

**Devotions – April 12-19, 2020**

By Christine Harkness

United Lutheran Church, Crystal Falls, Michigan

**Sunday, April 12, 2020**

Text: Psalm 32:8

**“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”**

As I get older, I somehow thought I'd be slowing down. Hah! Every year I seem to get busier. 2020 is no exception. My goodness, just three months in and we're preparing to transition to our "retirement" home, our oldest and her family are considering a move to the U.P. and our middle child and her husband are expecting their second child in June. Our youngest is thinking about buying his first home and my husband is trying to retire but keeps getting called back for special projects. Transitions and changes can be hard for some; but for me, I strive to enjoy the journey and move forward in faith. My faith is given a boost each time I worship, sing and pray. I know God's got my back and is guiding me as I navigate my future. I'm reminded of the benediction we shared at our ELCA congregation in Green Bay. May God go before you to show you the way. Behind you to encourage you, above you to watch over you, beneath you to support you, beside you to befriend you and within you to give you peace. Onward!

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for guiding me through life and reminding me you are always with me. Let me be mindful of your plan for me and to be patient in all things. Amen.*



**Monday, April 13, 2020**

Text: Hebrews 13:8

**“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”**

Our oldest daughter and her husband welcomed baby number two last fall. A beautiful little girl named Autumn who decided to arrive seven weeks early...just like her brother Ashton had two years earlier. They'd been through this before, but it was "still hard." With a toddler there was little time to rest and spending as much time as possible at the hospital was a priority. Settling into a routine helped when baby came home and of course this Grandma went downstate to help with that transition. Our daughter asked, "Mom, could you please stay forever...or at least until she starts school?" I laughed and she said, "I'm not kidding." Babies are a lot of work. Four

months later she told me, “Autumn is pure joy.” In the blink of an eye, the sleepless nights, the back and forth trips to the NICU and balancing the demands of a toddler and newborn came into perspective. God was with them from the beginning, through the pregnancy, the delivery and the transition home. I once heard, “Babies are God’s opinion the world must go on.” Finding pure joy in the shadows of life is found in the simple things. Like a baby’s smile. Even at 3:00 in the morning.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for the miracle of life and the endless blessings from this precious gift. Be with all families as they move through the different phases of life. Amen.*



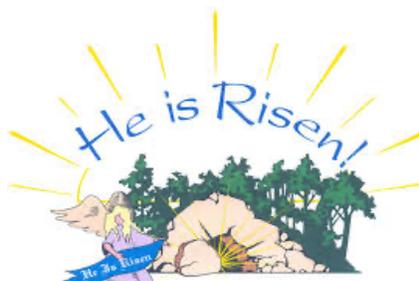
**Tuesday, April 14, 2020**

Text: James 1:17

**“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”**

I work as a speech pathologist in a diverse clinical setting in Crystal Falls. I have the privilege of working with the very young up to the very old. Supporting my patients through life’s transitions has been rewarding in countless ways. Providing families with strategies to encourage speech and language development in their toddler is fun! Informing a wife that her ailing husband can no longer eat, or drink safely is not. Some of my patients lose the ability to speak, while others struggle with declining memory. Their loved ones often express a sense of helplessness because they “just don’t know what to do.” It’s my job and my pleasure to show them what they CAN do. We celebrate each moment and recognize not every gain will be momentous. I believe my profession chose me. I believe God gently steered me toward this calling. I commit to living my faith while making a living and that includes treating people with caring compassion. It means holding their hands when they are lonely. It means singing a familiar hymn because that’s what they remember. It means saying “God bless you as you go” when they are actively dying. Work for me is a gift. And giving should always mean more than receiving.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for healthcare providers who bring caring to life and take their patients from where they are to where they want to be. Amen.*



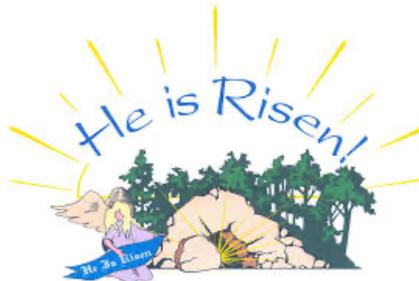
**Wednesday, April 15, 2020**

Text: Psalm 18:2

**“The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”**

Living in the Midwest means we experience all four seasons and for us Yoopers, we know winter is the longest of all. Even though we enjoy outdoor activities, I can't help but wish Spring would “just get here already.” The snow slowly melts, the ice on our lake starts to crack and I wonder each morning if this will be the day I see that first robin. Spring washes away the piles of sand left on the roads, reminds the trees it's time to wake up and coaxes our perennials up toward the sun and longer days. Spring is also the season of Lent and Easter. Was there a greater transition in the history of time? The hymn ‘Lord, I Lift Your Name on High’ is a series of transitions. “He came from Heaven to Earth to show the way, from the earth to the cross, my debt to pay, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky, Lord, I Lift Your Name on High.” At communion we sing “Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world.” What a wonder Easter is. A promise of new life, eternal life and forgiveness of sins. When winter drags on, I know it's pulling us closer to this miracle of new beginnings.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for the promise of each new beginning. Help us to live our lives with humility and compassion for others. Keep us steadfast in our faith and ever mindful of Jesus' ultimate sacrifice. Amen.*



