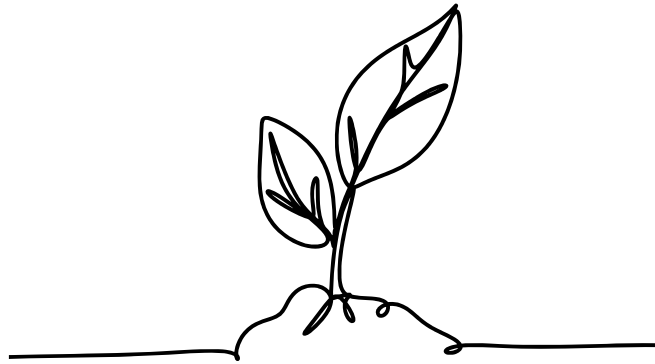


A Collection of Lenten Devotionals & Family Recipes
Nourishment for Body and Soul



GROWING SEASON

Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in the desert

Written in 2025 by the congregation of:



**FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
CLEBURNE**

FIRST WEEK OF LENT

THE FRUIT OF JOY

MARCH 5TH, 2025

Welcome to Lent by Pastor Melissa McDuffee Beal

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the self with its passions and its desires. If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit. - Galatians 5:22-25

Dear beloved church family,

I'm honored to journey with you through the wilderness of Lent this season. My heart overflows with gratitude for each person and family who has contributed to the devotionals you'll discover in the coming 40 days. These reflections have already blessed me deeply in assembling this booklet, and I trust they will nourish your spirit just as richly. As I often remind us, the true treasure of our church lies in its people—you, the laity—though I hope you'll also appreciate the occasional pastoral voice woven throughout these pages.

Lent invites us into the ancient spiritual rhythm of both releasing and embracing. Traditionally, we focus on "giving something up," but this often overshadows the equally important invitation to "take something on." The deeper purpose has always been to create space by setting aside what separates us from God, then filling that space with practices that draw us closer to the Divine presence.

This year, I invite us to shift our emphasis toward what we might gain rather than what we surrender. Modern psychology confirms what spiritual wisdom has long taught us—that lasting change comes not from simply eliminating habits but by replacing them with life-giving alternatives. What if this Lent becomes a season of cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives? What practices might nurture more joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and love in your daily walk?

I've discovered that simple acts like walking in nature foster patience and self-control in my own life, naturally reducing my tendency toward excessive social media use, which, though harmless in moderation, can disconnect me from both God and neighbor—including my own family—when it consumes too much attention.

Some practical notes about this devotional:

You'll notice there are no Sunday reflections included, as Sundays in Lent are traditionally observed as "mini-Easters"—small foretastes of resurrection joy. On these days, we're encouraged to pause our Lenten disciplines as we anticipate Easter's fullness.

Each devotional concludes with a recipe, with full instructions gathered in the second half of this booklet. I encourage you to try these offerings from our church family's kitchens! If you prepare any of these dishes, please capture the moment with a photo and share it either on social media (tag @fumccleburne) or by email to Pastor Melissa (melissa@fumccleburne.com). We'd love to celebrate these shared experiences during worship as we savor the joy of connection through breaking bread together.

Holy Christ,

As we join You once again in the wilderness of Lent, turn our hearts from scarcity to abundance. Reveal to us not what we lack, but the fullness we find in Your presence. May this season strip away distraction and renew our spirits with purpose. Plant the seeds of Your fruit within us—love that reaches beyond comfort, joy that transcends circumstance, peace amid uncertainty, patience in waiting, kindness toward all, goodness that reflects Your light, faithfulness through challenge, gentleness with ourselves and others, and self-control that creates freedom. Transform our hunger into holy desire for You alone. Prepare us, through each step of this journey, for the resurrection dawn that awaits.

Amen.

Recipe: Pastor Melissa's Indulgent Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Cookies p. 31

MARCH 6TH, 2025

There is Joy in the House of the Lord and We Won't Be Quiet by Allyson House

Every Sunday, as I step into our Sanctuary, I feel an overwhelming sense of joy. It's not just about the building or the people, but about the presence of God that fills this place. Psalm 100:4 calls us to "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise," and each week when I join the community of believers in worship, there's an unexplainable joy that fills my heart—joy that can only come from being in the presence of God and worshiping Him with others.

There is power in Worship. The music is more than just a song; it's an invitation into a deeper connection with God. The lyrics help us draw closer to His love and grace.

When we lift our voices, we are not just participating in a ritual; We are expressing gratitude for all He has done in our lives. The words of the worship songs, coupled with the energy of the congregation, create an atmosphere where the Holy Spirit can move freely, and we can't help but praise His name.

My takeaway each Sunday is that as a community, we will not be quiet in our praise. It's not just about personal worship but collective worship that makes it so powerful. There's joy in knowing that we're not alone in our faith journey but are surrounded by fellow believers who are equally passionate about worshipping the King.

I leave worship with joy in my heart, knowing that there is strength, peace, and love to be found in His presence. Worship is our response to the joy we have in Christ. It is not meant to be silent but expressed with gladness and praise. #gathergrowgo

Prayer: *Lord, thank You for the joy found in Your presence. Fill my heart with gladness and help me to praise You boldly. Amen.*

Recipe: Shelly Samuel's Corn Casserole p. 10

MARCH 7TH, 2025

JOY by Amy Daniel

Romans 15:13 (NIV)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Years ago, I faced some hardships. I didn't feel like celebrating anything, and that included Easter Sunday of one particular year. My best friend, Miki, invited me to have dinner with her and her family. She asked me to bring My Mother's Fruit Salad. I couldn't say no because she had already brought me all the ingredients I needed. I almost had the salad finished, and as I was folding in the pretty pastel-colored marshmallows, the texture didn't feel quite right. It wasn't as creamy. There was something different about those marshmallows. I took another look at the packaging, and to my surprise discovered they were not marshmallows! They were butter mints from a Baby Shower that had been stored in her freezer, that Miki mistook for miniature marshmallows! All the grocery stores had already closed, so it was too late to start over. My first thought was to just throw the entire thing in the trash. I really didn't want to disappoint Miki or myself, because doing things for others brought me

the greatest joy. I decided to put my colorful minty fruit salad in my fanciest bowl and take it anyway. I hoped it would taste good even with my unplanned substitution, and it did. Our lives often resemble recipes, requiring substitutions or adjustments. Sometimes we need to trust that everything will work out and just go with it. I still remember the joy I felt that day for doing just that. Don't let fear, or unexpected things hold you back from experiencing the joy that God gives us abundantly.

