



February 2020

the
SPIRIT

Salem Lutheran Church

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

A Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Congregation

Loving the "Other"

February makes me think about love. Epiphany makes me think about how the good news of God's love is meant for all people. And so those two thoughts have been dancing around in my brain.

St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13,

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind. . . . It does not insist on its own way. . . It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. . . And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

And in Luke 6 Jesus tells us,

"...love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. . . If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?"

Our call as Christians is to love God and love our neighbor and the neighbor whom we are to love is not just a family member or a friend or somebody who lives next door. The people whom we are specifically called to love are the people we don't like, the people we hate, the people who hate us. The people whom we are to love are the people who don't look like us or speak like us or act like us.

The people whom we are to love are the people around whom we feel uncomfortable, the people who may on some deep level threaten us in some way, the people who are different, who are "other".

And if we're not loving those people – and by love, I'm talking about the inter-

national building of a relationship – than we are no different from a non-Christian.

This month I put before you an Epiphany challenge: find someone who is hard to love and love them.

Maybe there is someone you can't stand, someone who bullies you, someone you hate. Maybe there is someone who is different from you in a way that makes you uncomfortable – because of their race or their sexual orientation or their political views.

Look around in your life and find someone who is hard to love and love them. And if it seems impossible then just begin by praying for them and for your relationship. I promise you that if you simply pray every day for a month, something will happen. And I also promise that if you build a relationship with them, your life – and theirs – will be greatly enriched.

I spent most of my life associating with people who were just like me. And then God brought people who were very different from me into my life and it's been one of the greatest gifts I've ever been given. It took me over half a century but I finally discovered that personal growth happens in greater measure when we are in relationship with people who are different from us.

And I also discovered that that's what church is all about. If we're not reaching out to those who are of a different age, race, culture, sexual orientation, political affiliation, class, etc., then we cannot call ourselves a church. God calls us to love those who are different from us because God is in the business of breaking down barriers, overcoming obstacles, and tearing down walls.

This February, take the Epiphany challenge. Love an enemy. Love someone who makes you uncomfortable. Love someone who is different from you. If you do, it will not only change your life, it will change the life of our congregation.

Blessings abundant!

Pastor Marjo

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We are a community of Christian disciples called by the Holy Spirit.

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

3160 Park Avenue
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604
Phone (203) 336-3300 ▪ Fax (203) 336-8813

Website - www.salembridgeport.org

Facebook - www.facebook.com/SalemBridgeport/

Church Office Hours

Monday to Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Worship Services

9:30am Traditional Worship

Salem's Staff

The Rev. Marjo Anderson, Pastor
Cell Phone (203) 982-3441
marjoanderson@aol.com

Karl Kraft, Office Manager
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salemsec123@sbcglobal.net

Jennifer Reyes, Sexton
Pablo, Cruz, Sexton
Office Phone (203) 336-3300, ext. 10

LEADERSHIP AT SALEM

COUNCIL

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Rich Kenyon, Treasurer – rich@kenyonbusiness.com
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Emily Sokoloski – emilysokoloski@gmail.com
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SUSTAINABILITY TASK FORCE

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Ray Anderson – andersray4@gmail.com
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Richard Lansing – rlansing@optonline.net
Jean Larson – tjcklarson@sbcglobal.net
Bruce Tomasko – bltomasko@yahoo.com

LIGHT –

Leaders Inviting Growth through Hope for Tomorrow

Source Team:

Pastor Marjo Anderson – marjoanderson@aol.com
Ray Lansing – raylansing@yahoo.com
Bill Winter – wjwinter@optonline.net
Tom Larson – tjcklarson@sbcglobal.net

Reflection Team:

Katie Adams – keadams333@gmail.com
Jean Larson – tjcklarson@sbcglobal.net
Frank Dukenski – fduzenski@aol.com
Joel Hintz – brondle@aol.com