**Thursday, April 16, 2020**

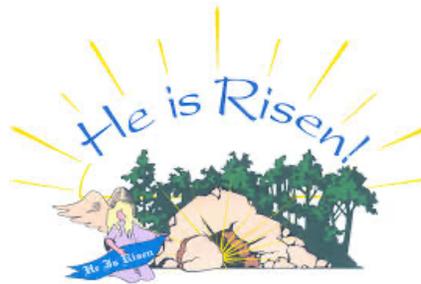
Text: Jeremiah 29:11

**“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”**

United Lutheran in Crystal Falls and Bethany Lutheran in Amasa have begun our 16<sup>th</sup> month without a pastor. As a member of the call committee, I struggle at times because I think I should be doing more. Praying harder, sending silent appeals to God or reassuring our faithful congregations that wherever we're going, God's already there. I don't think of our churches as being in transition anymore. We are between pastors. We continue to worship, sing, pray, welcome new members and celebrate baptisms and mourn the passing of family and friends. We are active congregations! The root word “con” means “with.” Whoever our next pastor is, he or she will find we are prepared to work with them in shared ministries. It's not realistic or fair to expect a single person to do everything. We have certainly proven we are more than capable of working together to grow in our faith and faithful service. Just as we've been patient in the time leading up to our next pastor, we must give our next pastor time to transition into their new role,

new congregations and perhaps new community. To be successful, we must not rush forward and risk undoing all the good work we've accomplished.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, give us patience in uncertain times, strength to continue our faith journey and comfort in knowing we are never alone. Amen.*



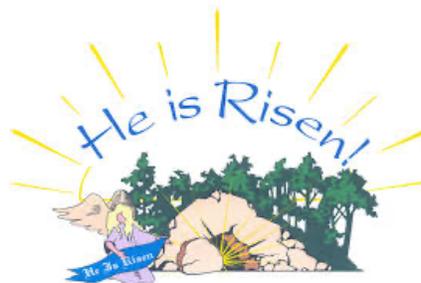
**Friday, April 17, 2020**

Text: John 13:7

**Jesus replied, 'You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'**

We just listed our house for sale. Some may think we put the cart before the horse because we found our retirement home first and now we're going to see how long it takes to sell our current place. It's lovely with great neighbors and we've made many friends. We thought it was going to be forever. We've moved several times in our 40+ years of marriage. This time feels like we'll finally be settled. We'll be close to our adult children and grandchildren. As we transition into this next chapter of our lives, I'm excited for everything we've yet to experience. This will include finding a new church. For us, it's a priority. I can't remember a time when I stopped going to church. I started teaching Sunday School when I was 18 and through the years have been active in all of our congregations. That won't change when we re-locate. We will likely visit several ELCA churches before deciding on one. It needs to feel welcoming. The congregation needs to be engaged. We need to see examples of active ministry. God will lead us to our next church. In this I am certain. My faith has taught me to trust in God and his plan for me.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, change may bring challenge, but it also brings opportunities. Thank you for watching over us as we venture into each tomorrow. Amen.*



**Saturday, April 18, 2020**

Text: Galatians 6:9

**Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**

With age comes wisdom. I turned 63 in March and these old bones “ain’t what they used to be!” I have arthritis and recently started having pain in my neck and shoulders. A car accident 40 years ago has come back to haunt me. I’m fortunate to work in a rehab clinic with access to great therapists. I’ve transitioned from therapist to patient and it’s given me a unique perspective. My PT is amazing! He explained why pain in my hands started in my shoulders. I’m grateful to have access to this service and to his knowledge and experience. He is also my friend and he and I work together to support the needs of the patients we serve. Do you have someone in your life who transitions from one role to another? Does your dearest friend become your confidante in times of need? Does your spouse become your business partner, your parents your childcare provider? We assume different roles as the situations require. Counting on family and friends brings peace of mind. God has brought these people into our lives to show us his love for us. I use the acronym O.W.L. to increase my awareness. Observe, Watch and Listen. Is there someone in your life who needs YOU right now? Let God work through you and within you to help you be the difference someone needs in their life.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of family and friends. Help me to be there for them in their time of need. Give me the tools I need to make a difference in their lives. Amen.*