What brings you joy in your life? What may be holding you back? Do you need to make any changes this Lenten Season to better reflect the fruits of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Dear God, help us to remember that joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and you want us to have it abundantly. Remind us to trust you and walk in faith without fearing the unexpected events in our lives. Let our minds and hearts overflow with your fruits that others may know you through us. Amen

Recipe: Amy Daniel's "My Mother's Fruit Salad" p. 11

MARCH 8TH, 2025

Faith like a First Grader by The Ford Family

Matthew 18:2-4 (NIV)

"He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'"

One of the joys of my life is getting to work with children everyday. Over and over again, Jesus references how we should really strive to be more like kids. It makes me reflect on things I see on a daily basis. I've seen a new kid come to school and immediately be invited to jump in and play at recess, often saying they have a new best friend by the end of the day. I need to be more like that. Eager to accept and befriend a stranger at a moment's notice. On that same playground, I've seen kids crying and angry one minute and then running around laughing again minutes later. I need to learn to give and receive forgiveness so freely. There is immense joy in not having to hold onto anger and bitterness. Lastly, I see kids come into the school everyday ready to learn. It is expected that they don't know everything, that they are here to learn from others, and that they will most likely need to ask for help. Once again, I need to be more like that. There is joy in realizing that I don't need to have all

the answers and joy in knowing that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. In the end, it is important for us to remember that we are children of a God who does not expect us to have all the answers. I think that God invites us to tap into our child-like selves and hopes that we remember that we should be quick to befriend the stranger, quick to give and receive forgiveness, and that we should approach the world with a sense of wonder knowing that we don't need to have all the answers to be acceptable in God's sight.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the gift of children and the way they reflect Your heart. Help me to embrace the world with the same openness, joy, and humility that I see in them every day. Make me quick to welcome others, quick to forgive, and eager to learn from You. Remind me that I am Your child, fully loved and accepted, even when I don't have all the answers. Teach me to trust You with the same faith and wonder that children so naturally display.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Recipe: Overnight Coffee Ring p. 5

SECOND WEEK OF LENT

THE FRUIT OF PEACE

MARCH 10TH, 2025

Devotional on Peace by Garrett & Rachal Watson

Bible Verse: Colossians 3:15

Let the Peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Peace is one of our favorite fruits of the spirit because of the implications it has on our lives. In all we do, as is described in the passage above, we are called to peace and can experience peace because of Christ's sacrifice for all of us. While we all find it difficult at times to experience peace with others and what is happening in the world, Rachal and I have found it helpful to take time to meditate on all the blessings God has given us and understand that we are all of one body, regardless of our backgrounds, beliefs, or opinions. At the end of the day, we believe that all people are striving towards our own version of peace. For some, that may be peace with other family members or close friends. For others, possibly financial peace or peace within themselves. Regardless of the peace we think we may need, God has given us a Peace above all other forms through Christ and all we have to do to receive that fruit of the spirit is be aware and accepting of His gift, sent down to earth for us.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the Gift of Peace You gave us through Your son Jesus Christ and for the Peace He taught us through His words and deeds. Help us to be aware of and accept the Peace you provide us and be aware of its presence around all of us as one body, ready to nurture us whenever we need it. God, may you help others around us see the fruit of Peace ruling in our hearts and may it help others to come closer to finding and accepting it themselves through my words and deeds. Amen.

Recipe: Shepherd Pie p. 19

MARCH 11TH, 2025

Fruit of the Spirit - Peace by Jonni Davis

Isaiah 12:2: "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the Lord Himself, is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation."

Most of the time when we see the word 'peace' we think, not war or not strife or not violence. Yet, peace can come in many forms. Of course, peace is what we want instead of war or strife or violence. But perhaps we should consider peace instead of worry or distress or fear.

In the past several years, I have found myself praying more for peace than for anything else. I pray for peace for our world, for many of those in areas of conflict. But I also pray for peace for those oppressed, for those in pain, and for those of us dealing with grief.

My mother passed from this life in December ten years ago. She had been diagnosed with a not-rare-but-uncommon thyroid cancer. It moved incredibly fast. One day in March she complained of a sore throat that seemed without relief, was diagnosed in June, and died in December.

She started radiation and chemo the week I started back to school in August. As a teacher of Senior English, a team leader, and the Debate Coach, I had many demands on my time. I needed to continue to do my job so that everyone in my life could carry on with theirs. I didn't know - I didn't know this would be her last months. I didn't know I had so little time. I didn't know we would not have another Halloween together, another Thanksgiving together, another Christmas together. Would I have done things differently had I known this? I so hope I would. But I went to work. When my mom needed someone to take her to chemo and radiation, I sent my husband. When she needed help with meds, I sent my husband.

I remember breaking down to a couple of my teacher friends in the hallway one morning before classes. I knew I had shirked my duty, what I knew I should do. I cried, and they, like the true friends they were, comforted me.

I was in denial. I denied the truth of my mom's situation, the truth of what I knew I should do, the truth of my own nature - until then. I was weak. I was scared. I

was fearful of being without the one person on earth who loved me unconditionally. I feared watching her die.

I remember telling my friends much of this and adding that I just couldn't do it. Yet in my denial, I knew I needed to do something and that something was my husband. I told them, "I can't give myself, but I gave her my husband. He's the best of me."

We can, of course, debate that till the final judgment, but I believed it.

And once you start down the road to denial it is hard to change. I did visit my mom at home and then in the hospital. But once again, when the chemo and radiation had ended, when the cancer had been found to have spread to other parts of her body, I couldn't go.

I finally did go see her in hospice care. I don't know if she ever knew I was there. She never woke up. And while the cancer ravaged her body, her will, always the strongest thing about her, carried on.

I remember standing by her bed, telling her I loved her. I remember stroking her face and her hair, ravaged from the treatments. I remember thinking I needed to tell her I was going to be okay, that whatever shortcomings I had, I would have to deal with them. I told her it was okay to go. And then I prayed for peace for my dear beautiful mother.

About a day later, she passed from this world. Needless to say, I was devastated. I was angry, sad, depressed, brokenhearted. A number of earthly issues surrounded her passing, none of which are really that important - now. Then these things only compounded the anger, sadness, depression, grief. I pretty much raged at everyone and everything. And when everyone told me to take time off from work, I told them I couldn't. Once again, I put my job ahead of everything else.

One day, I couldn't carry on. I was a mess. I sat at home, having cried myself dry. I had no solace. And I cried out to God.

I couldn't tell you what He said. I didn't hear it with my ears, but with my heart. My broken, bleeding heart heard Him. And I prayed. I prayed the prayers of the angry, "Why? God, why?" I begged to understand. What I got was guidance. Back to prayer, back to the Bible. Back to people who could help me on my journey to peace.

God couldn't bring back my mother. He couldn't change what I had done or not done. He couldn't undo the hurt from those whom I perceived had hurt me. But I learned over the next many months that God could help me find peace.

I found peace in my choices, peace in my mom's death, peace in choices of others, peace in knowing their choices were beyond my control. For several years I had felt driven by something. I still do sometimes. It's not a good feeling. It's not a drive that leads to a positive end, but rather a drive that makes life uncertain and anxious. I have learned that through seeking peace.

When my life starts spinning beyond my control, yes, I'm a bit of a control-aholic, I take a deep breath. Perhaps I need more than one. I try to center myself. I seek stillness, and then I pray. Regardless of the prayer or the occasion, I always include a prayer for peace. And when I do that, I know that God is with me. I know that he sent Jesus to redeem us. I know that the Holy Spirit is us.

Heavenly Father, I have not been a dutiful daughter. I have followed my own will instead of Yours. I have fears and griefs and worries. I seek Your guidance. Help me, LORD, as I seek stillness to know You. Help me as I seek to feel the Spirit with me. Help me as I strive to do your will. Grant me peace and grace. In Jesus's name, I pray. Amen.

Recipe: Creamy Chicken and Green Chili Soup p. 15

MARCH 12TH, 2025

Finding Peace in a Busy World

by Jacob Manning

Opening Thought:

Honesty is the best place to start when talking about peace. As a 24-year-old juggling two jobs and school, I often struggle with it. In our culture, busyness is almost a badge of honor. When someone asks, "How's life?" the typical response is, "Oh man, I've been so busy." Sometimes, that response comes from a place of pride—we feel that being busy means we are important. But is that the kind of life God calls us to?

Biblical Reflection:

Scripture reminds us that peace isn't found in how much we accomplish. Philippians 4:6-7 says:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

In a world that pushes us to keep moving, striving, and chasing the next thing, God invites us to rest. He calls us to slow down and linger in His presence. Even the Sabbath was created for our well-being—a time set aside to rest, reflect, and be refreshed.

