church for rituals; weddings, baptisms, funerals. But they also don’t really believe in anything. They put distance between themselves and anything that might call for serious thinking and commitment.

In a world full of pious godlessness, Jesus Christ is the Light.

How many people are feeling knocked down and dragged out right now? A great loss has left them desolate. A high hope has turned out to be a big flop. For some, things have been going downhill for a long time and now they have just about hit bottom. You may be there right now, down and out.

There is a good word for you, a word from God. It comes to us conveyed by a man who knew how it felt to be down and out. Paul discovered a great secret, all wrapped up in Jesus Christ. For Paul it was like the first dawn of light at the beginning of the universe’s creation. The great secret of life dawned for Paul. Jesus Christ was killed on a cross by the anger and hatred of the world, backed up by all the legalistic pieties of which religion is capable. Alive and for real, Jesus Christ emerged with the riches of God’s grace for all ages and all peoples. God graciously forgives sins and gives people a new life with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Paul was not teaching religious pieties, but holding up the light of Christ in the darkness of pious godlessness. A great Light coming from God.

All of us are human, bound to experience trouble. None of us can escape pain. Days will come when you are down, but God won’t let you down. The love of God is there in Jesus Christ. The light of God is there in Jesus Christ. The secret of life anchored by faith in Jesus Christ is simply this: We may be down, but never out; troubled, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; badly hurt, but not destroyed. We may be down but not out. Why? Because God is our friend and He never abandons us or leaves us without the Spirit as friend.

*Holy Spirit, strengthen me so that when I am down I will never be out. Help me live for you today, up and about in the light of God’s glory, shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Rev. Paul Biegner  
Member, Board of Directors  
Brainerd, Minnesota

**FRIDAY • MARCH 18**

**Numbers 6:24-26**

## ***Marriage Blessings***

*“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.”*

There is a phrase here on this reservation in northeast Nebraska regarding those who choose to live together as a ‘rez marriage.’ This is not the traditional way of the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago Tribe). Years ago the clan families would arrange who would marry who. This assured that close relatives would not unknowingly marry. The young men and the young women were closely observed by the families in order that the proper mate would be allowed to wed their relative. The young woman would leave her family and be joined into his family. I have been informed by an elder that the last of these family arranged marriages took place here in 1929.

It is sad to say that marriage is seldom seen as a tradition worthy of being followed. Nor is marriage seen as instituted by Mauna (Earth Maker). Rather it is thought to be white man’s doing and a marriage license as a piece of paper that incurs binding financial obligations, sometimes loss or reduction of benefits, and/or increase in rent payments.

The devastating part of a ‘rez’ marriage is that it almost always ends in separation. The offspring of such ‘marriages’ find themselves with step-brothers, step-sisters, step-fathers and step-mothers. Many also end up with foster parents, spending time in youth shelters or at boarding schools.

There are exceptions to this. One man asked me to have Mauna bless him and his fiancée. I was honored to have this man and this woman be blessed by God as they made their vows before Him and their family and friends. The Scripture text I chose was from the text above. The LORD gave Moses this blessing to give to Aaron so that the children of Israel would have God’s Sacred Name be placed upon them. Where God has placed His Name, whether in Baptism or Marriage, there is His blessing!

My sermon title was, “Actions Speak Louder Than Words!” Those who ask God to bless their marriage speak volumes to their children, their community and their co-workers. More importantly it is God’s gracious actions that have spoken louder than words. He has promised to bless those who trust in Him, have His name placed on them and who walk in His ways. God is at work and His actions speak louder than words.

*Dear Heavenly Father, Creator God, thank you for blessing your children with your name and where your name is, your blessings abound. To you be all glory! Amen.*

Pastor Ricky Jacob  
Missionary to the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska  
Winnebago, Nebraska

## SATURDAY • MARCH 19

### Psalm 91:1-2

## *Shelter*

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*

My wife and I traveled to Neah Bay, Washington, for *Tribal Journeys 2010* via Amtrak's California Zephyr train. It is a spectacular train ride, especially as it winds through the Rocky and Sierra Nevada Mountains. One of the interesting things about train travel is that you always sit with fellow travelers when you are seated at your dining table.

Near Winnemucca, Nevada, we were seated for breakfast with an elderly couple from Boulder, Colorado. He was a retired geologist who had worked for Atlantic Richfield when it was doing exploratory investigation for oil in Alaska. They had lived in Anchorage during the 1960's and were there in 1968 when oil was discovered at Prudhoe Bay.

Those in the "lower 48" scarcely remember that on Good Friday, March 27, 1964, the largest earthquake ever recorded in North America occurred in south-central Alaska. It measured 9.2 on the Richter scale and destroyed Valdez, lowered the Homer Spit eight feet, and caused untold damage and took many lives. The couple we ate breakfast with that morning had lived through that devastating earthquake. Their home in Anchorage, which had been built on gravel substrata, survived the earthquake with minor damage. Many other people were not so fortunate. The man had been away from home that fateful day. He related how overwhelmed he was with concern for his wife and seven children, and how relieved he was when he found out they were safe.

Scripture says, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1) How good it is to know that "though the earth give way and mountains fall into the heart of the sea," that we need fear no evil. We rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

*Heavenly Father, you guard us from all evil and defend us from all danger. Show us your mighty hand to save that we might praise your holy name. In the name of Jesus, your great salvation. Amen.*

Rev. William Simmons  
Christ Memorial Lutheran Church  
St. Louis, Missouri

Luke 22:37a

## *He Descended Into Hell*

*“It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’”*

I have known a certain young native woman for a number of years. During this time I have watched her faith in Christ change and grow. When she first heard the Gospel, she was in her own words “so confused.” Some of her family was very “traditional.” Others were of the Indian Shaker orientation that believe Jesus is their Savior but reject the use of the Scriptures. At least once a month we would have an opportunity to talk about her faith walk. It was so clear to me that the Lord was pursuing her and that her heart was responding to His gentle advancements.

It was during this time that she first talked about her profound regrets over some of her life choices. She had a son by a man who rarely visits and pays no support. Furthermore, this man has continued to father four more babies that he refuses to provide for. Every day she sees how her sin has hurt her child. Every week she tries to answer his question “Why doesn’t my dad come to see me?” Every year, as her son grows, she knows he will be more aware of what his father is really like. She has told me it is her constant prayer that this man will come to know Jesus so his son will not be ashamed of him.

I have been thinking a lot about that one short sentence in the Apostles Creed: “He descended into hell.” When we first become aware of our mortality and our sinfulness, fear grips us. The very thought of “forever in hell” leaves us weak. Hell, that place reserved for the devil, our enemy. Jesus loves us so much, He “became sin for us” (2Cor.5:21) Sin wasn’t something He carried as a burden. Sin became His person and by taking it upon Himself, He agreed that He was guilty and deserved to die. When we confess our sins, God forgives them because Jesus has taken them – to the cross. He suffered the death we deserve, complete separation from God, and entered hell in our place, a place we now need not go.

There are consequences to our actions. Our sin hurts others. It is so good to know our sins are forgiven. Now this young woman is breathless to tell me “You won’t believe what God is doing in my life? He has brought my niece for me to raise as my own along with my son. He has provided me with a good job and a house. He has led me to a church where the Word is preached on Sunday and Bible study during the week.”

She still has trials and sorrows, but now she knows the keeper of her tears. Now she knows the Lord of glory, risen from the dead, ascended into heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for her. Now there is no fear of hell because Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world, her sin, my sin, your sin. Yes, “It is finished.”

*Dear Father, thank you for your goodness towards us that we cannot fully understand. Thank you for Jesus, who prayed for you to forgive us, because we really cannot understand the awfulness of what it cost Him. Thank you for eternal life and the opportunity to share in Word and deed your love with others. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rosemary Sternbeck  
Neah Bay, Washington

## MONDAY • MARCH 21

### Deuteronomy 31:8

## *Helping People Move*

*“It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.” (RSV)*

Twice last summer, Stan and I found ourselves helping people move. In one instance we helped pack and tape boxes, sort giveaways, and load a container, after a friend of ours and her daughter made the difficult decision to move out of state from one of the villages we visit. In another instance, we provided the transportation, and used the boat to help move furniture and larger items from one community to another within Southeast Alaska. Both experiences made me think about transitions in life.

Transitions are uncomfortable. It’s during these times that the illusion that we are in control of life and events is often shattered, and we see how helpless we are to call the shots. Transitions are scary. They often involve leaving something known, and heading toward something unknown. Transitions are about change. Any rhythm that one had, has to be abandoned to accommodate something different. Most of all, transitions can be lonely. You want to be able to steer it all yourself, but most of the time, the stress of it helps you finally reach out and accept an offer of help.

I can remember packing up my own kitchen once, realizing I hadn’t allotted enough time before the new renters were going to arrive. I didn’t want to call anyone, or admit I couldn’t do it all, but I was getting more and more anxious....upset with myself and anyone who got in my way. In God’s graceful manner, He sent a friend along who pitched in when I needed it most. All was accomplished by the end of the day, but it didn’t happen alone. I was so grateful, I vowed I would do the same for another whenever I got the chance.

In all of this I was also reminded how God our Father sent His Son, Jesus, from the glories of heaven to live in our world of grief and sorrow. Imagine that transition. But Jesus did so willingly out of love and compassion for us. Because of His life, death and resurrection, we can experience God’s gracious forgiveness. We no longer need to “fear or be dismayed.”

*Lord, help us reach out to you in prayer, to put each transition we go through onto your altar, and to let you help us manage each step ahead. Guide us onward, and help us to not only accept help, but to be help for another, whenever we have the opportunity. In your name. Amen.*

Sharon Geldaker, First Mate/RN  
M/V CHRISTIAN  
Southeast Alaska

**TUESDAY • MARCH 22**

**Psalm 19:1**

## *Cape Flattery*

*“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”*

A cape is any land that extends out into water, especially a promontory that is significant for navigation. Some famous capes around the world are the Cape of Good Hope, near the southern point of Africa; Cape Morris Jesup in Greenland, the world's northernmost point of land; and Cape Cod, a sandy landmass in southeastern Massachusetts that forms a wide curve enclosing Cape Cod Bay. Though not nearly as well known, there is a significant cape that forms the most northwestern point of the contiguous United States. It is called Cape Flattery. It is located on the tip of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state, and it is part of the ancestral land of the Makah Nation. Cape Flattery provides a spectacular view of the Pacific coast.

