

**Devotions - July 28 - August 3**  
**by Members of Love Circle**  
**First Lutheran Church, Gladstone, MI**

Sunday, July 28

by Ellen Swenson

Looking for Signs

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

For every action there's a reaction. I chuckle when I picture the push me-pull you llamas from the Dr. Doolittle stories. They serve as a reminder when life's setbacks pull me away from my relationship with God, and push me to worry.

Worry about how I'm going to get through the toughest of times. Worry about results in the future. But I also know who holds the future. I get pulled back to God. Everyday God sees us falling; yet He sees us in the light of His infinite grace and mercy.

That is the proof to live one day at a time. Look for the signs – count a blessing, and it will turn into many. Name them one at a time, like street signs. You will be surprised at the wonders our Lord has done for each and every one of us.

The greatest example is found in the Cross of Jesus. Through his sufferings, we are forgiven and saved. Surely, God uses the trials of a fallen world to strengthen us. It is proclaimed over and over in the Gospel, reminding us of His promise to cause all things to work together for good.

The signs are clear. Say a prayer, thanking Jesus for showing us the Way. He knows the way to Heaven, He came from Heaven to get us!

Lord, help me to keep my eyes on you, the way I trust. Amen.

Monday, July 29

by Jo Skogman

" Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

1 Thessalonians 5:11

My husband and I have the luxury of being retired. When we first retired we were always asked "What are you going to do?" And we said, "We aren't going to do, we are going to be". What are we called to be? 1. Be Prayers: our daily prayer list is long and we have the time to send a letter, a card or phone call to say; we are praying for you. 2. Be Encouragers: encouragement may not solve a problem or cure an ill, but it is a way for God's blessings to flow. 3. Be Hospitable: we now have the time to open our home to others, to bake a loaf of bread for someone, or to serve a funeral lunch. During these dark days of winter who can you encourage?

Dear God, help me to find someone to encourage and pray for today. Amen.

Tuesday, July 30

by Velma Schmidt

John 14:27

Have the words of Christmas changed anything for us? Peace, comfort, joy – all sound so good in December, but what about January and the rest of the year? The problem seems that we associate these words with a Christmas scene of a precious baby, bright angels, and starry skies. We need to broaden our view and look to the God of love, who sent this baby, His Son, to our fallen world – who sends His angels to watch over us – who gives us starry skies to fill our lives with beauty. It is this God of love who brings His peace, His comfort, His joy. These are not just “December” blessings, but they will be with us all year. Jesus, the Son of God, came to make us one with God and to assure us of God’s love. His death brings us salvation and with that we have peace, comfort, and joy.

Dear Lord, thank you for your great love. Help us to always hold fast to you. In Christ’s name. Amen.

Wednesday, July 31

by Nora Smith

“He who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new!”

Revelation 21:5a

Recently it was my privilege and pleasure to join our youth and family minister and some Senior High youth for an afternoon of singing Christmas carols at nursing homes in Gladstone. One of the stops, the new Lakeview Assisted Living, welcomed us with the smell of hot chocolate and mulled cider. Plants and lights and various decorations adorned the waiting area. The Christmas tree by the fireplace caught my attention.

Now I knew this Christmas tree had once been at First Lutheran Church. It had been assembled, well almost assembled, the top did not fit on the tree as it was too tall for the room. This tree had been a gift for the youth room, traveling all the way from California to Gladstone. It's branches were a bit disheveled but it did make a brave stand as it was decorated with lights and a few hand made ornaments. This summer the tree was given to the owner of Lakeview Assisted Living.

The tree was now breath taking. All the sections of branches reaching up toward the ceiling, but having lots of space, and every branch spread out perfectly. The lights and ornaments of red and gold sparkled in the afternoon sun light. A picture of this tree could have graced the pages of Better Homes and Gardens.

Doesn't our God work like that? He takes me, misshapen and not quite complete, and transforms me into His beautiful child. Yes, behold, I make all things new. The others gathered for caroling may not have had my experience but the music never sounded sweeter to me.

Thank you, God, for the many opportunities you allow me to experience your love and grace. Teach me to place my life in your hands in order to be transformed in ways too wonderful to imagine. Amen.

Thursday, August 1

by Velma Schmidt

The kingdom of heaven is like a mother baking sugar cookies. She rolls out the dough and makes many interesting shapes. The pieces of dough that fall on the side are not discarded, but are rolled out again to make more shapes. Still there are left-over pieces and she uses these shapes as they are. Many times the new shapes are more interesting than the planned shapes. So it is with God and people. People are formed for specific reasons. God does not discard the odd and supposedly worthless people. The cookies by themselves can do nothing, but God can use all - even those that the world considers odd and worthless. God's son came for all and made all whole in God's sight.

Dear Heavenly Father, Help us to remember that all are precious in your sight. Amen

Friday, August 2

by Jo Skogman

"Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands."

Isaiah 49:15B-16

Forgetting. Confusion. Each of us knows the frustration of forgetting things, of not being able to think clearly or accurately; it is a part of being human. It is usually a small inconvenience in life. Imagine forgetfulness and confusion insidiously taking over your brain. Imagine not remembering the familiar as comforting and welcoming. Even faith and God can become absent memories.

Yet God does not forget. We are called to be God's faithful witnesses to God's presence in the midst of Alzheimer's disease, the fourth leading cause of death in adults. What can we do? We can touch to calm. We can listen and accept persons with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers as they share their frustrations and fears. We can ask to hear their stories of the past. We can treat them with dignity. We can be patient with them. We can pray for them.

Dear God, help us to be messengers of hope today. Amen.

Saturday, August 3

by Wenona Lund

The Master's Touch

Author Unknown

"And he touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose and ministered unto them." Matthew 8:15

"He touched her hand, and the fever left her."

He touched her hand as He only can,  
With the wondrous skill of the great Physician,  
With the tender touch of the Son of Man,  
And the fever pain in the throbbing temples  
Died out with the flush on brow and cheek;  
And the lips that had been so parched and burning  
Trembled with thanks that she could not speak;  
And the eyes, where the fever light had faded,  
Looked up – by her grateful tears made dim;  
And she rose and ministered to her household –  
She rose and ministered unto Him.

"He touched her hand, and the fever left her."

Oh blessed touch of the Man Divine!

So beautiful then to rise and serve Him  
When the fever is gone from you life and mine;  
It may be the fever of restless serving,  
With heart all thirsty for love and praise,  
And eyes all aching and strained with yearning  
Toward self-set goals in the future days;  
Or it may be a fever of spirit anguish,  
Some tempest of sorrow that dies not down  
Till the cross at last is in meekness lifted  
And the head stoops low for the thorny crown;  
Or it may be a fever of pain and anger,  
When the wounded spirit is hard to bear,  
And only the Lord can draw forth the arrows  
Left carelessly, cruelly rankling there.

Whatever the fever, His touch can heal it;  
Whatever the tempest, his voice can still;  
There is only joy as we seek His pleasure;  
There is only a rest as we seek His will –  
And some day after life's fitful fever,  
I think we shall say in the home on high:  
"If the hands that He touched but did His bidding  
How little it matters what else went by!"

Ah, Lord! Thou knowest us altogether,

Each heart's sore sickness, whatever it be.

Touch Thou our hands! Let the fever leave us –

And so shall we minister unto Thee!

Oh Lord, we thank and praise You for your constant love in all circumstances. Now we ask you to touch us in our need. Help us to feel your love when we feel lost or alone. Heal our hearts of bitterness or whatever consumes us and causes us to feel estranged from You. Fill us full of love and concern for others and give us joyful hearts to serve You. In Jesus' name. Amen