Application:

What does lingering in God’s presence look like for you? It doesn’t have to be sitting still in silence (though that can be powerful). For me, it’s running on a treadmill, going for a motorbike ride, or simply spending time with family and friends. It’s about acknowledging the small moments and having gratitude for them. Studies have even shown that gratitude helps combat anxiety and depression.

So the next time you feel overwhelmed, thinking, “I’m too busy for this,” or, “I have too much on my plate,” take a deep breath. Slow down. Rest in the knowledge that the Creator of the universe is offering you a different way to live—a life marked by peace, not pressure.

Closing Challenge:

This week, be intentional about finding moments of stillness with God. Whether it’s in nature, in worship, or simply sitting in silence, allow His peace to guard your heart and mind.

Prayer:

Lord, in a world that never stops, help us to find rest in You. Teach us to slow down, to trust You with our worries, and to walk in the peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.

Song suggestion: Hillsong Worship- Be Still

MARCH 13TH, 2025

Fruit of the Spirit: Peace by Mary Lewis

Philippians 4:7 “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”.

My mind churned as I drove that day with a velocity that was exhausting. *What had I done? Had I completely left all senses? What was I thinking?*

Some contextual background: My job was literally consuming my marriage. The ultimatum had been issued...it was time for a change or...well, it was time for a change.

I was absolutely shell-shocked...I *actually* gave notice to my employer several days before! Now, this wasn't just a *run-of-the-mill* job, but a pretty important job if I say so myself. *Had I lost my mind? What were we going to do? Would there be another job?* The mind wrestling continued as my head spun and my heart ached.

Well, like most people do when they're stressed, I decided to eat. McDonalds for a nutritious breakfast sandwich...surely that would help. The ordering process was uneventful, after all it was McDonalds. As I sat in the drive thru, I noticed a ragged red Dotson pick-up truck, you know, the little trucks that were manufactured some years back. My eye noticed the crooked license plate that was wired in place. Oh, my goodness, I thought, what a junky old truck. Then...*the eyes*. Eyes in Dotson's rear-view mirror that intently stared at me. *No, not today, Buddy...I am so stressed out and so worried and so...well, all the negative descriptors one could possess, I had them!* I looked away, but *the eyes* didn't budge. They just kept piercing through the mirror at me. *Seriously, dude, not in the mood... I can't be bothered today...I've got serious fretting to do here!*

But my gaze seemed to be pulled back at *the eyes*. *Seriously, PLEASE don't bother me...but I couldn't help my draw to the eyes.*

Finally, my time for the drive-up window. Just please give me my *Mc-Whatever* sandwich and let me get back to my worry. The slow-moving Dotson crept away from the drive thru, but *the eyes* persisted.

The still-opened drive-thru window homed a *Mc-employee* within who promptly handed me my brown bag with my *Mc-Whatever* in it. As I reached out to get the bag, she said, *its already paid for ma'am*. I said in amazement "What?" Yes, **He paid for it**, and **He said** to tell you to stop worrying about everything...**it is all going to be okay.**

My eyes quickly darted all around the parking lot for the old Dotson. It and *the eyes* were nowhere to be found. Could this really be happening? The mesmerizing and

piercing eyes...they were strange yet peaceful. I didn't notice that peace part of *the eyes* until they were gone...gone in the vanishing red Dotson.

I've never been great at surrendering. Never been very good at asking for help. And honestly, at that point in my life, not very good at praying. You see, I wasn't in a great place spiritually at that time. Thinking that Jesus would show up, *especially for me*, was not something I was accustomed to expecting. Peace wasn't something that I knew at that point in my life. And asking for peace was really **not** in my persona. Sure, I prayed (a little) but not intentionally. I didn't know about unconditional love, and I certainly didn't feel like *I* was worthy of asking for His help.

Years have passed since *those eyes* met mine that morning in the drive thru. Peace penetrated my heart that morning. There are really no descriptors that adequately describe the experience. *God's peace transcends all understanding* if we just let it in ...the tricky part is just surrendering and asking Him for it. We never know when and how Jesus will show up...he may even show-up in a beat-up, old red Dotson with a crooked license plate!

Prayer: God, help us to surrender our worries. Help us to ask You for help when our hearts are troubled. Give us eyes to see You even when we are not looking for you so we can have peace that transcends all understanding.

Amen.

Recipe: Uncle Vic Bierschenk's "Famous" Cinnamon Rolls p. 3

MARCH 14TH, 2025

Peace by Jane Walker

John 14:1 **Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me.**

Heart trouble. Even if not an actual physical condition, I've yet to meet a person without it. The fact is that no matter how "together" a person might seem, everyone has experienced or will experience a troubled heart at some time (and often many times) in their life. Circumstances and the related fears, imagined or real, can put us in a state of dis-ease which is far from the abundant life Christ promised.

In John 14:1, Christ is speaking to his beloved disciples on the night before his crucifixion. He is aware of the tremendous fear and confusion they were experiencing. In addition, he knows he does not have much more time to be with them on earth.

In thinking about this, I remember the words I spoke to my father shortly before his death, knowing I would not see him again this side of heaven. If you have ever been in this situation, you know this usually is not a time for frivolous talk. Rather, it's a time to share that which is most important. And that is what I think Jesus did in this verse. He used this precious time to assure those he loved most that they are not alone and that they can have trust and faith that God/Christ is still in control. What a gift!

We can claim that gift, too. Even in the midst of the most trying circumstances, we can recall that Christ urges us to return to "the peace that passes all understanding" by remembering the promise that we are not alone and that we can trust a Creator who loves us completely.

Dear Lord, thank you for never leaving us alone. When we are fearful, please calm our troubled hearts by reminding us to trust in you and your faithful love. Amen.

Recipe: The Walker Family's Company Casserole (easy 'lasagne') p. 16

MARCH 15TH, 2025

Peace by Rev. Jacob Snowden

Matthew 5:39a

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil. (King James Version)

Here's what I propose: 'Don't hit back at all.' (The Message).

There is a line of thought that connects Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, Howard Thurman, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The author of *War and Peace* was reading his Bible one day when he came across this verse, Matthew 5:39. And he thought, "That can't be right! Of course God tells us to resist evil!" But upon considering all the ways people have resisted evil—armies and prisons, too-savvy politicians and a church that blessed it all—Tolstoy remembered Jesus did not resist the soldiers who came to arrest him. He told Peter to sheathe his sword and healed the ear of one. Perhaps forming resistance was what kept evil thriving in the first place.

Tolstoy became pen pals with Gandhi. They discussed a method of non-resistance that culminated in the Salt Satyagraha, which is worth a Wikipedia search. Thousands of Indians broke the British monopoly on salt by walking to the beach and collecting their own. The march set the tone for the Civil Rights marches and Freedom Rides of the 1950s and 60s. Thurman, Dr. King's college chaplain, was part of a small Black delegation sent to India in 1935 to meet with Gandhi about the power of peaceful action.

I am prone to seeing things in opposition-black and white, good and evil, work and play. But peace is about imagining a way out of opposition, not hitting back at all. What did peace look like for people who turned the other cheek? It meant riding a bus, collecting salt, praying in a garden. And for these things, Jim Crow, British colonialism, and death itself crumbled.

What simple acts can you do where peace is both the method and the goal? Satyagraha was the idea that the peace in one person could be so powerful, it would cause an empire to fall. How can you work to build peace in yourself?

