

"It is WHAT IT IS!@!! and this is where God meets us!!"

ALL SAINTS LUTHERAN CHURCH "Oasis of Joy" USA

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Mid-February ... 2018

Dear Friends ... as we journey into this new year ...

I sometimes just have to stop ... yes, just stop, if only for a moment ... and simply reflect, pray, and think ... and allow the world to slow down. (I'm starting to sound like Mattie Stepanek ... only he, in his youth and innocence, says it so much better!) Hard for me to believe ... I've been here almost 44 years. I "love" the number 44. I used to call Scott Mitchell "#44" ... he wore Hank Aaron's baseball jersey when I first met him. When Scott died too early ... I made hats with the #44 on it. Some of you have shared many of these 44 years with me. You've seen and felt the peaks and valleys, and everything "in-between." To those of you who are newer to this humble place ... I hope you feel at home and welcome.

I am honored every day to be your pastor ... and hopefully, your friend. For the staff I am privileged to work with ... I am so grateful. You give of yourselves beyond measure!! My name may be on the sign ... but you are the ones who make things happen. Our deacons ... the church council ... you may meet only once per month. Yet you set boundaries and policies, allowing us to open our doors and hearts to all the varied folks who need a place of comfort and peace. Together we all do our best to create an atmosphere in which our people find joy in their church and their religion. And to each of you ----- for your time, your support, your openness to me: my humanity, my foibles (what is a foible??), my family, the ministry I try to share with you.

When you've been around as long as I have ... and many of you know what it's like ... one of the biggest challenges is not to grow "stale." In a good way ... each day is a challenge:

--- We have to give each day and moment our very best.

--- Be open to new ideas, and to the constructive criticisms/ideas of others.

--- I/We need to realize: the world, the church, our journeys ----- it's not "all about me" ... it's all of us together ... sharing and growing together.

With age can come renewed wisdom about what's important and what's not.

Thanks to each of you for sharing this journey with me. We never know where it will lead us.

I'm grateful for my kids. Every day ... they are at the heart-and-soul of who I am.

I continue to try to walk in the "footsteps of love" Jude shared with me for over 23 years. I am humbled and blessed now to share my life with Peggy. I remember sharing in hers and Mike's wedding ... and later saying "good-bye" to Mike, after his journey with cancer. Somehow, someway ----- the pain of cancer brings us together, as Peggy is almost finished with her follow-up treatments for breast cancer.

Mike's and Jude's spirits will always be a part of who we are. And, Peggy, thanks for putting some extra "skips" into my steps!!

A new year has dawned. I don't know exactly what to expect. I do know this: each of us has a "calling." Each of us has a purpose and a place in God's unpredictable and often-surprising kingdom. Each day ... when I turn the key to open the door to our "humble temple" ... I thank you for the privilege of coming to work every day.

With joy, love, and hope "rev"

(I know these words have been a bit personal ... hope it's ok. They are a part of our "annual report" ... and I am honored to have the opportunity to share my feelings with you.)

IS IT "LENT" ALREADY????

Kind-of an ironic twist that ASH WEDNESDAY is on February 14 – Valentine's Day. Well ... it's all about love!! ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP is on Wednesday the 14th at noon and 7:30 ---- we share the gift of ashes and the Lord's Supper. Ashes are a symbol of our humanity ("ashes to ashes" ... "dust to dust") and hope ---- as we look forward to the "victory and joy" of Easter. LENT is a time of reflection and renewal. The weeks following Ash Wednesday we have worship every Thursday at 7:30 ... preceded by Lenten Suppers at 6:30. Our suppers are informal and welcoming ... you can sign-up on Sunday ... and, if you'd like, you can help "host" one or more of them by sharing sandwiches, salad, or dessert.

BINGO FOR OUR VETERANS AT THE "ILLINOIS VETERANS HOME" in MANTENO

We could use a few volunteers. Many of the "vets" need help playing their cards ... and we help taking them back-and-forth to their rooms. We bring ---- lots of "singles" ... hats ... and a festive spirit. We leave after the 11:00 service, on February 18. You can sign-up on Sunday, or give us a call here at church.

WE ARE COLLECTING GENTLY WORN AND NEW SHOES AND EXCELLENT CONDITION PROM DRESSES AND FORMAL GOWNS.

The shoes are for an organization that is raising money helping families who are trying to adopt a child from another country. Josh and Ashley are a local couple spear-heading this drive. Josh is a pastor, and Ashley a teacher. Melissa's Closet and Crystal's Jewelry Box are collecting the gowns and preparing for a sale where students can buy a prom dress for \$5. Amazing ... all the things people do to help others.

We are collecting shoes and dresses for the next two weeks.

COUNTDOWN TO THE SPAGHETTI DINNER ... SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 6:00

This is our only major fund-raiser for the year and we've been doing this for almost 30 years. Please try to get your tickets by this Sunday. We are over the 200 mark ... and we cap sales at about 300. You can also stop by the church during the week. This is a fun adult evening. Tickets are \$20 ... and we are still open for your donations to the auction. Items must be new ... and we also can use gift cards, services rendered, tickets ----- whatever connections you may have. Thanks for your support.

OUR IRISH FRIEND GERRY DIGNAN

is joining us for worship on Sunday, March 4 ---- at both services. He has a beautiful voice ... and is also sharing a night of music here in Charter Hall on Friday evening, March 9.

THE PRAYER CONNECTION

*Paige Fitzpatrick is recovering from her surgery for a broken ankle. *Gary Gow's mom Pat died last week. We will miss her contagious smile. *Anne Fritz's friend Tony Kazor is battling kidney cancer. *Chuck Ellis is recovering from shoulder surgery. *Kathy Fredrick's brother – Don Kramer – is at Loyola Hospital ... prayers for her friend Sue Tracey, too. *Michael Reilly is living with ALS. *Grateful that Jen Fredrick's dad Mark is home. *Brenda Metz's mom is at Holy Family Villa. *Kris Miller Heidi is having heart surgery at the Cleveland Clinic on February 20 she is the daughter of Ralph and Nancy Miller. *Hank Sawa just had knee-replacement surgery. *Brandy Whitlow's step-dad Roger died ... his memorial is later this month. *Dan Andersen's daughter Jenny is very sick ... she has been at Palos Hospital. *Brenden Mackey has been sick and in a lot of pain ... he is at home. *Kolleen Lee (Midco employee and friend of the Janiks) lost everything in a fire ... we are helping her out. *Mavis Carlberg (Rey's husband) died almost 2 weeks ago. We will miss her presence in church .. she and Rey were married 67 years. *Matt and Laura Rauba have a baby boy -- Michael Landon. He is Mary Nance's grandson. *Carolyn (Buglio) and Jim Blaschek have boy, too --- Jayson Leo. *The Buikema's friend – Gerald Langenstrass – is awaiting a liver transplant.