The promise of a land for the people of God has always been part of His plan. Recall God's word to Abram. “Lift up your eyes. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.” (Gen. 13:14-15) God later described this land as “flowing with milk and honey.” (Exo. 3:17) It is a beautiful allusion—“milk” to an abundance of pasturage and “honey” to the chief of sweet things—to God's abundant provision for His people with all things needful for this body and life.

We know the unfortunate history of the Promised Land. Conquered under Joshua and consolidated under David, it subsequently split under Solomon's son, Rehoboam. Both Israel and Judah were later conquered by powerful nations, and repeatedly reconquered later on by succeeding world powers. What should we think of God's promise of a blessed land “to you and your offspring forever?” Two things. We are Abraham's offspring by faith—faith in the promise of God and its fulfillment in Jesus. And we believe God's promise to Abraham and his offspring of a “forever land.” But not one ruled by might of arms or defined by latitude and longitude. The writer of Hebrews explains. We, like Abraham, are “looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God.” (Heb. 11:10) This is the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, where God will live with His people. *A glorious inheritance, indeed!*

Cape Flattery isn't heaven. But you can see heaven from there. If you ever find yourself in Neah Bay, Washington, take the 3/4 mile picturesque trail across wetlands to Cape Flattery. This 30 minute walk, across cedar boardwalk and groomed earthen trail, takes you to breathtaking vistas of waves crashing against rocky shores and Tatoosh Island. Stay a while and you might catch a glimpse of puffin, sea otters, seals, and gray orca and humpback whales. It is unsurpassed natural beauty from which swells up the Scripture: *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

*O Lord, our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Give us the eyes of faith to see your handiwork all around us that we might give you praise. We thank you for your greatest work among us—the cross and empty tomb—so that we can anticipate your great salvation in a new heaven and a new earth. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.*

Rev. William Simmons  
Christ Memorial Lutheran Church  
St. Louis, Missouri

WEDNESDAY • MARCH 23

Ephesians 1:11

## *Answering The Call*

*“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.”*

About twelve years ago the Lord called me into ministry with Native Americans. I was currently working as an equipment operator at an irrigation district in central California, and I was three years away from retirement. Because of the length of time I was employed with them, I was able to take quite a bit of time off to travel to different reservations, doing mission work, and helping pastors that needed extra people to complete projects they were working on. People often think that when God calls them into ministry they should quit their jobs right away, sell their homes, and get ready to travel. In most cases this isn't how it is. If people would take their time and pray, they may find out that God can and will use them right where they are. We are the “priesthood” as believers of Jesus, even as lay people.

For myself, I was never planning on going into active ministry. But, God had other plans for me, and if God can use me, He can call anybody and use them. If we will humble ourselves and pray and listen to His voice, the Lord will call each one of us to ministry in the area that He has gifted us too.

When I retired from work, we moved to Port Angeles, Washington, where we found ourselves near many reservations, where we are now serving native people. Over one year ago, I started taking classes from the Northwest District to become a Licensed Deacon. I must say, that at my age this was the last thing that I would have planned to do, but it just shows you, that God's ways are not always our ways!

We serve a loving God, who will always provide for us and lead us in the right direction, if we put all of our trust in Him.

*Lord Jesus, Thank you for calling me to do the work I love to do, serving your people. I pray that others will be obedient to answer your call to them. I pray that each of us will be willing to serve as you give direction. In your name I pray. Amen.*

Tom Benzler  
Port Angeles, Washington

## *It's Not the Sledge Hammer Approach that Open Doors!*

*“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”*

Eighty six Tribal Journeys canoes landed in Neah Bay, greeted by singers, dancers and a crowd of visitors last summer. It was an historic celebration of northwest coast tribal tradition.

After days of uncertain weather, the strait was peaceful in the morning and canoes launched at Sekiu, near Clallam Bay, for the final leg of the journey. Paddlers pulled easily through rolling swells along a coastline punctuated by pillars of rock.

Canoes gathered at a beach on the east side of Neah Bay at noon to prepare for the ceremonial landing. Each canoe made a sweeping pass of the beach to salute the crowd, dancers and Makah leaders with raised paddles.

All 86 canoes were rafted together about 100 yards offshore to await the landing protocol. The scene in the midst of the flotilla was raucous and colorful. Friends greeted friends in neighboring canoes and stood to take pictures.

The canoes advanced to the beach in groups, based on region, to ask permission to land. It was an ancient protocol brought to life once again. What struck me was this beautiful ceremonial aspect of each canoe family asking permission to land their canoe. We as westerners have been known in the past to come to a new territory as either explorers or conquerors, and unthinkingly drive our craft ashore. How often have we missed this approach not only in mission work, but also in daily life. Do I approach people with, “Here I am and I’ve got the answer for your problem, and you better listen to me.” There is often none of the invitational approach to people or ministry that we see both in this northwest tribal tradition and in our Lords approach to His very church, a church He purchased with His very blood; yet He stands at the door asking permission to come and commune with His people. What a joy it is when we move in this invitational flow of life, walking carefully and seeking to be open to the direction the Holy Spirit would use us in reaching out to people with the Gospel.

Jesus comes to us gently, freely offering forgiveness of our sins and promise of eternal life. He does not force His love on us but rather stands at the door of our heart awaiting us to receive Him as Savior and Lord.

*Lord, I thank you that you come into my life when I'm broken and hurting and graciously draw me back to you. Thank you for the gentle ways of your convicting Spirit; thank you that there is never the heavy handed condemnation of the enemy of my soul in your voice. I long to move in that same way with my friends and family this day. Thank you Jesus! Amen.*

Winston Wilson  
Olympic Peninsula, Washington

## FRIDAY • MARCH 25

Gen. 28:15

### *Travelers*

*“I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”*

God spoke the above words to Jacob in his memorable dream when he saw a stairway to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. What you may not remember is the occasion for this dream was Jacob’s flight from home. His brother Esau had vowed to kill him because he had deceived their father Isaac and gotten Esau’s blessing. Despite Jacob’s failings, God demonstrated unconditional love by graciously promising His presence, His protection, and His provision.

Jesus echoed this promise many years later when He told the disciples, “I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20) “No one,” He says, “can snatch [you] out of my hand.” (John 10:28)

These words have encouraged travelers whatever their destination, whether it is across town or across the country. Their certainly encouraged a group from our church as we traveled over 2,000 miles from St. Louis to Neah Bay, Washington. We had been invited to Neah Bay by Rev. David Sternbeck, pastor of Makah Lutheran Church, to attend *Tribal Journeys 2010* and experience Native American culture first hand. Tribal Journeys was hosted by the Makah Tribe of Neah Bay and was the destination of up to 100 Indian tribes. They arrived in Neah Bay by large 14-person canoes over the waters of the Pacific Ocean and Puget Sound. It was a sight to behold as the decorated canoes arrived, first at the soft landing and then later at the hard landing when they asked for formal permission to land.

Our church team came by train and plane, making the final leg of the journey in rental vans. How comforting it was to know that regardless of the distance or the difficulty of the trip, God’s promise went with us: *I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.*

*Lord Jesus, our travels seem insignificant compared to your travels from heaven above to earth below. Thank you for making the journey for us and for our salvation. Watch over us when we travel and encourage us in the knowledge that you go with us. Amen.*

Rev. William Simmons  
Christ Memorial Lutheran Church  
St. Louis, Missouri

Hebrews 4:15

*Our Help in Time of Need*

*“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are---yet was without sin.”*

Sometimes life hands us things that seem random and chaotic; a tragic loss of a family member, a disappointing relationship, an untimely illness, an accident that leaves us or someone we love with a disability are just some of the things all people experience. We sometimes wonder why God would permit such things. We may even question God’s goodness. And yet we know these are the things of a fallen world and that we are all susceptible to them. We also know that God does not will them for us or cause them and yet He does not exempt us from them. We also know He sees and sympathizes with us when bad things happen.

When we turn to the Scriptures, we learn that nothing misses God’s attention. Hebrews 4:13 affirms, “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight...” And this includes all those things in life that we find disappointing or painful. In all that we experience, God in His Word assures us that He will provide comfort and even more importantly, transform those difficult things in life we experience into blessing. Romans 8:28 assures us that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purposes.

What serves to bridge the vast difference between our suffering and the transforming power of the Father’s grace is Jesus. Sent by the Father, He came into the world to intervene in our behalf in order to bring us hope and eternal life amidst all the things that seem like death and darkness. This Jesus who endured the cross in our behalf and who experienced great suffering in the process has a unique perspective on our lives. He knows what it is like to be human. He is thus able to sympathize with us. At the same time, his subsequent resurrection means that he can also assure us that he has overcome all suffering and darkness. Things that seem dark and meaningless now, when submitted to God through faith in Jesus, will be transformed into light and hope. That is ultimately one of the powerful messages of the cross.

For now however, we live in this present world where we experience things that try our faith. When this occurs, let us turn to Jesus for grace in time of need. And then let us trust him to take us through our disappointment to the other side of our loss.

The humiliation and pain Jesus experienced through all that He endured in our behalf means we have an advocate who sympathizes with us in our times of suffering. Like us, He too experienced disappointment, yet without sin. He offers grace “to help us in our time of need” and the power to turn our sadness into joy.

*Dear Father God, when we walk in darkness and no longer feel your presence, teach us once more to look to your Son Jesus for hope in our despair and light in our darkness. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rev. Dr. Don Johnson  
Executive Director

SUNDAY • MARCH 27

Psalm 33:16 (ESV)

***“The Eye of the Lord is on . . . .”***

*“The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.”*

On average more Native Americans serve in the U.S. military than any other people group. The role of being a member of a native tribe includes the defense of his/her people. It is a high honor to enlist and serve as a warrior in the Armed Forces.

Winnebago Veterans are held in high esteem by their families and friends. Combat veterans are asked to speak during the wakes of their war stories. At feasts honoring veterans all the people partake of the common food, however only the members of the Warrior Society are allowed to eat from the pot of Hog-head soup.

Since July 1866 the Winnebago Nation of Nebraska honors Chief Little Priest, Hoonk-Hoo-No-Ka, who died from wounds received while he served with Company A, of the Fort Omaha Scouts at Decatur, Nebraska of the United States Army and those who served as warriors since then. Each morning, for four days, the flags of veterans are raised at day break. Flag songs are sung and tribes, which come from across the country, join in the celebration, dancing and/or singing to the beat of the pow-wow drum.