A Prayer for Peace:

God of all peace, build in our hearts and souls a lasting peace that is not passive or blind to the challenges of others. Rather than living in opposition, help us to live bearing the fruit of your spirit, where peace is our aim and our power. Amen.

Recipe: The Snowden Family's Crock-Pot Vegetarian Chili p. 13

THIRD WEEK OF LENT
THE FRUIT OF PATIENCE

MARCH 17TH, 2025

Stop and Take a Breath by Maryann Brown

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you are being rooted and established in love. - **Ephesians 3:16-17**

It's somewhat easier to have patience with a child, because you can tell yourself that they will get out of the terrible twos or they won't be teenagers forever. But how do you show patience with a 94-year-old aunt who asks the same question six times in 30 minutes or swears that they have never had a TV remote control, then you find it under their chair. You know that they are not going to grow out of this, and that it will only get worse.

Sometimes we know what pushes our buttons and really tries our patience. Does it matter that we have heard the same story over and over? No, it doesn't, but when you have other things to do or you are tired or hungry, then for me, these things get on my nerves. When I really think about it, what tries my patience is at that moment there is something within me that doesn't allow me to be patient. It's not what someone else is doing, but about how God is working within me to show love, and I am ignoring it. If I take a deep breath and remind myself that in my case, I am blessed to have a 94-year-old aunt in my life. I can smile and nod when my aunt tells me she doesn't know where her room is or where she is living. I can gently show her the way to her room without being a bully. What does it take for us to stop and take a deep breath, reminding ourselves that we really are blessed by God for all that we do have? I will miss my aunt when she passes for she has been a part of my life since the day I was born. We are all God's children and deserve to be treated as God treats us - with love and respect. So take a breath, turn to God, and think about what you are going to say the next time your patience is about to flee from you.

Dear Heavenly Father,

I humbly seek Your forgiveness for the moments when I faltered in practicing tolerance and patience towards others. Grant me the strength to make amends and the grace to forgive myself.

I beseech You to continue guiding me on this path of expressing Your love and kindness.

Recipe: Squash Pound Cake - Homann Family Recipe (a newly found family) p. 30

MARCH 18TH, 2025

The Smell of Patience by McCarley Beal

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. - Galatians 6:9

“When in doubt, always try to cook things low and slow” Gina Beal 2005. Making the active choice to slow down and let all the flavors mix and come together into something truly delicious. Which was a big challenge for my mother trying to feed three growing boys on different schedules and a hard working husband. This was a lesson in cooking to my 11 year old brain but it had an added benefit in training me to have a foundation of patience that my ADHD brain was kind of born without. It’s not about waiting or delaying gratification, it's a choice to stay present with something longer in order to get a deeper and more enriched flavor. Our faith works the same way. Having faith then just waiting for eternity in heaven is about as satisfying as a piece of bread, sure you get nourishment but it's pretty bland. But if you add seasonings, growing in discipleship, prayer, worship, then add other ingredients, congregation, family, friends, bible study groups, you can simmer in something wonderful. And nothing gathers people around faster than the smell of something incredible cooking in the kitchen. It is in these choices to actively add to our faith and let that grow day after day, year after year, that will grant us an abundant feast in the Heaven that is already present with us to be shared with all and it will truly be something delicious.

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for giving us moments to show patience in fun ways like cooking. Help us grow in that patience to get through the hard times and become closer to you and to the people around us. Let the feast in heaven be plenty and delicious. Amen.

Recipe: Gina Beal’s Peach Whiskey Chicken p. 19

MARCH 19TH, 2025

Fruit of the Spirit: Patience by Andrea Perez

Romans 12:12: Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Patience is often misunderstood as simply waiting for something to happen. But it's much deeper than that. It's not just about enduring a difficult moment; it's about trusting that all things unfold at their right time, even when we don't understand "the why" or "the when". During a frustrating situation—whether it's a delayed plan, a season of waiting, or an unanswered prayer—I have to remind myself that my impatience is often a result of wanting to control what's beyond me.

I've had times in my life where things didn't go as I planned, and in those moments, I was tempted to rush, to force things to happen faster. Yet, every time I've been patient, I've found that things worked out more beautifully than I could have imagined. Sometimes, patience isn't about making things happen, but about making space for God "to do a work in us".

Patience is a practice of trust in the unknown. It's a daily reminder that we're not alone in this journey, and the process itself is just as meaningful as the end goal. It teaches us that we can rest in God's timing and find peace even when the world around us feels chaotic.

Today, I invite you to practice patience—whether it's with someone who tests your limits, or in an area of your life where you're waiting for something to unfold. Slow down, breathe, and trust that this moment, just as it is, has purpose. Take a step back and allow God "to do a work in you". Let patience be your guide.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for teaching us the gift of patience. Help us to trust in Your perfect timing, even when the path ahead feels unclear. Give us the strength to wait with grace and peace, knowing that You are with us every step of the way. Amen.

Recipe: Andrea's Quick, Easy and Tasty Spaghetti p. 21

MARCH 20TH, 2025

The Gift of Patience in Teaching by Todd Dubbelde

Based on Proverbs 15:18 - "A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel."

As educators, patience is a vital quality that shapes our classrooms and impacts our students' lives. Proverbs 15:18 reminds us that a patient person brings peace, whereas a quick temper stirs up chaos. As teachers, we are not only responsible for imparting knowledge but also for cultivating an environment where students feel safe, heard, and valued. In those moments when frustrations rise—whether due to a challenging student behavior, an overwhelming workload, or the pressures of time—this verse serves as a reminder of the calming power of patience.

Teaching often involves navigating conflicts, misunderstandings, and emotions. In these moments, our response can either escalate or de-escalate the situation. A patient teacher doesn't react impulsively but instead listens, understands, and offers calm guidance.

It's in our patient responses that we show students what it means to navigate difficulties with grace and wisdom.

Patience also allows us to embrace the unique pace of each student's learning journey. Every child processes information differently and faces personal challenges. As teachers, when we take the time to encourage, understand, and offer gentle correction, we model Christlike patience.

When we feel our patience thinning, it's helpful to remember that God's patience with us is endless. His love is steadfast, and His patience, limitless. So, in moments of frustration, we can draw on His strength, asking for the grace to be a calming presence

in our classrooms, and reflecting His patience in all we do.

Let us teach not only with words but through the patience we show to each and every person.

These are my usual prayers during our daily moment of silence. Please choose one of these quick prayers to read as an exit ticket to this lesson.

1. Sweet Jesus, please give me strength and peace today.
2. Dear God, please help me bring them up, not tear them down.
3. Patient Lord, please keep your arm around my shoulder and your hand across my mouth.
4. All of the above.

Recipes: Lois Koehlinger's Egg and Meat Casserole p. 1

& The Valdez-Dubbelde Easy High Protein Breakfast Casserole p. 1

MARCH 21ST, 2025

Patience: Waiting with Trust by Amy Sims

"But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." - Romans 8:25 (ESV)

Patience is not just about the wait—it's about how we wait. In a world of instant gratification, waiting can feel frustrating and even discouraging. But God calls us to a deeper patience, one that trusts in His perfect timing.

The Bible has so many stories of patience. Abraham waited years for God's promise of a son. The Israelites wandered for decades before entering the Promised Land. Both of these stories teach us that patience is not passive; it is an active trust in God's faithfulness.

When we grow impatient, we tend to take matters into our own hands, leading to stress, anxiety, and sometimes even choices that we regret. But when we surrender our timelines to God, we find peace. Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit because it reflects a heart that relies on God's wisdom rather than our own desires.

