

Be Well

SOCIAL



Be Whole

2025 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

HOLY TRINITY
LUTHERAN CHURCH

40 DAYS OF PREPARATION

2025 Lenten Devotional

“BE WELL, BE WHOLE”

Dear Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Community,

Lent is a season that anticipates the hope of spring and prepares us for the promise of the resurrection. Over these 40 days, you are invited to focus on your faith through three faith practices: daily devotions, weekly small groups, and regular worship.

Daily Devotional: In the pages to follow, you will find 40 devotionals written by 40 Holy Trinity friends, reflecting on the theme “Be Well, Be Whole.” Use this booklet to take up the practice of a daily devotional.

Small Groups: At the end of this devotional booklet, you will find discussion guides for four weeks of small group discussions. Sign up for a Lent Small Group on the website, holytrinityonline.org, or by signing up at Holy Trinity.

Worship Regularly: Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 5 at 6 pm, as we remember that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. All are welcome to begin this holy season with a special Ash Wednesday service, with supper at 5 pm. Throughout Lent, worship will continue on Sundays at 9 am, with *Holden Evening Prayer* on Wednesdays at 6 pm.

Introduction to this year's theme: In John 10:10, Jesus tells his followers, "I came that (you) might have life, and have it abundantly." Living well is a personal journey that presents each of us with unique opportunities to steward all dimensions of our lives. This study is meant to help you on that journey as you consider the ways God has created and blessed you. Every aspect of our being belongs to God. When we pay attention to all aspects of our humanity - our bodies, our relationships, our money, our minds, our feelings, our work, our faith - we more fully experience that abundant life in Christ and radiate God's love to others. The material for this year's Lenten theme and content comes from Portico, a ministry of the ELCA.

- Wednesday, March 5: **Ash Wednesday**
- Sunday, March 9 & Wednesday, March 12: **Social Well-being** (Small Groups)
- Sunday, March 16 & Wednesday, March 19: **Physical Well-being** (Small Groups)
- Sunday, March 23 & Wednesday, March 26: **Intellectual Well-being** (No Small Groups)
- Sunday, March 30 & Wednesday, April 2: **Financial Well-being** (Small Groups)
- Sunday, April 6 & Wednesday, April 9: **Emotional Well-being** (Small Groups)

God's peace to you in this season of Lent, as we prepare and await the hope of spring,

~ Pastors Alicia and Ben



Pastor Ben Hilding

Day 1, March 5

Tracking my blood pressure. Recognizing high sodium levels in easily accessible foods. Resisting snack splurges. Working on portion control and regular exercise. Avoiding unhealthy habits as a reward for a hard day. It's a humbling journey. But I needed it.

Dear Jesus, you saw people hurting and you had compassion. You sought to heal them and bring them to a life of peace, wholeness, and well-being. Lead us and guide us as we seek to be well and be whole. Give us strength, determination, and humility. We are ashes, but with ashes you can do beautiful things. Amen.

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.
- Genesis 3:19

My jaw ached. Christmas was coming, and I was worried I had an ear infection. So I made a quick doctor appointment for December 18. Turns out it wasn't an ear infection... it was stress. And the doctor told me, "I'm glad you came in because you've got high blood pressure."

Ash Wednesday is a day when we admit that we live in finite bodies. Ash Wednesday is when we are honest with ourselves: we will not live forever, and the various aspects of our personalities that make us great can also drive us into the ground. I guess stress and a stubborn drive don't count as exercise.

It turns out - I needed Ash Wednesday on December 18. Because Ash Wednesday led me to humility. Since then, I've been trying. Learning. Sometimes complaining.

***Jesus said: "Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well."
- Matthew 9:22***

A woman was very sick and came to Jesus to get help. She said, "If I only touch His cloak, I will be made well." Jesus did heal her as He knew her faith.

When I have been sick, I ask Jesus in faith to heal me, and He has. But to be fully whole, our souls must be well, too. I love the hymn in our hymnal on page 785: When Peace like a River- It is Well with My Soul, "When peace like a river attendeth my way when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul."

Thank you, Father, for healing me when I am sick. Please continue to guard my soul, too. Amen.



Karen Hoylo
Day 2, March 6



Amber Kahnke

Day 3, March 7

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. - Proverbs 16:24

It's natural to have negative thoughts, but they can build up and affect those around us. Shifting to gratitude can make the space feel lighter and more hopeful. Being mindful of this shift can improve our outlook and positively influence others. Gratitude lists are a helpful tool.

Here are some gratitude journal exercises:

- Write down one thing you're grateful for when you wake up and one before bed.
- Create a "Top 3" list each day; noting three things you're grateful for and looking for something better to replace one.
- Reflect on the week every Sunday, journaling all the things you're grateful for.

Remember to share your gratitude with others. If you see something positive, say it! Your words can change someone's entire day!

Dear Lord, help us to show gratitude for all you have given to us, not only to you

My flesh and heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. - Psalm 73:26

Trust God when you're going through hard times. God can help your intense feelings during your highs and lows. Don't rely on your own thoughts, but trust in God. When we have hardships with friends or family, talking to God and following His word can lead us on the right path.