“It has been said that the deceased Warrior, has gone on to the land of the dead with all the glory and honor earned by his service.” (page 32 of the 2010 Homecoming Celebration program) What does God’s sacred Word have to say about the death of those who serve in this way? As we continue the reading from above: *“The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue. Behold, **the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death.**”* (Psalm 33:17-19a ESV)

The service of a veteran is admirable. Yet it does not provide one with a pass to everlasting life. This is a false hope and denies the sacrificial life, suffering and death of Jesus. Instead it is the gift of faith in Jesus as our LORD and Savior that assures one, anyone, to life everlasting.

*Dear Creator God, fill us with your Holy Spirit so that our hope is found in your steadfast love alone and in faith in your beloved Son, in whom you are well pleased. Amen.*

Pastor Ricky Jacob  
Missionary to the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska  
Winnebago, Nebraska

**Mark 8:22-25**

## *Christ's One-Two Touch*

*“They came to Bethsaida and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When He had spit on the man’s eyes and put His hands on him, Jesus asked, ‘Do you see anything?’ He looked up and said, ‘I see people; they look like trees walking around.’ Once more Jesus put His hands on the man’s eye’s. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly.”*

The young man had his whole life ahead of him. The future was just beginning to open up, and it looked bright. He had beaten the odds of reservation life; he made it to 18; he wasn’t caught in a world of drugs and alcohol; he was a good runner; he graduated high school.

However, in a few weeks after graduation everything changed. There was a terrible wreck...and he was a quadriplegic. Those fast legs don’t move. Arms are clenched to his sides. No words come out of his mouth.

Gary has been several years at the nursing home here in Crow Agency now. At first his mom had almost every preacher and faith healer she could find come pray over him for healing. Hopes ran high for most of the first year...but nothing changed.

Well, actually Gary changed. He became angry, especially at God. Where is that loving God of miracles everyone keeps telling me to believe in? Though he could not speak, he could growl and would almost every time anyone pushed him near the chapel. Sometimes an aide got him in before he realized what was happening, but when he heard me begin to read Scripture, he was MAD.

Yet the Word of God is amazing and Christ still does miracles. Here, probably for the first time, Gary heard of the God with whom we don’t have to “believe strongly enough; to get something from Him. Here is the God who is not untouched by our sufferings. Here is the God who does not throw us away when the world thinks we’re worthless. Here is the God who climbs into our holes of despair and hurt and anger, the God who still loves us even when we curse Him, the God who forgives us, the God who blesses even our tragedies. It is all plain to see in His nail-pierced hands and thorn-scarred brow.

Christ laid His hands on Gary over the months and years, and a healing came upon him. Oh, his body is still just as crippled, but his spirit is set free in Christ’s mercy and compassion. Now Gary smiles and laughs in church and Bible study. If he is laid down in his room he even knows how to “call” to me as I go through the hallway to be sure we get him up to come.

I’m sure Gary does not see everything clearly now; none of us do in this life. He sees Christ from that first touch however, and he looks forward to Christ’s second touch, the resurrection of the dead. Then he will not only be healed in his soul but also in his body. No matter the sufferings in your life, the same holds true for you.

*O Dear Lord, we are broken and crippled people. Often we get angry because life is not what we want. We question you and your love. Have mercy upon us and touch us with your healing hands. Forgive us and give us Spiritual eyes to see you with us even in the midst of our sufferings. Amen.*

Rev. Dan Jacobs  
Crow Indian Reservation  
Crow Agency, Montana

TUESDAY • MARCH 29

John 10:10

## *How True Life Begins*

*“ . . . I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

The words of the song that the young woman was singing tugged at my heart. I am thinking, *“This song is describing many of the people that we minister to who experience life this way.”* Rick and I were at a music concert with friends. Their daughter was releasing her new music CD. She likened this song to one of her life experiences.

The song was about the new life stage of a certain tree. The **seed** of a tree is released during the rage of a forest fire. The heat intensity from the fire pops the seed from the tree branches and it drops to the ground. Then winter comes with the snow and covers it where it germinates for the season. Later the warm spring sun brings it forth as a seedling tree that will one day be a full-scale tree and become part of new forest. It is said that this is nature’s way of regenerating itself. But the old trees have to die first, in a fire, leaving nothing but ashes and charred wood from burnt trees. Yet it is from this bed of ashes and charred dead wood that a new life begins.

Many times painful life experiences can leave us feeling dead inside. People often come to believe that this is all there is to life – which is true for many of the people we minister to. I thought of a native man who had attended the last two training events I had been a part of. This man had many painful experiences in his life. He grew up in an alcoholic home. He was emotionally neglected as a child and felt abandoned most of his childhood. These painful experiences left him to “just exist” in the dead ashes of his life as an adult.

Yet I have started to see sparks of life in him in the way he is responding to others and how he is engaging with life. He has been gently challenged to face and enter his pain, and began to bring God into it. One of the big changes we have seen in him is his confidence to speak and take part in a group dialogue. This is a big step for someone who does not believe that he has anything worthwhile to say. This man is choosing to believe what God says about him as a man, and as a man of God. This brings him healing and freedom as a person.

The same is true for anyone who, by God’s grace, chooses to seek healing and freedom in Christ. Jesus said the truth would set us free. The message of Easter is that Jesus died and the Heavenly Father raised Him back to life. Jesus, the Son of God, had to die so that you and I can live. You and I can have a new life, not only in our spirit but in the physical realm of how we experience our earthly existence. In John 10:10 Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full!” During this Lent Season, let us be reminded of this new life in Christ.

*Dear Jesus, We thank you for dying for us and making healing and new beginnings possible. We pray that during this season it would become more of a reality in our lives. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Linda Martin  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario

**2 Corinthians 5:18**

## *Healing through Reconciliation*

*“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”*

Several years ago my wife, Cathy, and I went on a ministry trip with a group of Christian Native Americans. We were all from different tribes. We went to Southern region on the Klamath Reservation. In meeting with the leaders of the Modoc and Klamath tribes, they talked about a generational rift that had been going on for years between the two tribes, and they agreed to have a reconciliation meeting between the two tribes. In 1864, the Modoc Indians along with their traditional enemies, the Klamaths, ceded their territory to the United States. The Modocs were then moved to the Klamath Reservation, where they were treated as impostors, in which a war broke out and the Modoc people tried to move back to their traditional tribal lands, but by this time the government wouldn't allow them back.

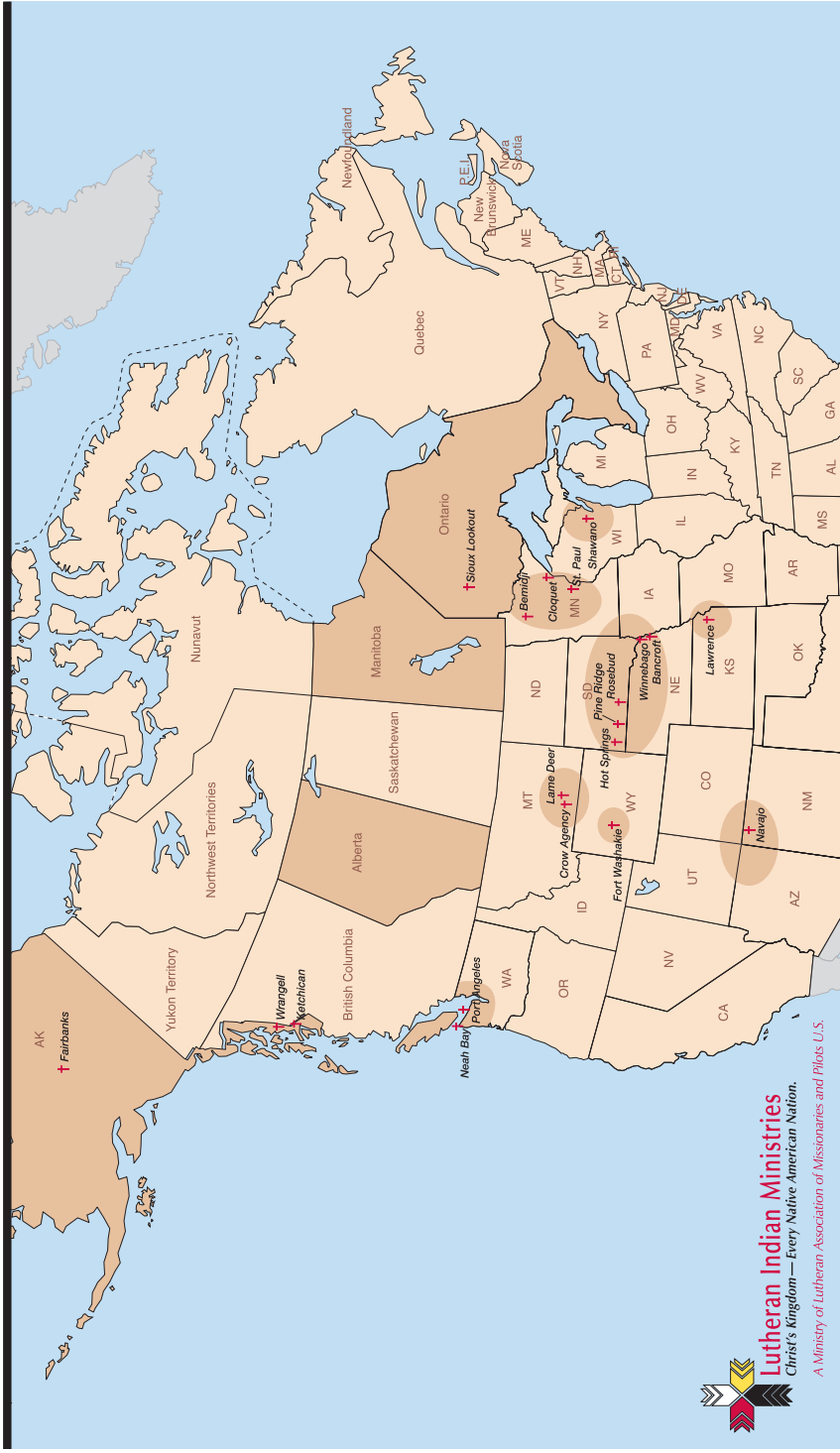
We were able to get the leaders of both tribes to come together for a reconciliation meeting outdoor, next to the Klamath Reservation. We were playing our drums and flutes and worshipping the Lord, while reading Scriptures. We read Isaiah 40:31, “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” While reading this Scripture, three eagles appeared in the sky overhead and everyone got excited, because for Native Americans these eagles represented a sign from the Creator. A young lady came up to the front and asked if her Father could speak. He was a medicine man from a long line of medicine men in his family. Tears were running down his face as he came forward to speak. He said this was the first time that he had shared his story. His voice trembled as he began to speak, telling about when he was eleven years of age he went to church and he was carrying an eagle feather and singing the hymns in his native language. He was told that he couldn't bring his eagle feather into church because it was demonic and if he were to come back he would have to sing in English. He couldn't figure out why an eagle feather would be considered demonic since he knew the Bible talked about eagles many times, and the eagle is part of God's creation. He never set foot in a church since that day, but on this particular day, when he heard God's Word and saw the eagles fly over, he felt free to worship the Lord, and knew that God loved him for who he was and that he didn't have to change his identity for anyone.