Today, ask yourself: How can I practice patience? Maybe it's by responding with kindness in a frustrating situation. Maybe it's by trusting God with an unanswered prayer. Maybe it's by waiting with hope rather than waiting with worry. Whatever it may be, choose patience today, knowing that God's plans are always worth the wait.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your perfect timing. Teach us to wait with patience, trusting in Your plans rather than our own wishes and desires. Help us reflect Your love through patience in our words, actions, and thoughts. Fill us with peace as we wait on You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Recipe: Squash Dressing p. 12

MARCH 22ND, 2025

Patience by Rev Bill Mauldin

Ephesians 4:1-6

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

"I was going to say "Hi" to you today, but you looked so angry I didn't say anything. What happened to you today?" "Nothing had happened today, I wasn't angry" I said. Someone else chimed in "You look angry all the time".

I didn't think I was angry or that I was an angry person, many of us are walking around angry and unaware, but the people around us see it. I wasn't angry, emotionally angry that day, but I was a generally angry person without knowing it.

One of the so-called Seven Deadly sins, is a form of anger called wrath. It is no sin to feel the emotion of anger, but when we hold on to it, cultivate it, and allow it to lead us to act out in aggressive (or passive-aggressive) ways, we may have wandered into wrath.

Lots of us go through this world, angry/wrathful, holding grudges, gossiping, and lashing out at others in obvious and subtle ways. When I decided to become a follower of Jesus Christ in my early twenties, wrath was the thing I struggled most to give up.

Each deadly sin has an opposite, a Heavenly Virtue, and the virtue that opposes wrath is Patience. Patience is the ability to endure difficult circumstances. Wrath is a response to insecurity and fear. We act out of anger/wrath because our egos are fragile things. When we truly begin to worship Jesus, and trust in His word about our value, we find the strength to be patient, even in our difficult circumstances. When we seek to follow Jesus, to be Christ-like, and trust in His promises, we will find ourselves growing in the virtue of patience.

Prayer:

Jesus Christ, help me to follow in your way. Allow me to let my anger go so that it does not fester into wrath. Help me to trust in you, trusting that you are with me, and that with you I am strong and can make it through even difficult times. Amen

Recipe: Mauldin Family Bacon Cheese Puffs p. 9

FOURTH WEEK OF LENT
THE FRUIT OF KINDNESS & GOODNESS

MARCH 24TH, 2025

The Fruit of KINDNESS by Lydia Shea

Scripture

Proverbs 19:17 " Be kind to the poor. Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done."

Devotional

Today I will be telling you about my Mimi's Pumpkin Log. Something I learned from my grandma is that when she is cooking do not bother her. When she is not in the kitchen she is the sweets woman alive. Something that I love about her is that if she messed up on a recipe, she would keep trying until she got it right. An experience that I loved is when I got to go to her house and make homemade chocolate milk. When I would make that chocolate milk, her cat Boots was not a fan.

My Mimi was very kind. She was many things where she lived and raised her family. In Blum, she was the mayor, she did charity, and she volunteered at my dad's school. She was always trying to find ways to be kind to her town. She would have a good time with her family and her animals. She was constantly thinking of other people before herself. She was kind in many different ways. When I would come to her house, she would read me a story and let me go through her kitchen to help her find stuff to cook. When she had to move out of her house to the Cleburne Court nursing home, she acted like she knew everyone as childhood friends. She was nice to the person at the front desk and to the cook. I would visit her, and every time she was always very kind to me.

Recipe: Pumpkin Log p. 8

MARCH 25TH, 2025

Be Ye Kind by Alice Finley

Be kind has been our family motto for our children's entire lives. Each day as the kids left for school, we said, "Be kind and we love you." This was also a reminder for Jimmy and I to be kind to others as we left for work. I see that our children, having taken our motto to their children and families. **-Ephesians 4:32**

One evening while eating at a local restaurant we ate at often, the waitress came to take our order. Instead of asking what we would like to eat she said, "who are ya'll." We both said, "the Finleys" and she said, "no, I mean, who are ya'll because you are different from other people who come in here. You are always kind and loving." Kindness matters and doesn't go unnoticed. Kindness is a gift of the Spirit working within each of the gifts of the Spirit.

God's definition of kindness must be compassion in action. Being kind is living a life that strives to always do what is right. It is understanding the impact our words and actions have on others.

The King James Version of Esphesians 4:32, and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Other translations use the word compassion instead of tenderhearted. Compassion is a feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others. I like the tenderhearted, having a kind, gentle, or sentimental nature. It's a reminder for me to be aware of my interactions with others and myself and have a kind, gentle, and sentimental nature.

The last part of the verse is about forgiveness. A reminder to forgive as Christ has forgiven you. Our kindness is directly related to Calvary's cross. Christ died for my sins, your sins, and the sins of all.

I challenge you to the say the verse out loud each morning to remind yourself and those in your household to be kind to others. Kindness changes things within us and impacts those around us.

Prayer: Jesus, I thank you for the kindness and forgiveness You have shown me. Please help me to be kind in all in interactions. I pray that others might see Your love through me. Jesus, please help me to forgive as you have forgiven.

Recipe: Gramby's Cornbread Dressing (Alice Finley) p.10

MARCH 26TH, 2025

Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness & Hospitality by Ann-Katherine King

If you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. - Romans 12:8

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. - Hebrew 13:2

When I was growing up, my neighborhood was very close and like family. When a new family would move into their home on our street, I remember my mother saying we need to make them feel welcome and a part of our neighborhood. I knew exactly what she meant; the new family was going to receive a loaf of her delicious bread.

Once the family moved in and was settled, my mother and I would walk down the street and ring the doorbell. Back then, someone would always answer! We would introduce ourselves and welcome them to our neighborhood. My mother would then give them a loaf of warm bread and let them know if they ever needed anything, we live at 3711.

To this day, if I make a loaf of her bread, it brings back feelings of kindness and hospitality; it just makes me smile. :) What could we do as a church or individuals to extend kindness to others?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to extend kindness and hospitality with an open heart so that our joy and love for You can be shared with others. Please continue to give us the eyes to see opportunities where we can be your hands and feet. We also pray for courage to show Your kindness to others no matter how awkward or inconvenient the situation may be. Help us to bless others as you continue to bless us. Amen.

Recipe: Patricia's Welcome Loaf p. 8

MARCH 27TH, 2025

Kindness by Koscielniak Family

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. -Galatians 6:10

Have you ever just stopped to think, I wish someone knew how I felt right now? Life can have its ups and downs and it is important to reach out to others when they feel they are going through the valleys in life. One way this church family does that is through college boxes. I know as a college student I would worry about my finals and everything that had to get done during that time. I felt so supported by my church family when that box of goodies would show up during that time and let me know that my community believed in me and was praying for me. Another example is with Santa Fe Elementary notes, mentors, treat days, and luncheons. Teachers have many

expectations placed on them and these surprises from the church help us to recharge and know that we are loved and cared for because even in the dark times FUMC is showing up with so much goodness. During a hard week, walking into the lounge and seeing the smiling faces really brings your day back on track. Goodness can take many forms besides these two ways. Short notes to homebound people can brighten their day, meals when someone is ill or recovering, or even just an offer of prayer to help get someone through a tough time. It is my hope that today you will find some small, or if you are daring a big, way to show someone goodness because when we reach out and connect with others in this way we are showing God's goodness to them.

Dear Lord, thank you for the good times and the hard times. Be with me throughout the day and please show me one way I can bring goodness into someone's life by showing them who you are. In your name I pray, Amen.

