

A “dash” of ordinary goodness ... in the middle of an ordinary day ...

All Saints Lutheran Church “Oasis of Joy” USA

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Dear Friends ...

Just finished reading a quote ----- *“Because life is finite ... it is infinitely precious.”*

Wow ---- good stuff.

So true.

I think of all the things consuming our journey through life. Most of it has a beginning and an end.

Our work day, or a day at school. Our job, career. Vacations. The Christmas season.

The car we buy. Sunday morning worship. Having the flu (we hope it has an end!@!!). A good meal.

A bad meal. The awards banquet. A standing ovation in your honor. Fame. A nasty e-mail.

Nothing lasts forever ... it’s just the way life is.

And yet ... it’s in the midst of what is temporary and ordinary ... that we experience the majesty and power of what lasts forever. My brother is gone ... his life was too short ... but his spirit and love and crazy-goodness ----- they are in every step I take.

My career as an “athlete” ... my days of going one-on-one with #44 ----- gone!@!! And yet the “lessons of life” and the spirit of what it means to give life your best they will never leave me.

Think of all you have learned (some of it painful) ... think of the spirits-and-souls who have touched your life ... in moments that come and go so quickly ... and yet it’s in these moments that the “winds of God’s spirit” speak to us and somehow force us to grow and to learn.

Even in dark moments ... when I make a mistake I wish I could take back ... when I clash with someone who just plain doesn’t like me ... when I have a plan, and screw-it-up ----- I grow from this, too.

God doesn’t abandon us & his spirit doesn’t leave us ... even in life’s most trying moments.

I want so much ... as we enter 2012 ... for “our humble temple” ... to be an “oasis” of hope & goodness: for you, your family, your friends ... for anyone who crosses your path and the many paths we share together.

In this place ----- we are unconditionally free to be human.

Here ---- it’s ok to cry ... to laugh ... to wonder and doubt ... to search and try to find our way ...

Yes, life is precious. It’s most precious ... when we open our heart “unto others.”

I watch the news ... read the paper ... I see candidates ripping each other apart ... people yelling at each other ... another act of violence ... another person betraying those he/she is supposed to serve.

Easy to get cynical and run-down.

But then I see the “wonder” in a child’s eyes ... an act of kindness & generosity with no fanfare or notice ... a person with so little stuff, yet whose heart over-flows with generosity ...

And I’m reminded again of why we are here ... why we do what we do ... why the door is open & the coffee perks. It’s all about a child ... born of miracles and angels ... a carpenter who builds us up from the inside out. Our life doesn’t last long ... often too short ... it’s about the precious miracles along the way.

Love and Joy

“rev”

SPAGHETTI IS IN THE AIRE!! ... our one major fund-raiser is the annual spaghetti dinner ... Saturday, February 25, 6:00. Tickets (\$20) are on sale now ... and we have to limit the number to 300 ----- so please don't wait too long. It's a fun and enjoyable adult evening. We need your help with the auction. If you have something ... let us know asap. Doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. Tickets to an event ... services rendered ... jewelry ... gift certificates ... it's all good!! COME AND ENJOY.

OUR FIRST OUTREACH BINGO OF THE SEASON is coming up FRIDAY, JANUARY 20 ... Doors open at 6:30 ... "first call" 7:00. This is "festive bingo" ... lots of fun ... and all the profits go towards our men's club outreach. Our club does some nice stuff ----- supporting programs for kids, our youth, helping families who are struggling (especially in our own church). Come --- enjoy a great adult evening, make a difference, and share in the joy of "giving unto others" ... and you might even win a few dollars.

WE HAVE AN AMAZING BOOK CLUB ... meeting on the 2nd Tuesday of the month ... and most often in the home of one of the participants. Has it already been 7 years?? If you'd like information about our book club, call Nancy Ellis --- 815-386-4932.

OUR ANNUAL MEETING is Sunday, January 29, after the 2nd service. Constitutionally ... we need 10% of our membership to be here, for it to be "official." The two most important things we do are ---- elect our church council members and adopt the new budget. The meeting doesn't last long ... but it's important to have your "approval" and to be open to any input you have for us.

OUR YOUTH GROUP has had a good year ... lots of participation. This is open to all 7th – 12th graders. We meet every Sunday between services ---- going out for breakfast or having breakfast here. We are bowling this Sunday (January 15) ... please call the church if your son/daughter would like to come. Our main February event is the bake sale ... a gym day in March ... and then the annual retreat in April. A full schedule is available at the church.

WE TRY TO HAVE ONE CONGREGATIONAL BREAKFAST EACH MONTH.

*"Uncle Wayne" and the youth group is serving breakfast this Sunday ... beginning after the 1st service ... until 10:30. So, late service folks ---- come a little early and join us!!
It's fun to see Charter Hall full of energy and conversation.*

A TOPIC OF CONVERSATION AROUND HERE DURING THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN ----- *exactly when is it ... that we have HOLY COMMUNION during church???? The staff here usually rolls their eyes and responds:
"Whenever Don feels like it!@!!"*

A little history. When I came here back in '74 ... we were like most Lutheran churches --- we had Communion on the 1st Sunday of the month. Eventually ... we started sharing the Lord's Supper on the 1st and 3rd Sundays ... then we added Communion on the "5th Sunday" ... whenever there was a 5th Sunday. We also share the Lord's Supper every Thursday night. Yes ... there are Sundays when "I just feel like having it" ... and we do. Some of you have shared with me ---- "church doesn't feel like church without Holy Communion." I know some of you feel like maybe we "have it too much." As always --- any feedback from you is welcome, appreciated ... and talking about "spiritual things" like this is fun and healthy.

A few prayers (*our web-site has a pretty current and more complete prayer list*) ---- **Scott Mitchell (son of Jan and Randy)** is beginning hospice care for his cancer. **Frankie Frech** is a grandma (Gavin James).

The Earharts are grandparents (Raney Elizabeth). **Char Hill's sister Lorraine** died a couple weeks ago. **Bill Marciniaks's brother Tom** died the week after Chrstmas. **Maribeth Murphy** should be home from Palos Hospital by the time you get this. **Robin Trybalski** (Marlene Marek's daughter) is home. **Kathy King** was at South Suburban, and was here Sunday. **Lisa Santoro's** friend Patrick McMahon is in the hospital. **Cindy Johnson's** dad – Edgar Solomon -- is living with cancer. **Frank Kuzel** is very weak ... hope to have him home by the end of the week.

**There are many more in our hearts ... let's keep praying and caring for each other.
Hope to see you "in the temple" ...**