Through all of this, healing did take place that day. The two tribes came together, forgiving one another, shaking hands, trading gifts and praying for each other.

*Heavenly Father, we thank you for the reconciliation that we have received through your Son, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Tom Benzler  
Port Angeles, Washington

# Lutheran Indian Ministries



**Lutheran Indian Ministries**  
 Christ's Kingdom—Every Native American Nation.  
 A Ministry of Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S.

**Rev. Stan  
Bentson  
& Sharon  
Geldaker**  
Southeast,  
Alaska



**Rev. Dennis  
Bauer**  
Northern  
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Lame Deer,  
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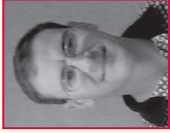
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**Don Nemec**  
Wind River  
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**Will & Patricia  
Main**  
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**Larry Beitz**  
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**Rev. Dan  
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Crow Indian  
Reservation  
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Montana



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Peske**  
Leach Lake  
Band of Ojibwe  
Benedi,  
Minnesota



**Rev. Bob  
Utecht**  
Pine Ridge  
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South Dakota



**Cathy & Tom  
Benzler**  
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**Rev. Dr. Don  
Johnson**  
Makah  
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**Sheila  
Peterson**  
Fond du Lac  
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Reservation  
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**Winston  
Wilson**  
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Northern  
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Northern Cheyenne  
Reservation,  
Lame Deer,  
Montana



**Rick & Linda  
Martin**  
Cree  
Sioux Lookout,  
Ontario



2 Corinthians 4:5

*Savior or Saved One*

*“For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”*

Recently during a long car ride, a young Native man named Gary told me how he has had to learn that he can’t be the savior for other people.

“My life growing up could be described in one word—chaotic. It was a chaotic roller coaster. No one ever said, ‘Gary you have to be the savior.’ But it got to feel that way. I always had to be the caretaker, the guard-dog, and sometimes the attack-dog.”

“When I got baptized the main word in my head was ‘accept’—accept God and Jesus. But what does that mean, and how do I do it? Sometimes things sounded easy but they weren’t. I had to look at the old roles I had played and ask, ‘Is that what God wants for me?’ I’m trying to live my life in a new way, but those old ways of thinking can be hard to break. And when I slip back into those old roles, I feel trapped again—like I have a leash around my neck!”

“When I got out of jail, there were people everywhere expecting me to take care of someone else’s problem. But one night in a bar I learned I could walk away from a fight! People could yell or complain and I could say inside, ‘This is *your* burden.’ Those burdens everyone had always heaped on me were for *them* to deal with!”

“The expectations others had laid on me and my own fleshly desires worked together—part of me liked being in the attack-dog role; it can be an adrenaline rush. But when you accept that you don’t have to live that life any more because God and Jesus are right there with you, then you start to view things differently. Everything becomes different—situations, other people, but mostly yourself!”

“I don’t want to keep handling people’s problems the way I have in the past. Now I want to encourage people to pray. I want to show people by my example how to handle problems without violence or fighting—to figure out the root of what set me off and deal with that with God’s help. His willingness to help me with every problem shows me just how valuable I am to Him—what I’m worth in His eyes!”

*Lord Jesus, thank you that we were so precious in your eyes that you were willing to suffer and die to become our Savior. Teach us how to be servants, not saviors to other people for your sake. Amen.*

Rev. Mark Peske  
Bernidji Minnesota

**FRIDAY • APRIL 1**

**Psalm 118:1**

## ***Giving Thanks***

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.”*

During these times we might wonder whether this worship song is still relevant. Look at the world today with much war, violence, suffering and diseases. When we watch T.V. news, talk shows, reality shows, and comedies, all they talk about is hatred, violence, mourning, suffering and sarcasm in our lives. Can we still say that God’s love endures forever?

Yes, of course! This song is still relevant, and will be relevant forever. Psalm 118 opens and closes with reminders for us to give thanks to the Lord for He is good and His love endures forever.

Why? Because the Lord never fails in loving us. The best evidence of His love is salvation. Psalm 118:21 says, “He has become our salvation.” How has God become our salvation? By sending His only Son, Jesus, who through His shed blood and His subsequent resurrection from the grave, has enabled us to experience forgiveness and to be made children of God. Through faith in Him, we can be assured of eternity in the presence of God. God has created each day for us. He has made His light shine upon us. He has saved us from death.

So, don’t give up with the world’s situation because God’s love indeed endures forever. Instead, let us rejoice and give thanks for “He is good and His love endures forever!”

*Father God, we give you thanks and praise for your endless mercies to us. Grant us grace to live always in ways that please you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Patricia Main  
Haskell LIGHT House  
Lawrence, Kansas

## SATURDAY • APRIL 2

Luke 14:16

### *Invitation to a Banquet*

*Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests."*

A native elder was stranded in the blowing snow and was waiting for a ride in Ketchikan a few years back. Stan and I had also just arrived, and had called a taxi to pick us up from the airport ferry. Since her ride was nowhere to be seen, we introduced ourselves and offered to take her in our taxi. It was an adventure getting around that day in the blizzard, but made for a fun memory.

Now, a couple years later, we met again! It had been a wild weekend of rain, wind and storms on the sea, and we had ducked into a harbor in order to be tied safely to a dock. After a few days, we felt anxious to get on our way, and looked for the next calm to take off. While waiting, we worshipped with a local congregation, and found our elder friend there as well.

After chatting and catching up, she asked if we could attend a banquet that afternoon to honor Native elders island-wide, part of the Alaska Native Sisterhood and Brotherhood. The wind had died down, and we knew we could take off now; in fact had planned to scoot out right after church. We told her our plan to leave, but the last thing she said to us was..." maybe I'll see you at the banquet!"

As Stan and I walked back to the harbor, I eyed the calm, inviting sea, ready to take us to our next stop that would keep us on schedule. Then I thought about the story Jesus told, about the man who made a great feast and invited many. But one by one, they made excuses. Where were we really supposed to be that day!

It wasn't long before we found ourselves walking past the harbor, and over to the banquet hall. Our friend smiled and gave us a hug! In fact, we saw many others we knew there from across the island, and were invited to join the Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood in a ceremony following the meal. What an honor! Now we are tied into a new family of believers, working together for the people of Southeast Alaska. Even though we didn't belong to a clan, we were accepted in the clan of Christ.

Isaiah 25 also tells of a banquet, to which all peoples and nations are invited. Let's not let our own agendas cause us to miss out in any of God's blessings of relationship or sustenance that He freely offers in Jesus and has prepared for us.

*Thank you, Father, for the ways you guide us out of storms, forge new relationships with others, and sustain us with not only food, but sumptuous banquets, for our journey together in Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Sharon Geldaker, First Mate/RN  
M/V CHRISTIAN  
Southeast Alaska

## SUNDAY • APRIL 3

Luke 23:46

### *In Good Hands*

*Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.*

We don't want life to end. At least the vast majority of people don't want life to end. Even as hard as life may sometimes be for us, we don't want life to end. But we know that death's change will come. We know that decay finally destroys every living thing. We despise the weakness and loss that sickness and age bring. As we move through later life we become weaker, more easily tired, slowed down, more susceptible to illness.

Despite all that, we don't want life to end. We want it to continue. Death is too final. We may wish that we might be the exception, but we know we won't be. We don't even want to think of funerals and coffins and graves.

So we prefer to cling to life as we have come to know it here. We prefer what we know. We're not ready to exchange it for God's eternal life in His presence. Even as our minds force us to admit we cannot escape death or avoid it or prevent it, we still avoid the facts and try to pretend that death is not our due—not for us nor for those we love.

We know and accept what the Bible says: "The wages of sin is death." And we know we are sinners and that death will come. But we don't want it that way. We resist death, even when we are told that we are in God's hands.

But Christ did not think that way. He not only knew about the reality of death, but He accepted it—and He accepted it *for us*. He accepted whatever His Heavenly Father gave Him, even when it was death. He did not try to escape from death. In His agony and suffering He did not lose the confidence that He had in His Father and His Father's care for Him. He committed Himself to His Father's hands.

That doesn't mean that Jesus didn't love life. In reading the Gospels, we see how He loved life, indeed. But He loved us more.

That's why He took the course that He did. He died not because it was the inevitable consequence of *His* sin, but because He took *our* sin upon Himself and paid the price for us. He died in place of us who deserved death. He gave Himself for us that we might live and die as sons and daughters of God.

He said, "Into Your hands I commend my Spirit," because He is willing to entrust His life to God—to rely completely on the Father. He knew what He was doing, even when it meant giving up His life for us. Now He speaks those words in their fullest meaning as He hangs between life and death, trusting fully in the Father.

Perhaps we will never be able to speak those words with the same confidence as Jesus did. But it is still true that the hands of God are there to receive us when our life ends, as they received Jesus. As surely as God raised Jesus from the dead, so certainly will He bear us up in His arms when we fall into death, for Christ is with us.

His Spirit and power await us each time we place ourselves into God's loving hands. All during our life God is working within us through Word and the Sacraments—working out the faith that enables us to face death when that day comes.

This is our hope. In this confidence we face our death—and each day of life as well—and say, "Into your hands I commit my spirit." And we, too, live through Christ.

*O Lord God, Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us the faith that enables us in life and especially in the face of death to commit ourselves into your loving hands. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Rev. Clark H. Gies, Retired  
Director of Ministry  
Fairfax, South Dakota

**MONDAY • APRIL 4**

**Colossians 1:15**

## *The Name of Jesus*

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

Most every morning at 6 a.m. or so I'm on the Junior High track near our home jogging a few laps. I'm 70 and the exercise keeps things limber. Over the last few days I began to notice empty beer cans strewn here and there at the track and I picked them up for recycling.

On Thursday morning when I arrived at the track there were three young people, teenagers, a boy dressed in black and two girls wearing hooded sweat shirts, seated on the small set of bleaches at the edge of the track. As I jogged by them I said good morning and the boy responded. One of the girls appeared to be in some emotional distress and was being comforted by the other two.