**Newsletter deadline is the 15th of each month
unless otherwise noted in the monthly
calendar.**

Next deadline date is **January 15th for the
February issue!**

**Email submissions to
salemsec123@sbcglobal.net**



February 2020 Salem Lutheran Church



SUN



MON

TUE



WED

THU



FRI

SAT

Feb 1

7:30am CPC - Fellowship Hall
5:30pm Musical Theatre Program

2 9:30am Worship 10:30am Semi Annual Congregational Meeting 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church 12:30pm New Directions Ministries 6:30pm SLAA - CR	3 10am Culinary Class 6:30pm Social Ministry 7pm Scouts - CR	4 9:30am Pastors' Text Study 10am Culinary Class 12pm Book Club 7pm STEPP Group - CR	5 9:30am Bible Study 10am Culinary Class	6 10am Culinary Class 7:30pm Choir	7 4pm Musical Theatre Afterschool Camp	8 8am Men's Breakfast
9 9:30am Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church 10:45am Adult Forum 12:30pm New Directions Ministries 6:30pm SLAA - CR	10 10am Culinary Class 7pm Scouts - CR	11 9:30am Pastors' Text Study 10am Culinary Class 6pm Stewardship 7pm STEPP Group - CR	12 8:30am Pantry Setup 9:30am Bible Study 10am Culinary Class	13 8:30am Pantry Setup 9:30am Culinary Class 4pm Food Pantry 7:30pm Choir	14 4pm Musical Theatre Afterschool Camp	15 11am Inner-View Chat n Chew
16 9:30am Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church 10:45am Adult Forum 12:30pm New Directions Ministries 6:30pm SLAA - CR	17 Presidents Day - Office Closed 5pm NDM - Lounge- Wives appreciation event 6:30pm Finance Committee 7pm Scouts - CR 7:30pm Executive Committee	18 9:30am Pastors' Text Study 7pm STEPP Group - CR	19 9:30am Bible Study 10am Culinary Class	20 10am Culinary Class 7:30pm Choir	21 4pm Musical Theatre Afterschool Camp	22
23 9:30am Worship 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church 10:45am Adult Forum 12:30pm New Directions Ministries 6:30pm SLAA - CR	24 10am Culinary Class 7pm Council 7pm Scouts - CR	25 9:30am Pastors' Text Study 10am Culinary Class 7pm STEPP Group - CR	26 8:30am Pantry Setup 9:30am Bible Study 10am Culinary Class 7:30pm Ash Wednesday service	27 8:30am Pantry Setup 10am Culinary Class 4pm Food Pantry 7:30pm Choir	28 4pm Musical Theatre Afterschool Camp	29 



Musical Fridays

of Salem Lutheran Church presents....

ONCE UPON A PARABLE ***The Musical***

Saturday, February 1

5:30 PM

**Sanctuary of Salem Lutheran Church
3160 Park Ave., Bridgeport, CT**



Free Admission



Worship Assistants

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

February 2020

	Feb 2	Feb 9	Feb 16	Feb 23
Assisting Minister	Bruce Tomasko	Anita Papp	Steve Kuczo	Anita Papp
Lector/Communion Minister	Diane Tomasko	Jean Larson	Eileen Anderson	Sandra Brown
Altar Prep Team	Sandra Brown Emily Sokoloski	Jean Larson Diane Tomasko	Jean Larson Diane Tomasko	Anita Papp Cindy Roberts
Ushers	Rich & Carol Lansing	Ray & Eileen Anderson	Mike Caragol Tom Larson	Joe Bales John Bryk
Flowers Given By	Cindy Roberts		Cindy Roberts	
Coffee Hour			Bob Reichelt Chris Wolff	
Tellers	Emily Sokoloski	Nancy Headford Rich Kenyon	Sandra Brown Diane Tomasko	Liz Bales Frank Dukenski



Calling all coffee hour hosts. PLEASE contact the church office to secure a date for coffee hour. Coffee hour is a wonderful tradition at Salem. It gives all of us a chance for fellowship among our members. Thank you for your continued support. Contact the office at (203) 336-3300, or email salemsec123@sbcglobal.net.

Roberta Bellows	1
Hailey Dewalt	3
Keith Murphy	3
Kerry Schulz	13
Bill Winter	13
Michael Gulyas	13
Ann Martin	14
Carol Lansing	16
Talisha Burrus	17
Pablo Cruz.....	22
Scott Luciani.....	22
Judy Albers.....	26
Katie Adams	27



2020
Blood Pressure
Screening Dates

Feb 2	Aug tba
Mar 8	Sep 13
Apr 5	Oct 4
May 3	Nov 8
Jun 7	Dec 6
Jul tba	

SAVE THE DATE

On Thursday, April 30, 2020 the Council of Churches will be holding its annual Spring Fling fundraiser at the Downtown Cabaret Theatre in Bridgeport. The show is "Matilda". This is always a very enjoyable evening. The cost will again be \$75. per person, which includes a reception at City Lights Gallery, presentation of the Faith and Community Award and the show.