Dear God, help us to trust you, especially when we are going through hard times. Lead us on the right path. Amen.



7th Grade Group 1

*Adley, Alexandar,
Ava, Elliana, Emma,
Finley, Morgan
Day 4, March 8*



Mark Jackson

Day 5, March 9

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. - Isaiah 41:10

Physical and mental wellness are important. Spiritual wholeness is everything. Limitations, it seems to me, are put on us by ourselves. Whenever I feel pushed to the edge, my mantra is, "I know God will never give me more than I can handle."

There was a day when my physical pain was overwhelming, which affected my mental health as well, and I was at my breaking point. As I had a heart-to-heart talk with God, He understood I could take no more and although my pain did not altogether go away, it subsided to being tolerable physically and psychologically. Although I have limitations, if there is something important to me, I find a way.

I am unsure of the reason for my continuing to be in this world. I have accepted that I do not need to know, I only need to do. Each morning, I thank God for the new day and ask for opportunities to help me grow physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and for His guiding hand to recognize those opportunities.

Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. (Psalm 30:2) I pray my life will matter for a bigger purpose than myself. Lord, hold my heart and guide my steps so that my life story will bring you Glory and point others to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. - John 15:5

As an enthusiastic gardener still developing my skills, I observe many lessons in nature, from God. Each year, I plant tomatoes with the hope of a bountiful harvest. As time progresses and the plants grow, there are often instances where leaves wilt and stems appear weak. It is tempting to prune these seemingly underperforming branches to direct more life force to the healthier parts of the plant. Nevertheless, it is surprising that sometimes these feeble-looking branches yield some of the best fruits. These branches thrive due to the strength of the main stem. Through this process, I have learned that patience and trust in Mother Nature are crucial in gardening. Similarly, in our relationship with God, we must continue to remember he is our life force and to seek him to make us strong and whole.

God, thank you for being our life force and vine. When we feel weak and uncertain, remind us to lean into you and that through you, we are whole and will bear more fruit. Amen.



Lindsey Cornell

Day 6, March 10



Dave Bornhofen

Day 7, March 11

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Churches are good for prayer, but so are gyms, hiking trails, running paths, or a nice Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) field with my favorite dog.

Not all churches have four walls. Some of my greatest and most reflective moments have been with God outside of church.

Every step is a choice, every path a possibility. Exercise clears the mind, fills the heart, and fuels the soul. It's not just about the miles- it's about the moments. Let's keep moving forward, one step closer to growth and gratitude.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of our bodies, fearfully and wonderfully made. Please give us the wisdom and discipline to care for our physical health as an expression of gratitude and stewardship. May our bodies be temples that honor and glorify you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. - Joshua 1:9

I found this Bible verse while exploring how this year's theme of "Be Well, Be Whole" applied to my life. In times of emotional, spiritual, and social instability it is easy to let fear and disappointment influence well-being. It is a comfort to rely on God's presence and know that he is with us every step of the way. As an introvert being "strong and courageous" can be challenging in many social situations. This verse is a reminder that with God one can be spiritually strong to face difficult situations with faith and confidence.

Dear God, thank you for your blessings, promises, and presence in our lives. Help me to rely on your word and give me the strength to overcome life's challenges and to live life with faith and hope always. Amen.



Joy Soukup

Day 8, March 12



Agape

*Carson, Elliot, Emmy, Eryn,
Evan, Grace, Jake, Lasse,
Linus, Noah, Parker, Salome*
Day 9, March 13

He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure to even eat. - Mark 6:31

We calculated - 18 bells a day - dictate the rigid routine of our school day deciding our coming and going from class to class and lunch. We often feel rushed, robotic, and not trusted to even use the bathroom without an e-pass with a stopwatch counting the seconds. There are many things competing for our time - activities, sports, friends, family, schoolwork, work, and commuting to and from all of these makes us feel like we really are often "coming and going" with no leisure. But, while discussing this verse at Agape, we all had one thing in common; walking into Holy Trinity Lutheran Church brings us a reprieve. "Upon walking into this space, you can't stay in that headspace (of rush and worry)." "When I walk into this church, it is like the outside world pauses." "Coming to church calms me down from all the stress and busyness." "Walking

in the door, someone will naturally greet you and welcome you to dinner." "This space feels like a safe space." "Coming to church is like a positive snowball effect - it renews my desire to open my Bible at home." So, even though the reprieve we are discussing in this devotion is not in a "deserted place all by ourselves to rest awhile," we feel like our church, our church family and Agape family make us well and make us whole.

Dear God, help us remember there is always a place for us to rest with you. Whenever we are bogged down with rigid schedules, activities, and things to do, you will be there to bear our burdens and bring us the calm we need in our lives. Also thank you for our welcoming church family that nourishes our wellness. Amen.

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. - Ephesians 2:10

A few years ago, a phrase going around corporate circles said, "Bring your whole self to work." The gist of the message was to be your true self - to share your vulnerabilities, triumphs, failures, strengths, and weaknesses while encouraging others to do the same without judgment. But not everyone wanted to share their whole self at work. Some preferred to keep their private selves separate.