Of course I wondered why the kids were there so early in the morning and what kind of grief their parents, particularly of the girls, must be experiencing. Some new empty beer cans could be seen by the bleachers and it looked as though I was witnessing the end of an all night party of some kind.

The Holy Spirit and I began to have a dialogue. I knew I would be witnessing to the kids in some way but I needed wisdom. Besides I wanted to finish my laps, so I prayed for time and the right words to say. The words that came to mind were some of the words that Jesus spoke in His sermon at Nazareth when He quoted Isaiah 61. I couldn't remember it all but hopefully just enough.

When I finished the last lap, all three of the kids were standing on the track getting ready to leave. Huffing and puffing I pulled to a stop by them and said to all three, "Have you heard of the name of Jesus?" The girls quickly looked at each other and the unspoken message was, "Weirdo!!" But the boy said, "Yes, I have." I smelled the beer. "What have you heard?" I asked. "Good things," he answered. Then the words of Jesus and Isaiah came to mind and I said, "Jesus came to set the captives free, to heal the brokenhearted and to give you vision of who you are and where you are going." The boy smiled and said, "Does He keep you running?" "Yes, every morning, right here" I laughed, as we parted. I thought, how powerful is the name, Jesus.

It's been three days and none of them have returned to the track. I pray we can continue our conversation so that we can get to know each other and the Lord better. I also pray that even if I don't see them again, the seeds that have been planted will be watered by others and they will bear fruit. It is certain that their hope, my hope and that of all the world rests in the person and work of Jesus. His birth, life, death and resurrection are the keys to our hope for forgiveness and eternal life. As we read in Colossians 1:15, Jesus is "the image of the invisible God." It is through Him we experience God's love for us.

*Dear Father in heaven, help us to witness to the wonderful Name of Jesus that people we meet may come to know Him as Savior and Lord. In His name. Amen.*

Bill Ruthford  
Member, Board of Directors  
Seattle, Washington

## TUESDAY • APRIL 5

1 Peter 3:15

### *Missionary*

*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...with gentleness and respect.*

Every four years when I was a child, Margaret, our church's missionary to Africa visited the congregation. She would report to us of her work on the mission field.

Margaret wore old-fashioned clothes and pulled her hair into a bun. She showed slides of Africa that invariably included snakes and a close-up of a leprous foot. I was a child who got sick in the middle of the night when I became over-tired. Her visits probably resulted in those nights.

Margaret was my only missionary example, and for all my childhood I did not want to be a missionary. But years later it dawned on me, if God called me to be a missionary, I would not be miserable. Thankfully, He sent me to Alaska (where there are no snakes), not to Africa.

Whether or not we want to be a 'foreign missionary,' we who are God's people are all missionaries. We are witnesses to Christ's redeeming sacrifice. The season of Lent gives us great reason to proclaim His death and resurrection.

Being a missionary, I've discovered, takes many forms. For Elvin and me, it is being a Grandpa and Grandma on the boat who listen to the children and attempt to represent the love of God. We give them a safe place, good experiences, and Vacation Bible Camp in the summer. We listen to the adults and talk with them and in some places have worship times. What might being a missionary mean for you?

*Our loving Father, we remember your loving us so much that you went to the cross. Forgive our sins and help us to be your witnesses – with gentleness and respect. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Alice Borg, Retired  
First Mate, M/V CHRISTIAN

Psalm 42:1

## *A Pathway To God*

*“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs for you.”*

I was talking to our pastor’s wife the other day. She was telling me that a member of the church, a First Nations woman, had told her that her father knew Scripture better than most, even though he had never read the Bible. She told me she was not sure exactly what this woman meant until I related an interesting encounter I’d had with a First Nations man recently.

For about seven months I had been working with a man from the Quileute Tribe. This man, possibly the noblest man I’ve ever met, has been tirelessly laying down his life for his community. I was so impressed with the fruit of his journey, that I was moved to speak with him. The concept of dying to one’s self so that life would come to others was so deeply embedded within this man. I became convinced that the Spirit of God was at work preparing his heart for the truth of the Gospel.

So I met with him and his wife. I said, “In my tribe they say that when we die we become the salmon that feed our children.” I told him that this wasn’t about reincarnation but about dying to self so that life would be given to others. Even as Paul states in 2 Corinthians 4:11,12, “For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus sake, so that life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.” At this point, a light went off in his eyes and he spoke these words to me. He said, “You know when I hunt for elk, I always pray to the Creator to help me and He does. When I take the elks life I again pray to the Creator and thank Him for allowing me to take the spirit of this elk to give life for my family, and then I always pour water into the elks mouth for the finish of his journey.” I was stunned as he spoke these words to me, because, as he related his story, I could hear, in the back of my mind, the Word of the Lord in Psalms 42:1 in a way I had never heard before, “As the deer pants for water, so my soul pants for you, O God.” Sometimes if we listen carefully, something about people’s older traditions provides an opening to share the Gospel!

Our God has not left Himself without a witness. (Acts 14:17) “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20) “I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’ ” (Isaiah 65:1)

*Heavenly Father, the sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the Word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. (Isaiah 50:4) Lord help me to see where you have prepared lives for your Gospel to attach itself. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Dave Sternbeck  
Ministry Staff  
Neah Bay, Washington

**THURSDAY • APRIL 7**

**1 Corinthians 15:20a**

## ***Surprised by Hope***

*“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...”*

I recently stumbled upon a book called “Surprised by Hope” that did in fact surprise me. Besides being inspired (so inspiring I’ve used it elsewhere) and greatly encouraged, I was reminded of the amazing hope that we have in Jesus. Respected biblical scholar, N. T. Wright, beautifully demonstrates and unfolds the far reaching consequences of the resurrection and then also the great importance of the ascension. I have understood for some time the absolute importance of the resurrection to my faith in Christ, but Wright shares wonderful new insights into the evidence for it as well as the importance and evidence of the ascension.

The fact is, Jesus has gone on ahead of us and is ruling and because of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, Wright declares: “Someone much greater than I is at the helm of the world.” He goes on to point out that Jesus is interceding for us at the Father’s right hand and is ***continuing to work for us in the present***. He shouts that, “It is even over and above our sense of that presence, which of course comes and goes with our own moods and circumstances.”

This past year something “surprising” happened in our ministry. My wife Linda and I have been working in many different native communities across Canada but there was one large native community, rather close by, that seemed to be closed to us. We always had this group of people on our hearts but the door never seemed to open. It all started with a “surprising” phone call! A youth group from an unexpected area wanted to come north and do some ministry. This was encouraging but it is often challenging to find the right fit and we didn’t have much time. Not only this but, we also needed to be invited by the people themselves. My schedule already seemed so full and I wasn’t sure how I felt about it!

It was shortly after this that I “surprisingly” ran into one of the leaders from this native reservation. It was in a coffee shop that I do not often enter. I felt I should simply ask him if he thought they could use a youth group for a week or so in his community this summer. I was again very “surprised.” Not only could he use a youth group but he was looking for one! Jesus is indeed alive and He is with the Father at His right hand ***continuing to work for us in the present!*** Over and over again it is the risen Lord that intercedes for us. We are often not aware of His work in our lives but Scripture teaches that He is constantly looking out for us as we serve Him for His Kingdom regardless of our own moods. What is more is that we have the great hope of, one day, reigning with Jesus.

To think I almost said no to this group. It turned out they were one of the most amazing youth groups I have ever seen. They truly blessed me and they especially blessed the children they ministered to. My prayer for you during this Lent Season is that God will “surprise” you in a new way and that you would have a fresh sense that you are indeed part of His marvelous Kingdom.

*Dear Lord, I am so thankful that you are continuing to work for me in the present. Thank you for reminding me of your truth again during this Lent season. Help me to walk with you in faith now and in all seasons. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rick Martin,  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario

**FRIDAY • APRIL 8**

**John 15:13 (ESV)**

## ***The Call of Duty: Ends that Justify the Means***

*“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”*

Over the years I have been blessed to hear the stories of Native American veterans who were willing to serve our Creator and our country. They were willing to make great sacrifices as they put their lives on the line. One such warrior was Felix White Jr.

Years ago Felix had taken up **the call of duty** in place of his dearly departed uncle, Sgt. John Rice who had died in combat during the Korean War. Over the years Felix had taken up **the call of duty** in many and various ways. As a Choka ~ ‘grandfather’, he had taken seven of his grandchildren to Zion Lutheran School some 30 miles away. Felix was a supporter of Jesus Our Savior Lutheran School; cutting down a large tree, connecting water lines, and financially donating without expecting anything in return.

On Veterans’ Day, 2010, Felix in the vehicle he had been driving, on Wolf Creek Pass in southern Colorado, went off the icy road, rolled once and landed in a frozen pond. Felix had been extricated from his vehicle, complained of being cold but had been walking and talking. He died while en route to Pagosa Mountain Hospital. Felix had been on his way to encourage his best man who informed Felix that he had less than two weeks to live. Felix had been responding to **his call of duty**.

I had the privilege of leading Felix’s funeral service. I was blessed to share the Good News about another man who had answered **the call of duty**. That man was the Son of Man and the Son of God, Jesus our Savior. About three weeks prior to his death I had spoken to Felix about the one and only time that I knew of where the **ends justified the means**. That was when Jesus suffered and died at the hands of the dominant Roman soldiers and the betrayal of his own tribal people. His suffering and death paid for their sins, **justifying the means to His end**. Jesus’ suffering and death had also paid for Felix’s sin and **justified** him. Felix had been graciously received into God’s family through the water of Holy Baptism at the age of 16. Faith in Jesus accepts His **means of justification**.

*Dear gracious Heavenly Father, Creator God, we pray that the message of your one and only Son’s willingness to heed **the call of duty** in order to **justify us sinners** would bring comfort and peace to countless other people in need of forgiveness. Instill faith in the hearts and minds of those who hear this Good News. In Jesus our Savior’s Name. Amen.*

Pastor Ricky Jacob  
Missionary to the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska  
Winnebago, Nebraska

**SATURDAY • APRIL 9**

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-14**

***A Hope and a Promise***

*“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”*

It is Sunday morning worship in Neah Bay. A soft, misty rain is falling. Intermittently the sun shines through the woods surrounding the church. Salal and salmon berry bushes encroach upon the lawn surrounding the building. Beyond them, tall spruce and pine form a hedge around us. We can enjoy these wonders through the windows that form a cross in our sanctuary.

A young woman offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the rainbow she has seen this morning. For her especially, it is a comfort, “A promise that God is real and has not forgotten us.” In this small village, there have been 21 deaths so far this year. She herself has experienced the loss of her beloved father-in-law and the miscarriage of a child.