Salem has always been well represented at this event and we hope that will be true this year. For further information see Sandra Brown, Bonnie

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is February 26. Worship service will be at 7:30 at Salem. This will be a joint service with Salem, Our Saviour's, Fairfield, and Genesis Café. There will be a joint choir at the service.

Salem Book Club meets on the first Tuesday at noon in the Salem Lounge. The book club will not meet in January. Upcoming selections are:

Feb. 4th: **Carnegie's Maid** by Marie Benedict,
Mar 3rd: **The Perfume Collector** by Kathleen Tessaro,
April 7th: **The Lost Girls of Paris** by Pam Jenoff.

New members and guests are welcome to join us February 4th. Please bring your lunch.



The following people have asked for healing, help, guidance or comfort.

Joan B	Bobby W
Barbara B	Anna
Sam B	Barbara
Erick D	James S
Grace D	Sarah R
Hannah & Joseph	Brooks A
Bob H	Angie
Dennis H	Liz F.
Sylvitha	Hazel P
Jay	Katherine P
Jinny L	
Mike R	
Jane M	
Jana B	
William S	
Daphne B	
Peter K	



We Are Grateful

Capital Improvements

Marjo Anderson

Food Pantry

Marjo Anderson, Joe & Liz Bales, David & Priscilla Schulz, Jane Weiss
Family Foundation

Memorial Donations

Sandra Brown (in memory of Ron Clough)
Pauline Boyum (Food Pantry - in memory of Derm Luckner)
Ray & Eileen Anderson (Food Pantry - in memory of Derm Luckner)

Outreach

Marjo Anderson



Wishing you a Christmas
filled with Peace & Joy

Dear Pastor,

Wishing you
the spirit of Christmas
which is joy,
the hope of Christmas
which is peace,
the heart of Christmas
which is love.

To you and your congregation,
we have gratitude for the many
years you have hosted us.

David M.

Treasurer, Tuesday Night 12-Step
Enclosed is a check for rent, Jan 1 - March 31,
and a donation to the church, an
emblem of their gratitude.

PHILIP RASCHKE
MAY GOD BLESS
YOU ALL AT JACKSON



This Info Could Save Your Life

From
Our
Parish
Nurses

1. Let's say it's 7:25 pm and you're going home (alone of course) after an unusually hard day on the job.

2. You're really tired, upset and frustrated.

3. Suddenly you start experiencing severe pain in your chest that starts to drag out into your arm and up into your jaw.

You are only about five km from the hospital nearest your home.

4. Unfortunately you don't know if you'll be able to make it that far.

5. You have been trained in CPR, but the guy that taught the course did not tell you how to perform it on yourself.

6. HOW TO SURVIVE A HEART ATTACK WHEN ALONE?

Since many people are alone when they suffer a heart attack without help, the person whose heart is beating improperly and who begins to feel faint, has only about 10 seconds left before losing consciousness.

7. However, these victims can help themselves by coughing repeatedly and very vigorously. A deep breath should be taken before each cough, and the cough must be deep and prolonged, as when producing sputum from deep inside the chest.

A breath and a cough must be repeated about every two seconds without let-up until help arrives, or until the heart is felt to be beating normally again.

8. Deep breaths get oxygen into the lungs and coughing movements squeeze the heart and keep the blood circulating. The squeezing pressure on the heart also helps it to regain a normal rhythm. In this way, heart attack victims can get help or to a hospital.

9. . Tell as many other people as possible about this. It could save their lives!

The **total cholesterol measurement** along with **blood pressure**, **blood sugar** and **body mass index (BMI)** will allow you and your healthcare provider to determine your risk for developing **cardiovascular disease caused by atherosclerosis**.

Category	Ideal Number
Total Cholesterol	Less than 180 mg/dL
Body Mass Index	Less than 25 kg/m ²
Blood Pressure	Less than 120/80 mm Hg
Fasting Blood Sugar	Less than 100 mg/dL



American
Heart
Association

American
Stroke
Association®

HEART ATTACK WARNING SIGNS

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** This feeling often comes along with chest discomfort. But it can also occur without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs** may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

**If you or someone you're with has one or more of these signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.
Get to the hospital right away.**

If you're the one having symptoms, and you can't access the emergency medical services (EMS), have someone drive you to the hospital right away. Don't drive yourself, unless you have absolutely no other option.