With God, it's different. There's no holding back. Not only does God know our whole selves, but God created our whole selves. So, what better place to give your authentic self than to God? God is with us at the joy of a birth, the sadness of a goodbye, the pain of an illness, or just an ordinary Thursday. God knows what's in our heads and hearts even if we don't feel like sharing our whole selves. And talk about no judgment! At any moment, God asks only that we be ourselves – perfectly created in God's image.

Dear God, You know us completely and love us as we are. Help us to bring our true selves to You, without fear of judgment. Amen.



**Sharon
Steinhoff Smith**
Day 10, March 14



Sue Gilles *(Right)*

Day 11, March 15

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? - Luke 12:25

It is so easy to get consumed by stress. God has granted me so many wonderful things (family, friends, job, health). But with all those things I love so much comes the overwhelming urge to worry about them. Stepping back I can understand God has a plan. The amount I dwell on the details will not change the outcome. I just have to trust and that brings me peace (and maybe an extra hour or at least a happier hour).

Dear Lord, Help us shed our worries for at least a brief time and trust in You. Amen.

When I read Psalm 104, it tells me that God created, provides for, and is in control of everything - weather, food, shelter, for all living things, Man and Beast.

Whenever I am outdoors I am grateful to be in his creation. As for me and my late spouse, Geri, and my family through our faith, God has always provided us with love, food shelter, clothing, and other needs. As with life, there will always be trials and tribulations, with God's help you can get through them.

Dear Lord, I give thanks for all of the blessings I have received. Please help me to do my best to take care of all the gifts I have been given and to help others as I am able. Amen.

***May the glory of the Lord endure forever
- Psalm 104:31***



Jim Sandin *(Left)*

Day 12, March 16

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.
– Proverbs 4:23

I love this year's Lenton Devotional theme, "Be Well Be Whole" because one of my passions is the development of resilience skills. Resilience is the ability to recover from adversity or change and grow stronger, despite being affected by something negative or a tragedy/crisis.

I believe the early steps in the faith journey include a simple act of resilience, and the confession of sin. Our participation in regular worship and reciting the Lord's Prayer provide a reminder that God loves us. God grants us both grace and perseverance, to "Be Well and Be Whole" resilient Christians.

As I looked through the bible to share a verse about resilience, I perceived rather dark themes depicting suffering to follow God's plan such as Proverbs 24:16.

"Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes." My preference is a beautiful verse, "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life". It reminds me to take care of myself, and that I have the strength within me to pursue a peaceful, joyful, loving, life. "Be Well Be Whole".

Dear God, When I feel crushed by disappointment, I pray for you to mend my broken heart and give me the courage to reach out to others instead of withdrawing into myself. When the opportunity arises, help me be a good listener, gracious, and compassionate to others in need. Amen.



Debbie Church

Day 13, March 17



7th Grade Group 2

*Abby, Finnegan,
Grayden, Jackson,
Lizzie, Lyla, Max,
Violet, William*
Day 14, March 18

***Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest. - Matthew 11:28-30***

Every day of our lives is filled with stressors such as:

Beliefs - political, personal.

Events - tests, sports, meetings

Work - homework

Effort - or lack thereof

Life - in general

Loss - friends, faith, family

When we take these stressors to Jesus we can become free of these burdens and gain:

Benefits our mood

Energy

Wellness

Happiness, humbleness

Optimism

Life in faith

Excitement

*Dear God, may our whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved when we
take our cares to the LORS. Lift the yoke of our burdens to make us whole.
Amen.*

For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

- 1 Timothy 4:8

December 2013: My 50th birthday! My husband, Tim, and I were empty nesters – we were having fun. . . Our oldest son had just graduated from college and our other two children were in college. Our families were close and we were able to do some traveling. In January, I came down with a bad cold and couldn't shake the cough. I ignored it until Tim finally said "Enough is enough—this isn't a normal cough." I finally went to the doctor in April and they found a tumor about the size of a lime in the upper right lobe of my lung. Stage II lung cancer. How could this be? I was a runner, a non-smoker, and lived a very healthy lifestyle. Why me?

And then I had this realization (after many sleepless nights). Why NOT me? It's easy to blame God for things that happen to us. Sometimes it's a cancer diagnosis, sometimes it's the death of a loved one, sometimes it's the loss of something else. No matter what it is, I found the words "Why NOT me?" helped me realize that God is there—always. He listens, guides, and gives us the tools to get through those rough patches that each of us is navigating.

Dear God, please continue to give me and others strength to get through our most challenging times. We know our bodies are not designed to live on this earth forever, but the promise of eternal life with you shall be our ultimate goal. May you bless all of those suffering pain, loss, and sorrow and guide them in their journey. Amen.



Jane Dittberner

Day 15, March 19



Maggie Arko

Day 16, March 20

An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” But wanting to vindicate himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor? - Luke 10:23-28

When I was young, I worked with a woman I just didn’t like. The hospital offered a teambuilding class and our first assignment was to pick someone we did not like and give them one honest compliment weekly. You know who I chose. Initially, it was hard to find even one thing to compliment her. However, week by week, it got easier. I went from just tolerating her to listening to her. I grew to like her and eventually love her. Georgia became a lifelong friend, confidant, and wise mentor.