It is now time for confession and absolution followed by communion. Just in front of the window which forms the cross, is the altar. With the words, “This is my body, broken for you,” the sun bursts through the mist. Millions of heavy water droplets turn into glistening diamonds on the surrounding greenery. A halo of light floods through the window to surround the altar and elevated host. The congregation is frozen in the moment, mesmerized. How real and comforting are the promises of God! We, the body of Christ, are joined in oneness. Our Savior has come to minister to us in the Sacrament of the altar.

As we go our separate ways today, I know we all feel we have met with the Creator in a special way. God through His goodness has not left us alone in our sorrows. Jesus has overcome the grave. We have received the Holy Spirit in our baptism and are reminded of that as we listen to His holy Word. We are assured of His love and forgiveness. We are filled with the peace that the world can't give nor take away. The Savior who knows all sorrows, meets us in ours. We know we can trust Him with our lives and those we love, today and always, for He has risen and He is coming again!

*Thank you, Father, for sending your Son. Thank you for your word that is “yea and amen to those who believe.” Help us to be a blessing to others in their time of grieving. Give us that hope “that passes all understanding.” In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Rosemary Sternbeck  
Neah Bay, Washington

**SUNDAY • APRIL 10**

**Philippians 4:6**

## ***Prayer Works***

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”*

When we go about our daily lives, there is always something to keep us busy and we can claim that we don't seem to have enough time to pray. If we don't pray, we don't have much of a relationship with the Lord.

In our weekly Bible studies we have on the reservation each week, we have a prayer circle in which everyone has a chance to pray if they want to. We take turns praying and often the new people in the group do not pray out loud at first, but after they come a few times they start praying with us. As the people learn to take the time to pray and read their Bibles, we start to see their faith come alive and their relationship with the Lord grow. We have also experienced people that have turned away from prayer and reading the Word and only pray when they need something or are in trouble. God never turns away from us, He is always there no matter how far away we fall, waiting to welcome us back with open arms.

When we would go on mission trips, we would fast and pray for two to three days ahead of time, it would clear our minds of anything that would keep us distracted and make us more sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Some people, for a variety of reasons, have departed the faith and no longer believe that God still produces miracles; but all we have to do is open our eyes and our hearts and take a look around us and see the miracle of His creation that constantly surrounds us. It is evidence that sin blinds us to the majesty and love of God. It is important to stay in God's Word and to pray.

The disciples were aware of their ineffective prayer life, so they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. Our journey through life could be more effective, and we are more likely to grow to maturity, if we seek the Lord through a more disciplined prayer life.

*Dear Heavenly Father, during this time of Lent, help me find more time to spend in prayer with you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Tom Benzler  
Port Angeles, Washington

MONDAY • APRIL 11

Romans 4:7-8

## *The Blessed Man*

*“Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”*

The case is pretty compelling against mankind as a whole and that takes in you and me as well. We fall far short of the standards of perfection that God demands reflected by a penitent King David, the Psalm writer, who burdened by his sin wrote, “For I know my transgression and my sin is ever before me.” (Psalm 51:3) Some of our sins of omission or commission are more serious than others in terms of their consequences. Realizing this makes us feel uncomfortable and well it should. That is one of the reasons God had given us the Ten Commandments in the first place; to cause us to evaluate our behaviors, a mirror into the soul as it were, to see if we measure up to God’s expectations.

Of course, if all we were left with is an honest assessment of our sinful condition we would be most miserable. And certainly we know people who live with much unresolved guilt. Thankfully, as Christians we have some really great news to share with the world. The news is that from all of eternity God has comprehended our state and determined before all eternity to send His Son Jesus to be our Savior. Anyone who receives Jesus as their Savior is immediately declared not guilty. The great load of guilt is taken from them.

I know what that is like; I too have had the load of sin lifted from me. As a young man I attended a Billy Graham meeting. I was drawn initially by curiosity. But what kept me listening was the promise that Jesus Christ who had suffered and died for me on the cross could provide me forgiveness of all my sins and grant me eternal life. I remember the great feeling of having my sins forgiven and having a relationship with Jesus. My life was never the same afterwards. Of course, I know that I am not a perfect person as a Christian. I have not always behaved the way I should. But I learned this other great truth from the Scriptures; namely that even though I sometimes still do things that displease God, through repentance and trust in Jesus Christ I am forgiven. “Simul iustus et peccator;” is the Latin expression. It means I am simultaneously a sinner and justified by my faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus, my Savior. All who come to Him with a repentant heart and trust Him for forgiveness are blessed. May you experience the blessedness that comes through faith in Jesus.

*Dear God our Father, we do not always behave in ways that please you. We acknowledge our sins and look to Jesus, your Son and our Savior, who suffered and died on the cross and rose again to give us true blessedness, in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rev. Dr. Don Johnson  
Executive Director

**Psalm 37:4**

***Blinded by Expectations***

*“Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”*

It has been a terrible year. All her worst nightmares fell upon her. Her husband left her, and then took up with a series of other women. She lost her home. She lost her job and has not been able to find another. She had to give up her dog. She had to move in with relatives, and then worked like a slave so no one would get angry and tell her to leave. Most of the people in her life said, “Forget that a\_hole and move on.” None seemed to understand why she continued to grieve month after month. They got tired of her weeping. So finally she began to bottle up her emotions.

There was one ear that would listen with sympathy, her pastor. With him she could let down the shield and speak her grief. Here she could weep openly and ask her why and how-long questions. He generally had no answers, for who truly knows the mind of God?

As the one-year “anniversary” of her husband leaving came near, she was visiting with her pastor. She asked, “Why doesn’t God keep His promise? He says He will dry all my tears; but still I cry.”

The pastor turned to her and asked, “How often have I wiped away your tears?” “More than I can count,” was the answer. “He has answered your prayer, many times.”

Prayer and the Lord’s answers can be tricky to understand. The big problem is that we often pray with expectations. We have in mind how and when we think God will answer a given prayer. We may not say so, but we know what we are looking for.

Such expectations can blind us to what the Lord is doing. When we don’t see the results we assume must be the only way to answer, we conclude that God is unfaithful, that He doesn’t keep His word, that He’s not listening, etc.

However, the Psalm does not lie. Part of delighting yourself in the Lord is the excitement of not knowing for sure how the Lord will answer but knowing He will, and watching for the surprise. There is a wondrous delight living with such a Maker.

The greatest delight is that He answered our heart’s desire to be forgiven even before we knew to ask. As Christ poured out His blood on Good Friday, He washed you clean and pure. He made you the Father’s delight. That blood guarantees all the Lord’s promises to you.

He is the God of wonder and delight. No expectations can prepare us for His answers. All we can really do is watch with eyes wide open with excitement to see what He’ll do next. You can be sure it will be something good.

*Dear Father, forgive us when our expectations cause us to doubt you. Free us from this, and give us hearts and eyes that are truly open to the wonder of all you do. Teach us to delight in you so that we won’t try to limit your answers but instead be alert to the amazing creativity by which you give us the desires of our hearts. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rev. Dan Jacobs  
Crow Indian Reservation  
Crow Agency, Montana

## WEDNESDAY • APRIL 13

Mark 6:34

### *Salmon*

*When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them.*

Jesus was a charismatic person. His teaching and miracles produced a following that grew to the point that “so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat” (Mark 6:31). He and the disciples stole away to a solitary place, only to be followed by a great crowd. When Jesus saw them, He had compassion on them. What follows is His miraculous feeding of the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish.

Fish played an important part in the events of the first official day of *Tribal Journeys* in Neah Bay this past summer. The Makah Tribe had promised everyone who attended—some 7,000 strong—a meal that first night of fresh caught salmon cooked by an open fire. To accomplish such an undertaking, four cooking stations were set up. Two from our mission team—Richard and myself—joined a native family and their friends to prepare, cook, cut and pack salmon at one of these stations. It was an interesting experience watching them prepare and cook the fish in traditional Makah fashion. Rich and I cut fish into portion size, sampling generously throughout the process. *Delicious.*

The Makah of northwest Washington state are noted for their hospitality. They committed to feed all guests to *Tribal Journeys 2010* at their own expense. In addition, they provided all the necessary services required to care for a group many times larger than the entire population of Neah Bay. Some of the Makah may well have wondered if they could feed such a large group. They may even have thought what the disciples said out loud: “Send the people away so they can buy themselves something to eat.” Jesus’ response—feeding them all with food to spare—tells us a number of things. It not only tells us that He is God; it reveals Jesus’ compassionate heart. It also validates His encouragement for us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Dr. Luther explains, “God certainly gives daily bread without our prayers, but we pray that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.”

We were thankful for the Makah hospitality. We have much more to be thankful for from a generous God who graciously provides us with all things that we need in this life. The object of this and all God’s provision is to point to Jesus, so that we may respond like the people that day so long ago, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world” (John 6:14).

*Our Father who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread. And with such provision give us the true bread from heaven, Jesus Christ our Lord. May we always believe what He promises, “He who believes in me will never go hungry.” Amen.*

Rev. William Simmons  
Christ Memorial Lutheran Church  
St. Louis, Missouri

**THURSDAY • APRIL 14**

**Philippians 2:5-11**

## *The Ultimate Potlatch*

*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

A potlatch is a festive ceremony practiced by indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. The word comes from the Chinook Jargon, meaning “to give away” or “a gift”. At potlatch gatherings, a family or tribal leader hosts guests with a feast and the giving of gifts. These are large gatherings; often such that they are held in a community hall. The main purpose of the potlatch is the re-distribution of wealth. Different events take place during a potlatch, such as singing and native dances, often with masks and regalia. The practice went through a history of rigorous bans by both the Canadian and United States federal governments largely at the urging of missionaries and government agents who considered it “a worse than useless custom” that was seen as wasteful, unproductive, and contrary to “civilized” values. Fortunately, the efforts to end the practice among native peoples were unsuccessful.

We recently were guests of a name-giving potlatch. I would guess that there were about 250 present. It began with a huge meal early in the afternoon and didn’t end till nearly 5:00 in morning. It was an amazing experience, with a huge amount of gifts given; everyone who stayed for the entire event received at least one gift, often more. There were three meals through the course of the evening, all provided by the host family. It was for the host family a generous and very costly event.