**For more information, contact your nearest
American Heart Association office or call
1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721)
or online at www.heart.org.**

The Council of Churches is a faith-based, non-sectarian social services agency dedicated to meeting the needs of people at risk and breaking the cycle of poverty and crisis in the Greater Bridgeport area. We are committed to educating children, feeding the hungry, supporting youth in crisis, guiding former offenders and building bridges of understanding between all faiths.

Founded in 1945 as The Council for Inter-Church Cooperation, the Charter of The Council states that:
"The Council shall do jointly what no single communion, congregation or denomination can do alone."

Working in partnership with donors, congregations, community partners and clients, our service area is concentrated on people from Bridgeport and its suburbs: Fairfield, Easton, Trumbull, Shelton, Monroe and Stratford, with additional partners in Westport, Milford and other portions of Fairfield and New Haven counties.

Our Mission:

"As communities of faith and partners in service, we create and sustain a more just, healthy, and vibrant society"

Our Core Values:

- Collaboration - we are stronger together
- Diversity - we embrace our differences
- Equity - we strive for justice
- Innovation - we develop creative approaches
- Impact - we seek sustainable results

Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport

1718 Capitol Ave
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-334-1121
www.ccgb.org

NEW Giving Societies for The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport

Because the challenges undertaken by CCGB have become more financially demanding than ever before, we need to increase our gift revenue. We've established several new giving levels and societies to accomplish that goal.

These new levels of giving and societies are intended to secure major gifts from new donors, but even more important, to inspire our current donors to increase their level of support commensurate with their resources.

The CCGB Board of Directors invites our loyal and new donors to consider joining one of the new societies listed below, as we build on the strong foundation of outreach ministry and mission of CCGB for 75 years.

\$1-249 Friends

For 75 years, tens of thousands of friends of CCGB have made thoughtful annual gifts up to \$249. These friends have supported the operational budget and core expenses.

\$250-499 Benefactors

These donors have helped fund hundreds of projects and people making a difference in the Greater Bridgeport area.

\$500-999 Advocates

Several very successful initiatives reached fruition because hundreds of Advocates have faithfully provided this level of support.

\$1,000-1,499 President's Society

CCGB has been very fortunate to have excellent presidents. Rev. Cass Shaw has proven to be an outstanding leader. This new giving society is intended to honor Cass and the gifts will provide resources for some of her many visionary ideas.

\$1,500-1,944 Steward Society

Our first society, this level of giving is truly the stewardship of CCGB. Just as a steward cares for and manages the operation of an entity, the generosity of the Steward Society cares for and ensures the ongoing operation of CCGB.

\$1,945-2,999 The 1945 Society

CCGB was founded in 1945 and will be celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2020. This new society is intended to provide several gifts of \$1,945 to celebrate the many achievements, expand current programs that have been very successful and to be seed money for new initiatives.

\$3,000-4,999 John Kidd Society

This society honors beloved President John Kidd, who served with distinction from 1983 to 2005. John Kidd Society donors have a profound impact on the all major programs and projects.

\$5,000-9,999 Mission Society

This society is crucial for sustaining and advancing the CCGB Mission: As communities of faith and partners in service we create and sustain a more just, healthy, and vibrant society. These generous donors provide the financial support and the emotional encouragement for everyone connected with CCGB to strive for excellence as a force for good.

\$10,000 + Founders Society

These donors provide the critical foundation upon which CCGB builds and sustains its vision of moving from charity to justice in all its programs and services. The significant gifts to the Founders Society support enduring change in housing and education, the driving force behind starting the Connecticut Food Bank, and champion many innovative programs to address poverty, inequality, injustice and human dignity.

To Join Any of Our Giving Societies, simply visit our website www.ccggb.org/CCGB/donate or call 203-334-1121 ext. 10



January 10, 2020

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

CHAIRPERSON:

Kathryn Maiolo
KM Solutions, LLC

Rosinne Chlala

The Festivities Foundation

Donna Craft

Community Leader

Pamela Dale

Attorney

Jill Fitzburgh

Community Leader

Rebeca Garcia

Bridgeport Police Department

Sofia Goncalves

People's United Bank

Chris D. Griffin

BNY Mellon Wealth Management

Anthony Iannini

Davis Wright Tremaine, LLP

Michael E. Lyngaas

Community Leader

Sarah Cwikla Mastropole

Stantec

Donna E. Milne

Community Leader

Kristen Okesson

Connoisseur Media

Matthew C. Reale

Attorney, Anthony & Reale

Rev. Sara Smith, Esq.