In this passage, Jesus is asked what one must do to attain eternal life and he agrees with the lawyer’s response. The lawyer then asked “Who is my neighbor?” and Jesus responded with the parable of the good Samaritan. That parable teaches me that my neighbor isn’t just my nearest kin, dearest friend, or someone “just like me.” My neighbor is the “the other” and may even be the enemy. When I see “the other” as my neighbor, I bring them into my community. I need them because my community makes my life rich in good times and sustains me in the bad.

Dear Lord, please help me to know my neighbor and be a good neighbor. Help me to show everyone love, kindness, and patience even when it is hard. Help me to see You in the world. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.
- Mark 6:31-32

When you are feeling overwhelmed, and thoughts are racing through your mind, it is difficult to think clearly. Spending time alone in nature helps me with my concerns. I am an avid outdoorsman and can attest to the mental clarity and perspective that comes during the quiet moments in the woods or on the water. We get so busy in our day-to-day lives that we rarely take time to connect ALONE. This helps me bring new ideas and answers to difficult questions and helps lift the fog of confusion from challenges. I am successful every time I go into nature...no, not with harvesting game, but from the *love I have for nature and the outdoors.

Dear God, thank you for allowing me to have a solitary place to go when I need time to reflect on blessings or concerns that I may have. Amen.

*We currently have “no limit” on LOVE.



Dennis Tietz
Day 17, March 21



Jessica Gallagher

Day 18, March 22

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. - 3 John 1:2

Wellness is not just about the physical health of a person. It is not all about blood pressure, cholesterol, and iron levels. As a family practice provider, I must consider the physical health, mental health, and spiritual health of the person who sits before me. As a provider, it is “easy” for me to encourage a patient to exercise their mind, body, and spirit. Personally, however, it is difficult for me to “practice what I preach.”

In the hustle and bustle of life, it is easy to become distracted and put yourself on the back burner. It is hard to put your spiritual health at the forefront. The idea of losing an hour of sleep to devote to a devotional or a prayer or to exercise is overwhelming at best. I have found, however, that when I put God first and remember to pray and spend time with God, he is there to greet me. It is now up to me to fill my cup so that I can continue to fill the cup of others.

Lord, I thank You for my body, and I ask for Your help in maintaining my health and wellness. Grant me the strength to care for myself and let Your healing power fill my body. Amen.

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. - Mathew 11:28-30

By carrying burdens by yourself, you may feel frustrated, confused, tired, anxious, and scared. Sometimes you have to take a step back from stressful events and let God help you. God can help you with any social, physical, financial, intellectual, and emotional burdens.

Dear God, help us take a step back to help rid us of the burdens that we carry. Thank you for helping us be whole. Amen.



8th Grade Group 2

Aaron, Eric, Everett, Isla, Kenzie, Will

Day 19, March 23



Rita Goggins

Day 20, March 24

Encourage one another as long as it is called today. - Hebrews 3:13

Be kind with your words, generous with your time, and share your talents. Your positive actions make it easy for people to find you in their time of need. If we all set our daily practices to be of help to others, we will create a life with less burden. Also, take time to encourage yourself. If you can speak kindly to yourself, create rejuvenating practices, and build guideposts to come back to your practices when life gets hard you will be able to encourage others to try one more time, start over, or ask for help. Best of luck, I know you can do it!

Dear God, Create in me a generous spirit so that I may share my talents with everyone who crosses my path. Amen.

And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:19

As a wife, mom, daughter, sister, and nurse I often feel the need to help solve challenges for those I love and care for. I often find myself carrying the worry and wondering the “what ifs.” In the day-to-day hustle and bustle of life, I have tried to remember to trust in God’s timing, even if it may differ from my expectations, and to know that he will provide for our needs. Philippians 4:19 is a great reminder to trust in God’s provision, which can help us to live more fully in the present moment, free from anxiety and to just be content with where our feet are.

Dear God, I trust in your provision and ask that you provide for me and those that surround me. Help me to have faith and to not worry, knowing that you will supply every need. Amen.



Makayla Drazan

Day 21, March 25



Sunday Confirmation Group

*Adam, Brayden, Eldon, Ella,
Jude, Nick, Summer, Taylor*
Day 22, March 26

***I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.
- Philippians 4:13***

Sometimes it can be hard to stay positive when there is so much negativity around us. Our friends and even our family can be negative and bring us down. It is important to have a happy heart. Your happy heart can have a positive impact on the people around you. Happiness is a choice, but sometimes it is a hard choice. When you are around negative people, you can try to use your positive attitude to change their negativity, but sometimes, you need to make the hard decision to walk away. God strengthens us to make the hard choices.

Dear God, help us to have a happy heart. Strengthen us to stay positive and share our positivity with others. Amen.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. - James 4:8a

I have a secret Pinterest board titled “Becoming Better.” It’s filled with everything from quotes and infographics to workout tips and videos, links to podcasts I could listen to, and articles I thought I should read. A lot of the pins were added at a particular time in my life when I wasn’t feeling the greatest about myself, about how I was doing as a mother, and as a wife. The subtitle could be... “things I pin when I’m feeling insecure.”