Recipe: Koscielniak Family's Cream Cheese Braid p. 7

MARCH 28TH, 2025

Goodness by Austin & Aley Lindert

Romans 2:4 (New Living Translation)

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? 4 Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? **Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?**

When I read verses about God's goodness I found a lot of verses about how he is fair and just, he's a stronghold, he's generous, and gracious. He's God - he can be a lot of things. When I think of general "goodness" or "good people" it mostly boils down to them being deeply kind people. So, I liked this verse about how one of the ways God is good is that God is kind.

I'm always trying to make sure my kids are being kind people and my two year old is asking, "why?" a lot - so we end up getting really far into the weeds, or we gloss over it and say something like, "be ye kind" (Ephesians 4:32). God is kind so we should be kind. But why is he so kind? He doesn't have to be - he's God. He's already good in a million other ways.

--Verse---

In this verse Paul is telling people why God is kind. God's kindness changes our hearts so our attention is on him, and the contentment and joy we find in that relationship. His kindness trumps sin in terms of what our hearts value. So he's able to change our focus from sin/worldly pleasure/etc to inspire thankfulness, faith, and repentance. He's able to lead by example and show us how to be good. God's goodness or kindness causes a change of heart and leads us to repentance.

Paul really goes off in Romans 2 & 3 telling people that God gets to be the judge not them, and if they don't make some changes they're going to regret it because the kind good God they know is also the judge who is watching them make poor decisions. God's goodness also makes him a fair judge.

I don't think that means we should be kind to change people - Paul makes it clear that other people's sins are not my business. However, if our kindness ever inspires others or shows others a glimpse of God's goodness - I think that counts as living out our faith.

Dear God, help us see your goodness, delight in your generosity, and borrow your patience. Help us to go out into the world and be good like you. Amen

Recipe: One pan Spaghetti Squash Bacon Goodness p. 22

MARCH 29TH, 2025

Be the Light by Sarah Moulden

Ephesians 5 1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.

Each day at school begins with the pledges and a moment of silence. Several years ago, I started praying the same prayer during this moment, one that focuses my day and my purpose: Help me to be the Light. Help me to see the Light. It reminds me that there is goodness in me, and my responsibility as a Christian is to act and respond in ways that align with Christ's works and teachings. It sets a tone for my day, to intentionally search for the goodness in others. If you are looking for it, you will find it.

Lately I have participated in quite a few meal trains to provide church families support in both grief and celebration. Hadley (13) commented, "Mom, you are such a good person." What she didn't know was when I was a junior in high school, my mom had surgery to remove a brain tumor. For an entire month, a warm dinner was delivered to our home every night. It wasn't just about the food. Our family felt the love and goodness of our entire community during that time.

And I don't "pay it forward" to others out of obligation. I want others to feel the goodness and warmth of the Holy Spirit within the communion of a warm meal lovingly prepared. It's a small way that I can "be the light" to others.

Gracious God,
Nudge me to love others through the gifts and strengths You created within me. May others feel the goodness that flows from Your love when I set a purpose to be the Light. Amen.

Recipe: Pioneer Woman Chicken Spaghetti (Ree Drummond) p. 14

FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

THE FRUIT OF FAITHFULNESS

MARCH 31ST, 2025

Goodness In Faithfulness by Bill Allen

Luke 10:40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Serving others is at the heart of Christian life. "I serve" should be the motto of everyone in God's family. Serving wholeheartedly is commendable, and putting our minds, hearts, and hands into serving is admirable.

Martha was fortunate to host Jesus, and her enthusiasm for hospitality was remarkable. However, her real misstep was becoming so consumed by her hosting duties that she lost sight of Jesus himself. She became so focused on serving that she forgot the most important aspect: being present with him.

The key is finding a way to be both - embodying both Martha's diligence and Mary's contemplative spirit. Being both is challenging. Often, it's easier to fill our time with tasks than to pause and cultivate spiritual connection.

In my own journey, I've realized that many actions stem from obligation rather than joy. Transforming duties into meaningful service requires a shift in perspective - doing things not just out of compliance, but with a genuine, loving heart.

Practical work is important, but it should not overshadow our personal relationship with Jesus. We must guard against becoming so busy doing things "for" him that we neglect spending time with him.

Ultimately, our spiritual health and ability to honor God hinges on maintaining a vibrant, authentic connection with Jesus. This relationship should be our priority, transcending all other activities and obligations.

Prayer

Dear God, Thank you for giving us the desire to help others through the Holy Spirit. Help us to be like Martha and Mary in one. When we have opportunities to serve, we first come with our hearts faithful to you.

Recipe: Bill Allen's Taco Soup p. 23

APRIL 1ST, 2025

Faithfulness by Michelle Inabinet

Scripture:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your path straight." Proverbs 3:5-6

A Model of Faithfulness:

My Memaw was a model of faithfulness. Not only was she the church secretary, but she was the very heart of her church. She poured herself into serving God through taking care of people. Whether helping cook, writing the Sunday bulletin, visiting a sick church member, or organizing an event, she always exemplified being a faithful servant, spreading God's love to everyone whose path she crossed.

To me, her faithfulness was never more evident than in the last days of her life. You see, on her way to work one rainy morning, a truck crossed over the center line and hit her car head-on. While she survived the wreck, her body was shattered. We were left devastated and lost, questioning, how could someone so good have something so horrible happen to them?

Over the next few months, we tried again and again to "fix" my Memaw. Through it all though, she never lost sight of her Jesus, even asking us to turn her hospital bed to face the crucifix on the wall. She knew that He was there with her, in all her pain and suffering. She never doubted that He would heal her....and that He did, just not in the way **we** wanted her healed. He answered her prayers and took her home, making her body whole again and her soul at peace.

This event shook my faith to the core because I just couldn't comprehend how God could let my Memaw suffer the way she did after all she had done to spread His love on Earth. Then, one day, I was in her house and found the scripture of Proverbs 3:5-6 hanging on the wall, and it stopped me in my tracks. I could hear her voice reminding me that I may not always understand, but I should continue to be faithful

because He has a plan. At her funeral, I was in awe by the number of people whose lives she touched by serving God. That was a turning point in my faith.

To this day, I have that scripture hanging on my wall and have taught myself to listen to His voice when I'm at a crossroads in life. I truly believe that my Memaw showed me the way to trust in the Lord with all my heart and follow Him, even in blind faith...doing that has led me to the love of my life, Tom, and to my calling in life, being a behavior specialist. Every day, I pray that God will give me the ability to show the kids that I work with His love through my words and actions.

Next time, you are facing a tough decision or going through a valley in life, pray and listen for His voice to guide you.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord,

I admit that I often struggle to put all my trust in You, trying to control situations or bend circumstances to my will, not even considering Yours. Forgive me. Please help me to be more faithful to You by placing my whole life in Your hands, so that You may work through me to glorify Your kingdom. Amen.

Recipe: Memaw's Neiman Marcus Cake p. 31

APRIL 2ND, 2025

Faithfulness by Missy Nelson

Philippians 3:13-14 - "Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Psalms 91:4 - "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart."

I want to share a story about a very special woman. She was raised in a loving and caring home and was taught about God's love and promise at an early age. After high school, she went off to college and found the love of her life. They were married and started their life together. Shortly after they were married, he was drafted by the Navy and they had to move from Texas and their family and friends to go to the strange new world of Long Beach, California. Then he was shipped off on a boat for

months at a time. This woman, who had always dreamed of becoming a nurse, put her dreams aside and worked as a secretary to help pay the bills while her husband was out on tour. After two years, the man got out of the Navy and went back to school to finish his degree. So the woman moved with him again, this time to Lubbock (at least they were back in Texas). She worked to pay the bills while he went to school. Finally, after five long years, the man graduated college and got his first job in the private sector utilizing his college degree.