United Congregational Church

Lisa M. Todd

Webster Bank

PRESIDENT, CEO:

Debra A. Greenwood

Rev. Mayo Anderson

Salem Lutheran Church

3160 Park Ave

Bridgeport, CT 06604-1103

Dear Rev. Anderson:

Thank you for your generous in-kind donation gift of **gloves, mittens, scarves & hats (71 items)** received on **January 3, 2020**. Your gift provides hope for individuals, children and families as they begin their search for a life without violence and turns victims into survivors.

Here's how your gift helps:

- Provides victims and families a safe and supportive shelter at The Center's domestic violence safe home, Kathie's Place.
- Gives sexually or physically abused children and teens, and their families support through the legal process and the tools they need to heal from trauma.
- Educates children on ways to build healthy relationships, recognize and address violence, prevent teen dating violence and teen bullying – both in person and over the Internet.

Here, at The Center for Family Justice, our motto is **Hope Starts Here**. Your gift allows us to provide the services that give hope to our clients while helping them restore their lives. We are grateful for your generous gift. Thank you.

Hope starts with you!

Sincerely,

Debra Greenwood/mam

Debra A. Greenwood

President and CEO

dgreenwood@centerforfamilyjustice.org

www.centerforfamilyjustice.org

The Center for Family Justice, Inc.

Hope Starts Here

The Center for Family Justice, Inc. is a non-profit charitable organization pursuant to Section 501(c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Service.



Hope Starts Here

753 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604 • Tel: 203/334-6154 • Fax: 203/579-8882 • www.centerforfamilyjustice.org



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

“A very rare treasure, indeed”

Friendships deepen faith and life

Robert C Blezard

Her mother having passed away only days earlier, Carolyn Bolz was in deep grief while attending the Sunday service at Trinity Lutheran Church, Riverside, Calif. While others cheerfully passed the peace, she hung her head and wept.

“Suddenly there was a hand on my shoulder,” Bolz recalled. She looked up and saw a church member she didn’t know very well. Jackie Letourneau Wagner handed her some tissues, joined her in the pew and listened empathetically. The encounter led to a joyful friendship.

“Thanks to her unexpected act of kindness on that Sunday morning, I felt the love of Jesus and made a new friend,” Bolz said.

Bolz was one of many who responded to *Living Lutheran’s* call for readers to share stories of friendship and faith. Friends occupy a special place in our lives. Through them, as for Bolz, we often experience God’s love, especially in times of deep need.

That was the case for Cynthia Lauletta, a member of Grace Lutheran Church, Mount Prospect, Ill., when she went through an especially difficult period of one misfortune after another. She lost her father to a heart attack and then two beloved pets died. She also faced declining health, car trouble and the betrayal of people she trusted.

“It was almost too much to bear,” Lauletta said. In her pain she seemed to forget her faith. But church friends surrounded her with support and love, accompanying her back to wholeness. “The power of God still amazes me,” she said. “If I should ‘forget’ his strength, I have strong, spiritual people in my life to guide me back.”

Friends not only give us love and support in times of trouble, they can help us find a stronger faith when ours is wavering. While a student at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., during the 1970s, Larry Gajderowicz found himself plagued with doubts about his faith. That’s when he met a new friend who shared common interests in school, sports and family, but especially in faith. It dominated their late-night talks.

“He bared his soul to me and I bared mine to him,” Gajderowicz said, who grew in faith and wound up joining his friend’s congregation, St. Mark Lutheran, Evansville, Ind., where he now serves as a certified lay worship leader. The friendship that led him back to faith has deepened over the decades. “The only thing that has grown more than my friendship with this wonderful friend is my everyday walk with Christ,” he said.

Church is a great place to develop faith and friendships, but so are Lutheran camps, said Kaitlyn Rager, a member of Zion Lutheran Church, Hummelstown, Pa. “Camp is my happy place, my favorite place and my home,” she said.

As someone who has experienced depression, Rager knows that it’s

sometimes difficult to feel God’s presence. But she always finds comfort in reaching out to camp friends.

“Even in my darkest moments, when I feel everything falling down around me, I read my affirmations from leadership training camp, I look at goofy pictures of my friends and I at confirmation camp, and I text my friends ... my friends that I gained through the work of God bringing us together to enrich our faith,” Rager said.