I also have a journal filled with pieces of text I’ve found moving from devotionals, verses that I want to remember, and prayers I’ve stumbled across. Some have been added when there has been something I’ve been struggling with or needing spiritual guidance on. Some I’ve run across and knew that this would help me or someone I love someday. I’ll admit the Pinterest board hasn’t proved very helpful. Many of the workouts have not been done, podcasts have not been listened to, and articles have not been read. They sit on a virtual vision board in a digital world. When I re-look at them as I’m writing this it’s not surprising that this board contains things I pinned in secret for no one else to know.

But the journal I find helpful, comforting, and calming. The verses are read, and the prayers are said. I feel good adding things and sharing these words of support I’ve found over the years. From those pages, I’ve come to be able to give myself and others grace. By drawing nearer to these thoughts about God and his word, I’ve recognized more of the blessings in my life than the burdens.

Feeding my heart and soul with God’s words and wisdom has helped me much more than any content found on the internet. And as I’ve turned to God’s guidance, I feel less demand to be “better” and more content and compassionate with myself.

Lord, help me to turn to you, trusting in your unconditional love. Remind me that in You, I can find everything I will need. Amen.



Cassie Olson

Day 23, March 27



Dr. Tim Miller

Day 24, March 28

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. - James 1:4

You don't see **"Perfect or Whole"** in this passage from James, but I think that is what James implies. In James, "perfection" doesn't mean "to be without sin" but rather acknowledging our sinful self. Jesus was never upset at sinners, He was only upset with people who didn't think they were sinners. (The proverbial splinter in someone else's eye while ignoring the log in our own.) Biblical revelation recognizes the dark side in us and integrates our failures in order to achieve a promised wholeness. Becoming mature and whole by recognizing our sin and it's forgiveness through Christ's death and resurrection would suggest we need to:

1. Be patient in times of difficulty
2. Tell/live consistent truth
3. Control our tongue and not speak vile words or slander
4. Avoid anger, hatred, and fighting
5. Accept God's divine plan of unified love for/by ourselves and others which is more important than worldly satisfactions.

(References: *Falling Upward* by Rohr pp 53-63; *Be Mature, The Book of James* by Wiersbe pp 23-28.)

Let us pray. Lord help me mature into the wholeness of Christian life. Grant me the wisdom (James 1:5) to be a doer of the word not just a hearer; help me to grow in patience, faith, and hope in the face of inevitable tribulation (Rom 5:3, John 16:33); and lastly, sinful though I am, help me to be a participant in your divine plan of unified love. Amen.

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul. - 3 John 1:2

“Wellness” is a particularly timely subject, as I have recently undergone surgery. My recovery has gone well, but God has done so much more for me than that. I had some difficult struggles earlier in my life and have only realized in the past few years that it was God caring for me all along that got me through those struggles. God truly contributes to all aspects of our well-being!

Dear God, thank you for always caring for us. Please help me to become more worthy of your care. Amen.



7th Grade Group 3 (Right)

Ainsley, Brody, Dylan, Hunter, Ingrid, Quinn

Day 26, April 2



Mikki Hubert (Left)

Day 25, April 1

Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth. - Psalm 46:10

This verse means to be faithful to and with God and to trust Him. With God all things are achievable. God is everywhere and you can find faith in Him wherever and whenever you need. He is very important and should be well respected. In life, faith can overcome all obstacles.

Lord, I lift my hands to you in prayer asking for guidance and protection. Amen.



Chris Loose

Day 27, April 3

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. - Psalm 11:12

A healthy daily habit of morning quiet time/devotional reading can help reduce anxiety and start your day with a reminder of God's presence with you. I am a type-A person who can be prone to worry and I found this habit to be very calming and to start my day with the right focus.

My husband Joel helped himself reduce worry by starting his day with a morning quiet time. He was doing this back when we were dating 35 years ago and tried to keep this up through our married life. Of course, he was not perfect with this practice but particularly in his later years, he made the habit a priority. His siblings would take turns reading out of a daily devotional book called *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young with their mother on the phone. Each sibling took a different day.

This particular devotional focuses on bringing peace to your life by focusing on Jesus' presence with you. Recently, I was going through some of Joel's things and ran across his *Jesus Calling* book. I found that it was marked on February 1, which was the day he died. I was reminded that he and his mother did *Jesus Calling* on the morning of his death. What a comfort to me to know the Psalm listed above was speaking to him about being lifted up by angels at the time he needed to hear this most.

Dear Lord, Please help us to focus on your presence in our lives first thing in the morning before we succumb to the many distractions, worries, and fears of our day. Please help us remember that you will send angels to us to guard us and lift us up when we need it most. Amen.

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. - Isaiah 41: 10

Very important parts of our life are Holy Trinity, faith, friends, and positive attitudes. As we have concerns the last three years. First my kidney failure and now cancer. I am doing well. Donna has lost most of her eyesight, but she is doing well. Now my opportunity has come to care for her. This opportunity makes me WHOLE. God has guided us to this place, church, and area to make us WELL, WHOLE, and positive about his guidance for us. Our life is Whole and Well. He has blessed us!

Wishes for good health dear friends. I pray that God's word will be sustained during times of concern. Faith, friends, and God will help us BE WELL, BE WHOLE! Amen.