In ancient times a tribal leader would host a potlatch and literally give away everything he owned. In so doing, he would make himself monetarily impoverished, but also elevated to the highest position in the eyes of his community. It was a powerful thing, so powerful and foreign to a western mind set that it was banned by our government. How sad that something so reflective of what our Lord did for us would be squashed. How awesome it is to see in Philippians 2 this incredible potlatching of our Lord, this total emptying of heavenly glory to the point of a harsh criminal death so that he might give us the gift of eternal life, and in so doing He was highly exalted. The more I learn about my own First Nations people, the Cowlitz, and my Northwest coastal tribes culture, the more I see how God has mirrored His love for us in Jesus through ancient traditions and practices. What a great joy it is to know “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) He became poor that we might become rich.

*Lord, thank you for inviting us to your Great Potlatch. Thank you for Jesus. Amen.*

Winston Wilson  
Olympic Peninsula  
Washington

**FRIDAY • APRIL 15**

**Luke 15:4**

## ***The Third Crew Member***

*“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?”*

There are really three crewmembers on the M/V CHRISTIAN. One is a dog, Jubilee. Part Border Collie. She wants everyone to be together.

She accompanies all field outings with the kids during summer Vacation Bible Camps. She loves riding in the skiffs.

Last summer we were in the village of Angoon (west shore of Admiralty Island...think big brown bears) and we took a day trip with 25 kids and some adults to Sand Island. The agenda was lessons, a fire, and of course, s'mores, that marvelous combination of Hershey's chocolate bar, marshmallows and graham crackers.

Everyone was by the fire. One boy ambled away along the beach. The nervous Border Collie watched him and finally gave in to the instinct of her kind. She rose up from the center of her “flock” where she was resting and padded down the beach, following her wayward “sheep”. She stayed with him until he turned, then walked beside him until he was again by the fire. Caring for the one, driven by instinct.



Some churches try to reduce the care for a wayward one to a policy, letters, even threats to be dropped. For a shepherding dog, it's simple. Just catch up with someone and walk along.

Our Creator has made many marvelous creatures. One four-legged type can help the church see how to care for the lost and lonely. Jesus, our loving, compassionate Savior, is waiting with the “wayward” ones. Waiting to infuse them with His love and to shepherd the guilty and hurting into His Kingdom of love and forgiveness.

*Release us, Father from what stops us from walking with those who need loving hearts and listening ears. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Rev. Stan Bernston  
Skipper M/V CHRISTIAN  
Southeast Alaska

SATURDAY • APRIL 16

Luke 23:42

## *Remember Me*

*Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

The cost of discipleship is not cheap; it could cost you your life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said as much in his famous writing, *The Cost of Discipleship*. As you may know, Bonhoeffer was one of those in Germany who recognized the evil of Hitler's Third Reich and publicly opposed him; and then was subsequently imprisoned by Hitler. Only days before liberation by the Allies, Bonhoeffer was executed. Sometimes, God's followers pay an extraordinary price, even their own lives for the Kingdom's sake and for standing up for truth. Sometimes we are left to wonder why God allows this to occur.

In the summer of 1996, a volunteer pilot flying for our organization was killed in a plane crash high up in the mountains near Nome, Alaska. He had been on his way to pick up children from a remote community so they could attend a Bible camp. The volunteer pilot, Tom Liederbach, was an extraordinary man of God who loved serving with our ministry. For a long time afterward, I grieved his death and wondered why God had permitted a tragedy like this. Then another tragedy struck our ministry a few months later when Pastor Ken Olson, skipper of the M/V CHRISTIAN drowned a day after Christmas. At the time he was with a man with whom he had been sharing the Gospel. Once more I grieved his passing.

To this day I cannot understand the whys of these great losses. What was true of their situations was that both men were serving God when their lives were taken and both had affirmed preparedness to meet Jesus just before they were killed. Ken Olson had written as much in a devotion just before his death. Tom had affirmed to friends his readiness to meet Jesus the night before his fatal crash. Their example of faithfulness to the end has served as a powerful testimony of the importance of faithfulness as well as God's grace in preparing them for the appointed hour of their death.

Of this we can be certain; even if we do not understand why God permits His saints to die for his cause; those who trust in Jesus, no matter when they die, can be assured that they will be with Him for all eternity beginning the instant they are taken. Jesus affirmed this when to the repentant thief on the cross He declared, "This day you will be with me in paradise."

What great comfort to know in our times of grief at the loss of a loved one that Jesus, the crucified and risen Savior, has a place for us in paradise; and that one day we will all be reunited with all the saints of God for all eternity in paradise. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

*O Gracious God and Father, we give you thanks for grace to trust in Jesus and His power to grant us eternal life. Grant us the opportunity to share with others we come into contact with, the love of Jesus for their lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Rev. Dr. Don Johnson  
Executive Director

2 Corinthians 4:7

*Common Clay Pots*

*“We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”*

Joan loves her flower gardening, and I tag along as helpful assistant. She lines walkways and plantings with large and medium size clay pots filled with floral arrangements to provide accents and highlight beauty. But always it is the beauty of the flowers that is all-surpassing.

When archaeologists excavate a site, they find more clay pots than anything else. Clay pots serve a purpose for a while and when they crack or break, they are thrown away. You can always get more clay; it's so common.

Remember, you and I are clay alright. The great thing about common clay pots is not that they are made of breakable clay, but that they are pots and can hold treasure.

We have to be realistic. Like clay pots we are not strong; but God is. Sometimes we are not forgiving, rather we nurse hurts and resentments, but God is forgiving. We are not strong; but God is. We are not always kind and loving; but God is. The treasure is God and it is God's to give. By His kindness we have that reassurance of God's in our little clay pots. We put our trust in God for Jesus' sake, and we receive from Him the gifts of His grace and goodness, His undeserved love and His protective power.

What a fabulous privilege it is for each Christian to share God's treasure out of our little clay pots. You are not beyond God's reach. It is God who works both to will and to do His own good pleasure. He works in you and through you to others. It is His work every step of the way, putting His treasure into our common clay pots and making them things of beauty in spite of all the clay.

The great Son of God had a clay pot just like ours. He took our common clay. He endured the hard knocks of life. He was bruised, beaten, spit on and treated unfairly. He didn't complain. He took it all, including a hideous death. Thereby He paid the full price for our sins and was raised from the dead and declared openly as Lord of all.

Our risen Lord is the life of the children of God who are members of His family by virtue of faith anchored in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit teaches us to be more like Jesus Himself; to give and forgive, to love and serve others. To the end that others see our beautiful Savior and trust Him as Lord of all.

*Holy Spirit, fill and refill my clay pot with your treasure. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Rev. Paul Biegner  
Member, Board of Directors  
Brainerd, Minnesota

**MONDAY • APRIL 18**

**Job 42: 5, 6**

## ***Eyes of Faith***

*“My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”*

“Does Job worship you for nothing?” Satan would ask God. “Take all that he has and he will curse you to your face.” In the end and through his suffering Job would learn to worship God because He is God. There is a substance in our faith, a maturity, which only comes through trial, suffering, and brokenness.

Rosemary and I were scheduled to fly out of Fairbanks the next day. We had decided to have lunch with a young Athabaskan couple. They are wonderful people who know Jesus, long to serve Him, and their people.

As we were having lunch, they began to tell me about some recent deaths in their village. Two recent suicides and a death of an elder have rocked the village of Tanana. This is the village this young man is from. The young man told me that he has been going home to minister to his people for ten years without much success. He told me that this time as he was about to leave for home that the community came to him and for the first time asked when he was going to come back. It made me think of the life of Job. It made me think of how God will sometimes allow suffering as a means of drawing us closer to a life, to life itself, life that can only be found in relationship with Christ.

The people of Tanana have heard by the hearing of the ear. Missionaries have been going there for years. But because of the suffering, the brokenness that has no human solution, they now have an opportunity to see God with eyes of faith. In the ashes of our lives, God draws near, like no other time and opens our eyes to self, to life, to God; to the work of Christ’s life, death and resurrection, the forgiveness of our sins and the conquering power of life that overcomes death.

*Lord we thank you for the message of hope that you bring to us in the ashes of our lives and we thank you for the messengers you are preparing to be sent to the ones you love. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Rev. David Sternbeck  
Neah Bay, Washington

**TUESDAY • APRIL 19**

**Psalm 139:9,10**

## *He is There*

*If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.*

They are in the boat. They are in the air. They are in my food. I suspect they are even in my heart. They come from the hill tops. They come from the sky. I know they are here for all I need do is push a button or turn a knob and I've got them. With a proper receiver I can pluck out of the air a weather report, sea conditions, or my exact position on the water. I can't see, hear, touch, or taste them. Yet I depend upon them to help me determine if the weather is safe for travel. I trust them to help me find safe passage through new or difficult passages. I can even use them to call for help or simply connect with others. It's almost miraculous.

God's Holy Spirit, like the VHF and GPS signals, is around me and within me at all times. I can't see, hear, touch or taste Him in the ordinary sense. But, I know He is there, not by pushing a button or turning a knob, but by opening a Book and turning some pages. Through that Book, He speaks to me and helps me find passage through difficult places in life.

I know He is there because at times I have found words in my mouth that have come from Him. A few times I have spoken words that have seemed to miss the point or words that I was even chagrined to have said, but those words He used to further His work.

I know He is there for I have called for help and He has answered. He tells me that I am in the palm of His hand. Nowhere else.

I know He is there because in ways beyond explaining or comprehending, I have discovered Him in my heart, softening me with His grace, warming me with His love. It's a miracle.

It is a greater miracle than all those words and positional signals in the air around us. For God's Word has power to create and give new life, guide and direct us on our way through this life, and bring us to life eternal. There we will see Jesus in all His splendor – the Word of God incarnate. There'll be no guessing then!

*Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for always being with us to comfort and guide; even if we take the wings of the morning and sail to the outermost parts of the sea. In your name, Amen.*

Elvin Borg, Retired  
Pastor/Skipper M/V CHRISTIAN

**Psalm 42:5**

***Brushing Off***

*“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”*

A traumatic experience has the potential to paralyze both body and spirit. A recent discussion on the merits of motorcycles produced an unequivocal response: *Too dangerous! I saw someone killed while riding on the highway. I will never ride one, and I forbid my children from riding one either.* Some situations can be avoided in this way. Others cannot. If you have ever been in an automobile accident, you know that you need to put your fears behind you and get behind the wheel again. But what do you do about the traumatic memory of the crash, the injury, the paralyzing fear?

Two ministry leaders from Makah Lutheran Church in Neah Bay, Washington, had to answer that question if they were to continue to be effective agents for the Holy Spirit. Late in the winter last year they were involved in a serious automobile accident while driving home from Neah Bay. Fatigue overtook them and their car left the road as the driver momentarily dozed off while behind the wheel. They careened over an embankment, through some brush, and struck a tree. Both were seriously injured but, by the grace of God, their lives were spared and with time their bodies mended. But the lingering trauma of the accident and the nagging fear that it could repeat itself crippled their spirits.