Thinking about long-lasting friendships, Linda Staats, a member of Faith Lutheran Church, Phoenix, recalls *The Message* translation of Proverbs 18:24: “Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family.” She finds that to be true for a lifelong group of seven girls who grew up in the same small town in Iowa. Now scattered across five states, they stay in touch by email, text and videoconferencing, and gather once a year.

“Faithful, lifelong friends—a very rare treasure, indeed!” Staats said.

Sometimes friends can help us discern what is really important, said Sue Czarnetsky, who was once in the middle of a hectic day when a friend asked if she could visit. Czarnetsky felt torn.

“I watched the struggle between the Martha and Mary sides of my personality,” said Czarnetsky, a member of St. Mark Lutheran Church, Springfield, Va. Although she was very busy, her Mary side prevailed, and she invited the friend over.

The incident reminded her of how Jesus asked the disciples to journey with him in faith. “Beginning my journey that day required me to slow down,” Czarnetsky said. “By slowing down, I was able to hear the Spirit speak and to clearly see my way.”

Deep friendship even transcends species for Pat Gergar, a member of Grace Lutheran Church, Macungie, Pa. Pointing out that “God” spelled backward is “dog,” he counts his two dogs among his best friends. After all, dogs provide people with companionship, listen to our stories, keep our secrets and provide us with unconditional love that mirrors God’s love for us. And when we lose pets, they teach us about love and coping with death.

“Just like Jesus walked this earth as God’s Son, I am convinced that God put dogs on this earth for us to have a physical connection with the unconditional love only our Lord can provide,” Gergar said.

Robert C. Blezard is an assistant to the bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod and editor of *Living Lutheran’s* study guides.



Hope and Healing in South Sudan

Situated in eastern Africa, South Sudan is the newest country in the world. But newest isn't the only way to describe South Sudan—it's also one of the most volatile.

According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, an estimated 1.5 million South Sudanese are internally displaced and many more have fled to neighboring countries due to poverty, food insecurity, a lack of education and health care, and extreme violence against civilians. While the government struggles with the situation, many have turned to the church to be a healer and peace-maker.

"With all of this suffering, we still see God has a promise for us," said Hilary Garang Deng, bishop of the Malakal Diocese of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan. "He gave us a mission to testify about the great God who created the world."

Part of this mission includes establishing the Evangelical Lutheran Church Africa Mission in South Sudan. With the assistance of local partners, including ELCA congregations that are Sudanese, the Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan, and the South Sudan Council of Churches, the ELCA is seeking more than \$1.2 million to enable this work.

Last November the partners broke ground on a Lutheran center and health clinic in Juba, the nation's capital. The center is near Juba's Hai Referendum area, which lacks basic health and education services, making it difficult for people who are displaced to improve their lives, said Rafael Malpica Padilla, executive director for ELCA Global Mission.

"It is precisely in that community that we are planting a center to provide these opportunities," he said. "This center will be a place of encounter for a community that has experienced the horrors of war, a place of hope for the next generation of

leaders, an instrument through which we will touch people's lives and where the good news of the gospel will be proclaimed."

The center will offer courses, including English language lessons and computer training. This will be the first formal education for many South Sudanese adults. "Most of them were in the war and couldn't get an education," said Mawien Ariik, an ELCA pastor who coordinates outreach for the new church. "This time is about catching up so they can learn, they can operate a computer, and they will know how to write their names. This time is hope for them—we are giving them what they couldn't get when they were young."

Joining Ariik at the church's frontlines is Wal Reat, an ELCA pastor serving in refugee camps in South Sudan and its bordering countries. Both are South Sudanese natives who sought asylum in the U.S. during the war and eventually became ELCA pastors. What's more, they come from feuding tribes. Together they hope to grow the Lutheran church and bring healing to their country.

"The church is calling for the unity of the tribes in South Sudan to be one in Christ, but it is tough for those who are really wounded to convince them to accept others," Ariik said. "The message that the church is conveying is that they are all children of God and we are supposed to remain as one. It is not bad to have different tribes, but to love others as one body of Christ — it is a big challenge for us to convey that."

Hope is a common thread connecting and motivating these leaders in South Sudan. Amid conflict, violence and poverty, they are growing the Lutheran church, spreading the message of God's love and bringing hope for a peaceful future.