Allen Gulbransen

Day 28, April 4



**Pastor
Alicia Hilding**

Day 29, April 5

***I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery. - Exodus 20:2***

First, when reflecting on well-being, my mind races to self-improvement as there's plenty of room for me to grow. Yet, I know Lent is more than a New Year's resolution...Next, my mind goes to the Ten Commandments, knowing God created them for our well-being. Amazingly, I can distort that, too, into self-improvement impositions.

This shows my human nature to quickly focus on myself. However, the commandments are not just an aptitude or achievement list. The Ten Commandments begin with God. God reminds us that God brought God's people out of the place of endless and increasing demands. God didn't take God's people out of Egypt just to create a new lifelessness. My hope this season is that God may help us to gain quality of life by reflecting on well-being, not from new lists, but by being reminded of who God is and what God's desire is for us.

God, we so easily turn inward. Turn us away from ourselves and transform us during Lent. Make each of us well inside because of what you've already done for us so we can contribute to the well-being of the world. Amen.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. - Proverbs 3:5-6

We are getting to an age where we don't always like to be told what to do. We are finding our independence and want to figure things out for ourselves. This can sometimes mean we are faced with different paths and they aren't always direct or in our best interest. This can be choosing to study or watch TV instead. Or trying our best at practice even after a long day. If we place our trust in God, we know he will be there to help and guide us. We can acknowledge God in all our ways through faith and honor. Our confirmation group agrees that many people in our lives have helped us to trust in the Lord: Pastor Ben, Pastor Alicia, our moms and dads, grandparents, Confirmation leaders, Crew Time leaders, other caring adults, friends and even our pets! We can trust that he saved us and will forgive us for the mistakes we make if we faithfully ask him to steer us in the right direction. In doing this, God will lead us and we will live a good life.

Dear Lord, give us the courage to acknowledge you in all our ways and to trust in you with all our hearts. Guide us so that we can be well and believe in ourselves. Amen.



6th Grade Group 1

*Aubrey, Aydan, Clara, Cora,
Kylee, Lydia, Madden, Max*
Day 30, April 6



Allie Mahowald

Day 31, April 7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:6-7

In this verse, I am reminded of the peace that comes from trusting in God. As a single mother, this verse speaks directly to my heart. Life is full of challenges and uncertainties, but this verse calls me to release my anxieties and turn to God through prayer.

Understanding that many things are beyond my control, I place my trust in God, acknowledging His ability to handle what I cannot. Presenting my requests “with thanksgiving” shifts my focus to the blessings I have, cultivating gratitude. Turning to God granted me strength for both myself and my son, bringing a sense of calm and clarity.

God's promise of peace is incredibly comforting. It protects my heart and mind, helping me stay grounded in life and in Christ. Embracing this peace helps me to be well and whole, knowing that I am supported and loved by God.

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for the peace that comes from trusting in you. In the midst of life's challenges and uncertainties, help me to release my anxieties and turn to you in prayer. Grant me strength to handle what I cannot control, especially as I care for my son, Jack. Amen.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. - John 14:27

Veterans serve with courage and sacrifice, yet the emotional and psychological toll of their experiences can linger long after they return home. The scars left by war may not always be visible, but they are real. As a community, we are called to support veterans and honor their mental health, offering compassion, understanding, and prayer.

God cares deeply for those who are hurting, and He promises peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Just as Jesus healed the brokenhearted, we can offer comfort through His love and the strength of community. By recognizing the struggles veterans face and offering support, we embody Christ's love in action.

Lord, we lift up all veterans who are struggling with their mental health. May they experience Your healing and peace. Guide us to be vessels of Your love, offering support and understanding. Grant strength and restoration to all who serve. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Joel Fadden

Day 32, April 10



Jackie Lee

Day 33, April 9

***A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.
- Proverbs 17:22***

For the last three years, each January has brought some sort of physical pain to members of my family. But this time, it had a much different effect emotionally, mentally, financially, and spiritually. All coming at once and not all beneficial. I'd like to say I responded with positive thoughts and an optimistic outlook but that would be incorrect. It took me some time of self-reflection and discernment to identify that God has provided the strength our minds and bodies need and have needed.

To know that we can lean on God when we are feeling emotionally and mentally discouraged. And by taking care of the body that he has given us, keeps us strong in more ways than just physical. As the bible verse says, a merry heart does good. And however we get to that merry heart, may it be the medicine we need! I know that asking God for strength and guidance helped my heart heal.

Dear Lord, Your strength and unforgiving grace never waiver. Thank you for watching over us and healing our bodies, minds, and spirit. In your name, we pray, Amen.

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. - Proverbs 16:24

This verse reminds me of the impact kind words can have on those around me – we truly never know how much a simple gesture can mean to others. It also makes me reflect on how I speak to myself. I am my worst critic. I can do 99 things well but lose sight of all that success if one thing doesn't go as I had planned. When I'm disappointed and have negative self-talk, I need to give myself grace. Offsetting those negative thoughts by redirecting to the positive outcomes can be hard but so worth it as it shifts my perspective from disappointment to gratitude.

Lord, continue to help me be kind to myself and be grateful for all the good to get beyond life's tiny struggles. Amen.