They moved to Midland to start their new life and wanted desperately to start a family. But, the woman had been having some female problems. She had an ovarian cyst on one of her ovaries, so the doctors put her on hormone therapy for several years. Then her problems got worse and she developed endometriosis. She finally ended up having to have an ovary removed. Her husband was also checked and it turned out he had a low sperm count, so the odds were stacked against them having a family. But the woman had great faithfulness and knew God would provide. Finally, after six long years of struggle, anticipation and disappointments, the couple decided to adopt. After a year of paperwork, background checks and home visits, they were finally approved and got a baby girl, seven years after they were married. The woman was happy, but had always wanted to have a big family because she was an only child. So they pursued adopting another child. This time, they contacted various sources; a children's home, a pastor and an attorney that handled private adoptions. Each time they thought they had another baby, it would fall through. Then the attorney called and said he had a family that wanted to give their baby up for adoption. The woman was very excited. They filled out the paperwork and eagerly awaited the new baby. Just one month before the baby was to be born, the teenage father changed his mind and decided to marry the teenage mother and keep the child. Needless to say, the woman was devastated, heartbroken and scared to hope for another child, but she continued to have faith.

A few months later, a friend of a friend of the couples' came to see them and told them about another teenage pregnancy. They assured them that the family would not change their mind and would allow the adoption. The woman was scared, beaten down and afraid to hope. How could she take another chance and fear loss and devastation again?

Even though this woman was scared, she knew God loved her and had great faithfulness and perseverance. God gave her the strength to hope and try again to adopt another baby. This faithfulness paid off, because on February 1, 1964, I left the hospital and went home with my new parents. My Mom has always told me that I was

God's gift to her. She also told me that I grew IN her heart instead of under it. And then, six years later, the woman with one ovary and the man with a low sperm count finally conceived and had a healthy and happy baby boy, my brother Jeffrey!

Please join me today in trying to practice living out this Fruit of the Spirit by asking God to have more faithfulness. Faithfulness...it's a God thing...please pray to be more faithful and not telling what God will do in your life!

Dear Heavenly Father, please help us to live more faithful lives and practice daily our faithfulness to YOU and Your plan for our lives. You are the great architect and if we are just faithful, we will realize all of the blessings and wonders you have planned for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Recipe: Mom's Monterrey Chicken p. 17

APRIL 3RD, 2025

Fruits of the Spirit Lenten Devotional-Faithfulness by The Woodard Family

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness. - Matthew 25:23

As a family we have been faithful to God's call by following His Word in job placements and communities that we have been a part of.

Before we moved to Cleburne we (especially Liz) were happy and content in our home community, school and jobs. Jim applied late and got the job later. It was a rush to get packed, sell one home, buy another and finish out the school year. We only applied so late at the urging of our former head coach. As a family, leaving the comfort of the known and pushing into the unknown was very scary. We followed God's call faithfully, although fearfully, to be a part of a new community. We were rewarded with an amazing community that warmly welcomed us, as well as with jobs we loved, people we loved working with and new coaches and coaches families to add to our Football Family.

As a Church and a family we can continue to listen to God's call and remain faithful to Him and His Word. To be good and faithful servants to his teachings, call and his Word as the servants were in the parable in Matthew. Those servants that were faithful to the master and followed instructions were rewarded. We can be like those servants and follow our master's instructions faithfully and we will be rewarded.

Heavenly Father,

As we strive to be good and faithful servants to your word, help us focus on utilizing the gifts we are given. Help us to remember to seek you and your Word faithfully. Help us know that whatever gifts we are given will be used to glorify your Name and in using those gifts we will be rewarded.

Thank you for the gift of faithfulness,

Amen

Recipe: The Woodard Family's Chicken Spaghetti p. 14

APRIL 4TH, 2025

Faithfulness in Every Step by Seth and Kaelyn King

Key Verse:

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'" - Matthew 25:23 (NIV)

Reflection:

Faithfulness is not just about the big, life-changing moments—it's about the small, daily choices we make to be steadfast, trustworthy, and consistent in our walk with God. Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25 reminds us that faithfulness is rewarded, not because of how much we have, but because of how we use what we've been given.

Think about the servant in this passage. He didn't need a massive fortune or grand opportunities to be faithful. He simply worked with what he had, stayed committed, and honored his master's trust. The reward wasn't based on the size of his work but on the steadfastness of his heart.

The same applies to our faith journey. We are called to be faithful in our relationships, our church, our jobs, and even in the quiet moments when no one else is watching. Faithfulness is showing up—consistently, with integrity and a heart committed to God's will.

Practical Application:

1. **Be Faithful in the Small Things** - Look at your daily habits. Are you faithful in prayer, reading scripture, and serving others? Choose one small act of faithfulness to commit to this week—perhaps setting aside time daily for prayer or reaching out to encourage a friend.
2. **Stay Committed Even When It's Hard** - Faithfulness is easy when things go well, but it's truly tested in challenges. Is there an area where you've been tempted to give up? Ask God for strength to remain faithful, whether in your family, your work, or your calling.
3. **Encourage Someone Else's Faithfulness** - Who in your life needs encouragement to stay faithful? Send them a message, pray for them, or offer a helping hand.

Closing Thought & Prayer:

God honors faithfulness. He sees every moment you choose to trust Him, to serve, to love, and to remain steadfast. You don't need a grand stage—just a heart that says, "Lord, I will be faithful with what You have given me."

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your unwavering faithfulness to us. Teach us to be faithful in the small things, to trust You in the hard times, and to honor You in every step of our journey. Strengthen our hearts to remain steadfast, knowing that You reward those who are faithful. In Your name, Amen.

Recipe: Granny King's Chocolate Cream Pie p. 27

APRIL 5TH, 2025

Faithfulness devotional by Dylan Patterson

Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will find favor and high regard with God and people. -Proverbs 3:3-4

Faithfulness is a rare quality in today's world. People often change their commitments based on convenience, but God calls us to remain steadfast and true to our word, consistent in our relationships, and unwavering in our walk with Him.

To be faithful means to be dependable, trustworthy, and constant in our love and devotion. It reflects the very character of God, who is always faithful to His promises.

Even when we fail, He remains true (2 Timothy 2:13). When we embrace faithfulness in our lives, we mirror His nature and bring glory to His name.

Proverbs 3:3 tells us to bind faithfulness around our neck and write it on the tablet of our heart. This means faithfulness should not be something we practice occasionally but a core part of who we are. It should guide our decisions, shape our relationships, and define our walk with God.

When we live faithfully and keep our word, staying loyal to our commitments, and remaining steadfast in our love for God and others it helps strengthen our community by being someone you can lean on in a time of need. I feel like our church shows up and shows out in this aspect from the gathering to small groups we remain steadfast to these great programs and help our younger generations have great role models to glean from.

Application:

Be faithful in the small things - Integrity in little matters prepares you for greater responsibility (Luke 16:10).

Keep your promises - Let your "yes" be yes, and your "no" be no (Matthew 5:37).

Stay committed in your walk with God - Even when life is difficult, remain steadfast in prayer and worship, .

Prayer:

Lord, You are always faithful, and I desire to reflect Your faithfulness in my life. Help me to be trustworthy in my words, steadfast in my commitments, and unwavering in my love for You and others. Teach me to walk in integrity so that I may show others what faithfulness looks like. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Recipe: Patterson's Mexican Rice p. 11

SIXTH WEEK OF LENT
THE FRUIT OF GENTLENESS & SELF-CONTROL

APRIL 7TH, 2025

GENTLENESS by Lorna Smith

ESV Psalm 18:35 *You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great.*

Matthew 11:29 *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

Philippians 4:5 *Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

The word *GENTLENESS* evokes an emotional response—a stirring of our hearts toward love and relationships—and perhaps need. In **Psalm 18:35**, King David reflects on God’s graciousness--

ESV *You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great.*

David acknowledged God’s goodness and His extra extension of love in making him king.