Members of Makah Lutheran Church gave them a precious gift in an object lesson on healing. In a solemn ceremony they took these two through a ritual of healing and restoration. The couple was wrapped in a ceremonial blanket. Then, members brushed them with feathers as they invoked the healing power of God’s Holy Spirit to remove the painful memories and replace them with the healing power of God’s presence. With tears these two ministry leaders related this experience and the quiet peace with which it left them. In the strength of this healing they were able to return to ministry with a renewed appreciation of God’s healing salvation.

We all carry scars from the past and wounds from present struggles with powers outside of our control. How easy it is to be cast down and despair of relief. It is exactly for moments such as these that Jesus came. He “took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.” (Isaiah 53:4) In their place He gives us His healing and peace. We do well to heed the counsel of the psalmist: “Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you.” (Psalm 55:22)

*Lord Jesus, you know the wounds I carry and the struggles that I have. I know the wounds you received and the cross you carried for me. Renew in me the joy of my salvation that I may again praise you, my help and my God. Amen.*

Rev. William Simmons  
Christ Memorial Lutheran Church  
St. Louis, Missouri

Mark 14:36

## *Trail of Tears*

*“Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”*

Many have heard about the Cherokees and the Trail of Tears in which they were forced from their lands and made to walk to an unknown place with just their very own personal belongings. It is one of the many sad events that happened in the history of this country. But, the Cherokee people aren't the only ones that traveled a trail of tears. All people have traveled on their trail of tears, at one time or another, during their lifetime. Those trials and tribulations, sickness, disease, oppression, poverty, or even when things are just hard or seem unfair in life can all be seen as our personal trail of tears.

Jesus walked a trail of tears also. He knew what lie ahead of him as He knelt in that garden, shedding tears and praying; while His disciples couldn't even remain awake to keep watch. He wasn't spared the pain and anguish of knowing what He would have to endure and experience as He hung on that tree, atoning for every sin of the world. He felt the unjust beatings and the mockery that was hurled upon Him, as He stumbled along bearing the cross upon His back to Golgotha, where He was crucified for us. Jesus drank the cup of pain and suffering that would have been ours, so that our debt of sin would be paid in full and we could be reconciled and have life everlasting with Him. He did this because He loves us.

If we are His disciples we should expect to endure pain, suffering, trials and tribulation in our lives. It is what molds our character and develops our endurance and patience. It is not our natural way, though. We live in a world of individual gratification, where everyone wants everything and thinks it is owed to them. The cost of following Jesus however is not like that. It is about selfless sacrifice.

Cherokee Chief John Ross said this, “Years of trial and anxiety, of danger and struggle, have maintained the...Cherokee people as a distinct community...and such must continue.” When we rely on our faith in Christ and look to the cross, our trail of tears turns into a trail of joy, as the Holy Spirit teaches us through our times of trouble, we survive and we grow stronger.

*Oh Creator God, help us walk through our times of trouble, pain, and heartache in a way that gives honor to you so that others may see your glory and we emerge from our tears stronger than before. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Cathy Benzler  
Port Angeles, Washington

## GOOD FRIDAY • APRIL 22

John 19:30b

### *Finished!*

*Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that He bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

When Jesus said from the cross, “It is finished,” He declared that the work of redemption was completed. All that needed to be done was done. Nothing more could be done—nothing more could be added to what He had done. There was no other way. There could be no improvement or addition to what He had done.

Throughout His life, Jesus perfectly obeyed His Father’s will for us. He won the victory over sin, death and the devil—over every contending spirit, every power and force which defied and challenged God’s rule. He was willing and obedient in His service to the Father. And so He gained the victory. He is Lord, overcoming all opposition to His Father.

Jesus not only kept the Law perfectly for us, He also sacrificed Himself and suffered, in the place of rebellious people like us, the punishment due every sin. His death was the final step in the humiliation and self-sacrifice that earned forgiveness for everyone.

There is no more price to be paid—no more penalty to endure. Everything has been done in Christ. Salvation is a reality. God’s justice is satisfied. His plan to redeem mankind has been carried out by Christ.

Christ’s saving work is over now. He can rest from His saving labors. Several verses earlier John reported in his Gospel that Jesus knew that “all was now completed” (v. 28). All the laws and requirements of God’s covenant with mankind were fulfilled. Salvation is ready to be enjoyed.

Now God freely invites everyone to come and enjoy what He has prepared in Christ. All can come to celebrate the happy day of redemption. Our invitation has been delivered to us by the Spirit in our baptism. And it is signed with the blood of Jesus Christ. The filthy rags of our righteousness have been replaced with the robe of Christ’s perfect righteousness.

We receive the gift of grace in faith—with thanksgiving.

*Lord Jesus, keep us in the assurance that because you said, “It is finished,” we know that we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life with you. Thank you, Jesus, for all that you did and all that you endured for us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Rev. Clark H. Gies, Retired  
Director of Ministry  
Fairfax, South Dakota

## HOLY SATURDAY • APRIL 23

### 1 Corinthians 15:55

# *Lord, Dance With Me*

*“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”*

Dancing is something common and unique to most cultures. Many countries and communities, nations and nationalities often have had their own cultural dances and costumes. All are very unique and the costumes dramatic and beautiful. Some dances involve couples, others might be circle dances where the individual dances alone but joining in the movements of the group, or a solo presentation. Often there is an instrument that is predominant in the music. For Native Americans the drum seems to be predominant in setting the beat and the flute sets the tone.

A number of years ago I ran across a very meaningful song titled LORD OF THE DANCE in a songbook titled “Songs for Saints and Sinners.” It touched my heart with its rhythm and words while reminding me that I am a sinner by birth and a saint redeemed by the life and death of Jesus Christ. May it touch your heart during this season of Lent as it takes you from creation to the cross and the open tomb.

*“I danced in the morning when the world was begun,  
And I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,  
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth.  
At Bethlehem I had my birth.*

*Refrain*  
*“Dance, then, wherever you may be;  
I am the Lord of the Dance,” said he,  
I’ll lead you all, wherever you may be  
“And I’ll lead you all in the Dance,” said he.*

*“I danced for the scribe and the pharisee,  
But they would not dance and they would not follow me,  
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John;  
They came to me and the Dance went on.” Refrain*

*“I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame,  
The holy people said it was a shame;  
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high,  
And they left me there on a cross to die.” Refrain*

*“I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black.  
It’s hard to dance with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body and they thought I’d gone,  
But I am the Dance, and I still go on.” Refrain*

*“They cut me down and I leapt up high,  
I am the life that’ll never never die;  
I’ll live in you if you live in me.  
I am the Lord of the Dance. Said he.” Refrain*

Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 11:25)

*Dear Lord Jesus, as I hear music help me to remember that you danced with death that I might have eternal life. Amen.*

LORD OF THE DANCE

by Sydney Carter

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Rev. Layton L. Lemke (Ret.)  
Former Board Member & Volunteer  
Norwood Young America, Minnesota

## EASTER SUNDAY • APRIL 24

Luke 24: 5-6

### *He Has Risen!*

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!”*

We live in a world today where news of tragic events from other parts of the world continually bombard into our living rooms. These tragic events are both natural and man-made, such as the flooding in Pakistan, oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, cholera outbreak in Haiti, gas explosion in a resort in Mexico, etc., the list goes on. These are events that involve death as well as damage to the environment. This news is disturbing to us, and can cause anxiety, fear, and a sense of powerlessness.

Rick and I were called to talk to a fourteen-year-old girl who was struggling with “*fear and anxiety*.” At the time we were called to see this young girl, she was having problems sleeping and was not interested in anything. We found out that she could not sleep because she had fears about the world coming to an end. She was not interested in anything because, I believe, she had given up hope on the world. She did not see anything hopeful about the world!

As we talked to her we told her that, “Yes, the world as we know it will end at sometime, but within God’s time, and not according to some theory or legend. Yes, there are many tragic events that are very overwhelming but there is hope!” We shared with her that the hope we have is in Jesus and His promises to us. Jesus has promised that **“He will always be with us”** and that **“He will never leave us!”**

We continued to share with her that she was not alone in her “fear” even if it felt like it. Jesus was there with her in her fear and that He knows about her thoughts and feelings. Not only did Jesus know about her but He cared about her too. At the end of our time with her, we laid hands on her and prayed for her.

Many times people lack proper Biblical teaching on life, the world, and God. Many times people receive information about life from the secular world. The secular world says nothing about God and His concern and care for us. People then, including this young girl, get literally immobilized by fear and anxiety. Yet, as we declared to this young girl, there is “hope”.

You and I who are believers in Jesus have a message to share with others. Our “Hope” is that we have a living Savior who defeated death! We have a God who has “risen” from death, and is “alive!” Therefore, we have hope in the midst of tumultuous times. This same hope is available to everyone who will turn to the “risen” Jesus. During this season may we, with renewed sense of faith, declare with Luke that, “He has risen!”

*Dear Heavenly Father, We pray and ask that you would open our spiritual eyes and renew our faith in the Living Christ. Help us to live our lives in this truth. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Linda Martin  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario

## *Northern Lights Fellowship*

The *Northern Lights Fellowship* recognizes the men and women who have made a special commitment to the long-term ministry of Lutheran Indian Ministries through a bequest, charitable gift annuity, trust agreement, life insurance program or other estate gift.

If you are interested in learning more about making a planned gift, please contact our office. While estate plans remain anonymous, membership in the *Fellowship* encourages other friends to remember Lutheran Indian Ministries in their estate planning.

As a special expression of our gratitude to members of the *Northern Lights Fellowship*, we are pleased to offer a beautiful print of a watercolor painting by Mary Johnson, gifted artist and wife of our Executive Director, Reverend Dr. Don Johnson.

### *... Your Legacy of Faith and Love ...*

**Yes!**  I have already remembered Lutheran Indian Ministries in my Will or Estate Plans. Please enroll me in the *Northern Lights Fellowship*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me.

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please detach and return this form to the address below. Thank you!

Lutheran Indian Ministries  
3525 North 124th St, Suite 1  
Brookfield, WI 53005-2498  
(888) 783-5267

**Lutheran Indian Ministries shares  
the Gospel of Jesus Christ  
with Native North American  
Nations encouraging them  
to proclaim Christ's Kingdom  
to their own and to others.**



**Lutheran Indian Ministries**

*Christ's Kingdom — Every Native American Nation.*

*A Ministry of Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots U.S.*

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