Laura Magnuson

Day 34 April 10



6th Grade Group 2

Autumn, Ben, Charlie, Evelyn,

Faith, Libby, Piper

Day 35, April 11

***O Lord my God, I cried to you for help and you have healed me.
- Psalm 30:2***

For everyone in our group, it's comforting to know that you can talk to God in times of need. Especially when experiencing anxiety or challenges with an obstacle like the COVID pandemic. In those times of darkness, when your hope is lost, remind yourself that God is the light that helps you find your way. We are all his children and need to trust in his ways, even when we are not at peace yet.

*Dear God, thank you for helping us through all the tough times.
When things feel hopeless, you remind us that you control the
ultimate plan. Amen.*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:6-7

Life can be overwhelming with all of the unknown, paired with access to unlimited information (factual and fictional). It is easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of fear. When I find my anxiety is climbing, I remind myself that worry doesn't solve any problems. Anxiety, when left to fester, can not only damage our mental health but also our physical well-being. It is important for us to protect our peace of mind. God is there for us. The act of prayer can be a grounding experience; it can help pull you out of a tailspin, and bring peace back into your mind. Developing a habit of turning to God, and giving God your troubles, while expressing thanks for the blessings in your life, can aid in calming your anxieties.

God, we ask that you place peace in our troubled minds. Give us faith and trust in you, Lord. Help to remind us today of the blessings we are given. Help to remind us, Lord, that you stand beside us through the struggles, and that we are not alone. Guide us to make healthy decisions and to reach out for help when we need it. Remind us, Lord, that we are loved. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.



Megan Borgos

Day 36 April 12



Diane McCormick

Day 37, April 13

***God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
- Psalm 46:1***

I find taking time each day to nurture my spiritual and emotional health by realizing that the God who loves me does not need me to be constantly busy or prove I can carry the world on my shoulders. God calls me to rest in Him, in the beauty of His creation, and to reflect and share his love with others.

When my mind is spinning or overwhelmed, I try to take a pause and look for a way to get a clear understanding of what God intends for me. Where is the answer? I can pray to ask God to give me clarity, but sometimes my mind keeps spinning. I can open the Bible to a specific verse, or randomly open it to see the exact verse I needed to read, but sometimes my mind keeps spinning. I may turn on one of my favorite Christian music stations to hear a song that resonates in my heart but sometimes my mind may keep spinning. Maybe I will make a call or have a conversation with someone who shares comforting words with me, but sometimes my mind just keeps spinning.

So many options to get answers to what God intends for me. Eventually, it becomes clear to me there is one important option. I just need to be still! God will speak to me and give me everything I need. There's no need to keep spinning. God's got this!

Thank you, God, for the reminder that each day I need to nurture my spiritual and emotional, health, making me better equipped to live in the way you would have me respond. Help me to have your peace and quiet moments to pause and reflect on you and your love, trusting that your love and grace cover my every weakness. Amen.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. - Proverbs 3:5-6

When you are afraid, make the best decision you can and then lean on the Lord to help guide you. For us, we do a lot of sports and activities and get nervous sometimes. We need God to help keep us calm and know we will be ok. We learn from everything that happens in the long run. We won't have all of the answers to everything that happens in life, but we will put our trust in God.

Dear God, please help us stay well and whole during this Lenten season. Help us to follow in your footsteps and find out your way. Amen.



8th Grade Group 1

*Elsie, Harry, Lauren, Sam M.,
Sam G., Schaefer, Trevor*
Day 38 April 14



Brian Gieseke

Day 39, April 15

***Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.
- Proverbs 3: 7-8***

I can be very stubborn. There have been plenty of examples in my life where I think I'm being wise and try to force things to work my way, only to create more stress. When I finally "let go" and trust God, it seems things always turn around quickly and a new path, the path God meant for me, comes to light. Of course, that new path always ends up feeling better, feeling more "right," than the one I stubbornly wanted to stick to. Pray and follow the path God provides. Don't waste time or your well-being thinking you are "wiser" than HE.

Dear God, help me to "let go" and see the path meant for me. Amen.

Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them in the name of the Lord.

- Jeremiah 17:14

A little more than a year ago, my beloved, wise Grandfather, Carl E Braaten passed away. At this June's upcoming tri-annual Braaten Family Reunion, we will not have a member of the eldest generation present. However, we will be paying tribute to this eldest generation who started the tradition of hosting these reunions by continuing to sing "Be Present" for our table grace and telling stories of their memory.

This verse, of course, reminded me of my own family, but it also reminded me of my Church family. I love that our mission is to "share God's love from one generation to another," and "We value inter-generational relationships." Intersecting generational relationships within our Church has nourished my spiritual, social, intellectual and emotional well-being. Last year we had a special senior guest visit Agape and share with us a Native American prayer that he can recite from memory. It was beautiful! During COVID, I was connected with a member of our church who had just lost her husband and just might need a check in once in awhile. I consider this new friend one of my biggest blessings COVID gave my family; that friendship even led to another dear friendship, and now I thoroughly enjoy visiting with these wise "elder" women. Our Wednesday dinners foster these intergenerational relationships and I've appreciated these interactions and conversations. Without naming them, I admire so many of the "elders" in our Church. Their generosity, dedication, gentleness, sense of humor, and fellowship makes our Church whole and fills my bucket!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for making us creatures that desire to connect with others. Help us to realize the blessings of our current inter-generational relationships, and help us to seek more opportunities for this communal wellness as individuals and as a church. Amen.



