

Devotions – January 29-February 4, 2012
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Sunday, January 29

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. I Peter 2: 9-10

Someone I know is attending their annual congregational meeting today ...

Annual meetings are called for in our church, and some churches even have a couple per year. They are times for review and re-assessment and planning for the future. Sometimes they are upbeat and forward-looking, and people leave enthused and refreshed. Sometimes they are serious and difficult, and people make unwelcome and non-unanimous decisions. Often, the meetings are a mix of both kinds of agenda items.

Go in prayer to your annual meeting, with openness and a will to do the best for this body, this "royal priesthood", this "holy nation, God's own people", namely the congregation to which you belong.

Let us pray: Be with our leaders, our pastors and staffs, our members, all of us as we navigate through Christ's mission of love and salvation, and the business of our annual meetings. Amen.

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Pray for the **members of St John, Columbia MD (Revs Brian Hughes & Mike McQuaid), St Mark, Hampstead MD (Rev George Tuttle), St Paul, Leitersburg MD (pastor), and St Peter, Hampstead MD (pastor).**

Monday, January 30

*... be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and
spiritual songs among yourselves,
singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts.
Ephesians 5:18-19*

Someone I know is singing today ...

For my husband John and me, Monday evenings during the NMU school year are set aside for Marquette Choral Society rehearsals. We, and about 100 other people, show up to rehearse the great choral works, getting ready for concerts in December and April. This we have done for the past 40 years.

Music is such a wonderful way to lift one's spirits, to soothe one's fevered brow, and at times to do a little dance in the kitchen, enjoying it doubly via a reflection in the window.

Music plays a vital role in most of our worship services, and when it is NOT there, that is significant. But usually it IS there, with organ/piano, choir, chants and hymns. The music combines with the words to give praise to God, sometimes to pray for mercy for ourselves and others. Everyone participates, everyone benefits.

Let us pray: Thank you for the music, Lord. For the ability to play it or sing it, for the appreciation of what it has to tell us. Amen.

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Pray for the **members of Holy Trinity, Chassell** and **Interim Pastor Melinda Quivik** as they begin the call process during a **pastoral vacancy**.

Tuesday, January 31

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. James 1:19-20

Someone I know is going to speak out of turn today ...

Might get a little "fussed" at something, or someone. Might answer too quickly, too archly, too sarcastically, causing great regret. Might even go so far as table pounding, loud talking, scowl-faced anger. It's not hard to imagine ourselves in these situations.

Of course, the Bible tells us to avoid anger; its consequences are no good. We read "One who is quick-tempered acts foolishly" in Proverbs 14-17. Compare this to a description of our Lord in Psalm 30:5, whose "anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime."

When it's our unfortunate turn, however it comes about, to "speak out of turn", may we quickly see the foolishness of our ways, and reverse course, with apologies.

Let us pray: Patience, Lord. We pray for more of it, and greater understanding to go with it. Amen.

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Pray for **Pastor Bonny Kinnunen** and the **members of First, Iron River**

Wednesday, February 1

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
Colossians 3:13

Someone I know is repairing a relationship today ...

Words were said, feelings were hurt, ways were parted at least virtually, and now the big gap in the road of life needs to be filled in. The broken relationship is too much to bear, and re-joining of this 2-person unit is needed. Others may be involved in creating the problem. Others may serve as counsel in solving the problem.

How many of us have found ourselves in such situations? How many of us have hoped that no one else noticed our pain? How many times have we ignored any sign of trouble on the face or in the behavior of a friend, or colleague, or family member? A time when a word or two, a smile, a small gesture of support could change dejection into a path of hope and healing.

And the thing is, these moments happen and we don't even know that our small act is important at all. Or, perhaps, ALL our acts have some sort of non-trivial impact. Let us bear with each other, realizing we are all part of God's family, and need to feel welcomed and loved.

Let us pray: Help me to ferret out the thorn when it hurts, and do and say the things that will heal and make us whole again. Amen.

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Pray for **Pastor Katherine Finegan** as she begins her work as **Assistant to the Bishop** of the NGLS.

Thursday, February 2

My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night.

Psalm 63:5-7

Someone I know is having surgery today ...

There's an aloneness that comes with illness, illness of any proportion. It's you against that disease, that flu, that overwhelming condition that you didn't bargain on in your life, that surgery that will bring wellness again or merely stem the flood of ills yet-to-be.

When our bodies experience ill-health, major or minor, we know that it's us against those germs or genes or whatever inhabiting us. Other people help us, certainly, as do medicines. But this battle is one on one; we are alone in the final analysis.

The picture painted above by the psalmist struck me as very true, particularly the part about contemplating, meditating, quite possibly praying "in the watches of the night". Those are the especially lonely times -- 3 AM and no one's awake except you. But wait! There's our Lord, our merciful God, our dependable Creator and Comforter. He will carry us forward, and we will be satisfied as after a superb meal, and we will be well again!

Let us pray: In health, we praise you. In illness, we come to you for mercy and healing. Be our strong guide, our very present help in trouble. Amen.

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Pray for those attending the **Region 5 Mobility Event** as they discern God's calling.

Friday, February 3

*We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us:
prophecy ... ministering ... teaching ... exhortation ... generosity ... diligence ... cheerfulness.*
Romans 12:6

Someone I know is going to a meeting today ...

Sometimes meetings are the bane of our existence! Oh no, not another one! Time I could use for my OWN work, my OWN interests, maybe just some REST!

And sometimes, meetings become vibrant with fresh ideas, finally a solution to a situation, a new perception of an idea, a new understanding of another person on that committee.

With all the meetings needed for the ongoing functioning of a congregation, it is good to know that positive things can happen, and the mission of spreading Christ's love and mercy can be accomplished. All those qualities above, from Romans 12:6, do we let them shine through as we sit around a table talking and weighing, planning and praying?

Let us pray: The next time I go to a meeting, help me to look for and acknowledge the gifts that each person brings to the gathering. In that, let us all praise the Lord. Amen.

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Pray for the clergy spouses from our synod and the synods in Wisconsin attending the **Clergy Spouse Retreat** in Appleton WI these days.

Saturday, February 4

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:35

Someone I know is baking bread today ...

Ah, the smell of freshly baked bread! The anticipation of tasting it when it cools, the nourishment it provides, the good memories it brings back.

Baking bread is not for sissies! There's a lot of work to do, especially in the kneading. Timing is everything, from deciding when the dough is ready to rise, to when it's ready to take out of the pan.

But when you're done, you have food for yourself and your family, maybe a gift for a friend, maybe a loaf to be consecrated on the church altar for Holy Communion at the Sunday worship service.

Jesus gave bread a whole new meaning when he compared his mission to the sustaining, life-giving, satisfying experience of eating bread. "Mmmm, heavenly!" we might say after a particularly delicious bite. And Jesus might just respond, "Just wait and see what I have in store for you!"

Let us pray: Help us to appreciate the many connections we have to eternal life in our everyday lives on this earth. Amen.

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Pray for **Pastor Steve Gauger** and the **members of Calvary, Rapid River** as they celebrate **18 years of ministry together** this month.