Jen Saylor

Day 40, April 16

Session 1: Social Well-being

Week of March 9-15

Introductions: Welcome one another, then share your names and a story about a time when someone initiated a social opportunity with you that you appreciated.

Opening Prayer: Holy One, your very heart is relational. We give thanks that you call us into community. Help us to live and serve together in your peace. Amen.

Bible Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

Read Today's Lesson: We are created by God to be social beings, living in community and instructed to help and love each other. We maintain social well-being through interaction, play, time, and forgiveness. Take time to nurture your relationships with family, friends, your congregation, and co-workers. In Colossians, we hear a description of how we are called to live among and care for one another.

Discussion Questions:

- When have you experienced a community focused on building up instead of dividing?
- Think of a lasting relationship where you don't agree on everything. How do you maintain that relationship?
- What might it look like to "clothe ourselves with love" when we interact with those who have hurt us, or whom we have hurt?
- When in disagreement, how can we model the ability to disagree with a person without diminishing their humanity?
- Consider Luther's explanation of the 8th Commandment in the Small Catechism: not only are we to not bear false witness through lies, but also we are to interpret everything our neighbor does in the best possible light. How might that impact our interpersonal relationships?

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Session 2: Physical Well-being

Week of March 16-22 (Note: No Small Groups March 23-29)

Introductions: Greet one another, remind each other of your names, and share about some activities you enjoy doing outside.

Opening Prayer: God of Sabbath, even you rested amidst your work of creation. We give you thanks for our bodies. Help us to remember to rest and care for what you have given us. Amen.

Bible Reading: Mark 6:30-32

Read Today's Lesson: While we are not all born perfectly healthy or able to live life without injury or illness, we can live well by tending and nurturing our bodies as a gift from God. Feed it healthy foods, keep it hydrated, build up physical endurance through regular exercise, and respect your body's need for rest. In Mark, there were so many people coming and going, that the apostles didn't even have a chance to eat. Jesus invites the apostles to go to a quiet place and get some rest.

Discussion Questions:

- What aspect of physical wellness is most important for you?
- How can you practice saying “no” when you are overwhelmed by the needs of others?
- Have you ever been so busy that you “had no leisure even to eat?”
- How is Jesus' instruction to the disciples also good news for you?
- How might you make space to care for yourself physically while also attending to the other aspects of wholeness (relationships etc.)?

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Session 3: Financial Well-being

Week of March 30-April 5

Introductions: Greet one another, and share a message you were taught growing up (intentionally or observed) related to money.

Opening Prayer: God of abundance, we give you thanks that you have given us all we have. Send your Spirit of peace as we tend to our financial well-being. Amen.

Bible Reading: Luke 14:28-33

Read Today's Lesson: Being financially well involves making decisions based on our values, as reflected in the way we save, spend, and share. Tending to one's financial well-being in this way requires us to be resilient, generous, and focused on sustainability. In Luke, we hear the importance of intentional reflection around cost before making big decisions.

Discussion Questions:

- Financial well-being might be one of the more anxiety-producing topics in our society today. What practices do you have around finances?
- Today's Gospel talks about financial well-being. How would you describe this lesson in today's terms?
- In the Gospels, Jesus talks about money more than almost anything else. Why do you think that is?
- How can Jesus' focus on money remind us of the importance of financial wellness in our own lives?
- How can Christian community lift each other up and support each other in working toward financial wellness?

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Session 4: Emotional Well-being

Week of April 6-12

Introductions: Greet one another, and share about an emotion that is hard for you to see in others.

Opening Prayer: Incarnate God, we give you thanks that you know the fullness of our humanity. Grant us your compassion. Amen.

Bible Reading: John 11:17-37

Read Today's Lesson: Being emotionally well means feeling the full range of human emotions and expressing them appropriately. Self-awareness is the first step. Recognizing and honoring your own feelings and those of others- stress, contentment, anger, love, sadness, joy, resentment- will help you live life abundantly. In John, we hear many different emotions expressed around the death and resurrection of Lazarus.

Discussion Questions:

- What emotions are you quick to avoid?
- How did the different characters in these verses respond to the emotions others displayed?
- When you read this text, what emotions resonate with you?
- How does our society respond to different displays of emotion?
- What are some healthy ways you can practice naming and experiencing emotions, especially the ones that our society prefers to “shush” away?

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday: Sunday, April 13, 9 am. Brunch at 10 am.

Maundy Thursday: Thursday, April 17, 7 pm

Good Friday: Friday, April 18, 7 pm

Easter Vigil: Saturday, April 19, 8 pm

Easter Sunday: Sunday, April 20, 8:30 & 10:30 am. Easter Egg Hunt at 10 am.



HOLY TRINITY
LUTHERAN CHURCH

1300 Main Street East • New Prague, MN 56071

952.758.3513 • office@holytrinityonline.org

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