An observation from a senior citizen: An important realization at some point in my life was that we are all a bundle of our own insecurities—and that hopefully, by some point in our maturity we have realized ways to help heal or understand them. Those “bundles” cause fear, pain and hostility; all limiting our potential. Experiencing gentleness massages that pain.

Scriptures encourage us toward gentleness -- **Matthew 11:29** *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

We can rely on God’s love. His gentleness is always available; it is so abundant that He wants it to overflow to others--**Philippians 4:5** *Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

The harsh reply and the hardened heart are not sanctioned by the Lord. There are times where difficult messages must be delivered, but gentleness is still available. A soft approach, an empathic voice, extra moments that indicate understanding are always options.

We can all recall difficult situations of our own where harshness reigned. Gentleness is usually remembered as a bright star of guidance and love. We may have the chance to bestow gentleness that promotes greatness—just as God did for King David.

Another nugget that I found and liked--

“Empathy and kindness are the true signs of emotional intelligence.” Will Ferrell

Recipe: Four Layer Delight (Adaption -- Sugar-Free) p. 28

APRIL 8TH, 2025

In the Interest of Gentleness by Julie Mahaffey

Ephesians 4:1-2

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

With more than a touch of chagrin, I must admit that my temper can be as fiery as my hair and my patience as short as my attention span. These issues have long been front-of-mind struggles for me, and I work hard to listen more than I speak and let others tell their story. I find that there is much more to be learned through observation than through spewing my own thoughts.

When I was a young parent, I often lost sight of the importance of living in the moment with my children and became impatient or rushed to get through the day or to “get everything done.” I wish I had realized then that I would never “get everything done,” and had savored that fleeting time more. This became obvious to me when my little girl wanted to learn to tie her shoes. I started to show her, and my son, just two years older, stepped in and said, “I’ll show her, you aren’t patient enough.” I worried then that I hadn’t been gentle with him, or listened to him, or given him the attention that he deserved. He hadn’t felt loved as he should. The guilt and sorrow was overwhelming. This was the reality check that I needed to reflect on my own gentleness. I took more time with my precious little children. I tried to make sure that I paused before reacting and calmed down. I observed mentor teachers. I was always kind to my students, but by watching my most esteemed teachers I became quieter, softer spoken, and gentler. I became a port in the storm and a listening ear for students and friends. I shared the word of Christ, learned to pray in public, and became more fulfilled. Gentleness is truly a fruit of the spirit worth cultivating, for the bounty is truly fulfilling.

Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank you for gently showing us the way to love and care for one another through serving you. You guide us, protect us, nurture us, and smile upon us with gentleness every day of our lives. For that we are truly blessed.
Amen.

Recipe: The Mahaffey's Christmas Morning Cinnamon Pull-Apart Buns p. 2

APRIL 9TH, 2025

Gentleness by Jacob Zachary

Matthew 11:29-New International Version

29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Gentleness is something we often associate with children. We associate it with small and fragile things and the cultivation of and growth of those things. A fruit that we usually reserve for those who need comfort. We are pretty good at that part...But gentleness is something that I, for one, realize I need to use more in my responses to all those around me—specifically the other adults.

In the verse, Jesus directs us to do the work first. He doesn't ask; it is a directive: "Take up my yoke and learn from me." What I hear in this is, "Fake it till you make it." Intentionally apply gentleness in your life, and the learning will follow.

Our challenge is to be aware of Gentleness in response to all the big and small things that we see and hear every day. Those things that cause me to want to snap a response, and those responses that are most often anything but gentle, usually cutting, and frequently cruel.

What he also offers, beyond learning, is the reward. "You will find rest for your souls." At the time I'm writing this, I was up two hours before my alarm feeding a two-week-old baby. ANY rest at this point sounds FANTASTIC.

Of course, it isn't the physical rest he is talking about. He is talking about Peace. It is the peace of letting a slight go, in not escalating, in giving grace. This kind of rest rejuvenates you because you realize that you don't HAVE to be on guard and ready with a riposte at all times and with all people. This Gentleness allows someone new in a community to find where and how they fit. This is the mindset in which relationships

are forged and grow. This Gentleness allows us mere humans to make mistakes... and be forgiven.

Dear Lord,

Help us remember that you have directed us to do the work first, responding to our lives like you would. Remind us that we should see through a lens of Gentleness. Open us to growth and peace offered by living this way. Let us share this fruit so that we may better make this world a little more yours.

Amen

Recipe: Ruth's Cherry Pie p. 25

APRIL 10TH, 2025

SELF-CONTROL Devotional by Alan Reed

Scripture Reading: Galatians 5:16-26

Self-control...is it about controlling your temper when you are angry, overindulging on food, overspending, or is it a discipline to control your physical, mental, spiritual, or relational needs or desires? Of all the "Fruits of the Spirit", this is probably the one topic that so many people have trouble with.

You may think that you have everything under your control when the devil pops in to test you. It can be over something simple or even quirky. Needless to say your response could be negative, and you regret your sudden outburst of unkind words or actions.

I think if we all admit it, self-control is hard to keep 100% of the time. Honestly, I think I do pretty well until my tongue lashes out at the idiot in the vehicle ahead of me does something nearly cause a wreck. OR, how about the driver going 45 in a 70 mph no pass zone—my wife can testify that I talk to the driver about the issue as if that would help.

Now let's think about one of the weakest moments many of us have and that is with dieting and sweets. I'm pretty sure I am not alone on this lack of self-control. I just can't eat just one cookie or piece of pie. I must have two. Of course the eventual outcome is wondering why my clothes have shrunk, but I go ahead and have that second helping of Banana Pudding.

Do you relate to what I am saying?

With God's help, I think our self-control weaknesses are fixable if we would just think before we act out, not intentionally overeat, and would just pray for help to conquer your uncontrollable moments. If we did, everything would be much better.

I think that self-control is a self-discipline that we try very hard not to break. I know that most Christian believers are courteous, kind and compassionate, BUT ever once in awhile there is a thorn of irritation that makes your thoughts, words and actions not so great. However, our God desires that we strive to have self-control, and He is a forgiving God who knows our weaknesses and He gives us the tools over and over of how to develop self-control. We just need to be intentional on having self-control no matter what falls in our laps.

Now that this devotional has been shared with you, I think I will go eat my third helping of Banana Pudding because I love the taste of Banana Pudding. (I guess I just failed that moment of self-control. Sorry!!!)

PRAYER: Father God, you know me better than I know myself. Help me to be more intentional in having self-control in my life. I am weak at times even when I try to do my best to follow your way. Please don't give up on me. Amen

Recipe: Alan's Banana Pudding p. 24

APRIL 11TH, 2025

God Already Gave Us the Spirit of Self-Control by Keith Whitworth

Scripture:

"God didn't give us a spirit that is timid but one that is powerful, loving, and self-controlled." – II Timothy 1:7 (CEB)

Self-control often feels like something we have to work hard to develop. We read books, set goals, and strive to muster the discipline we believe we lack. But Paul reminds Timothy that self-control is not something we must force; it is already given to us as part of our identity in Christ. We don't have to manufacture it—we simply need to lean into what God has already provided.

Ryan Holiday, in *Discipline is Destiny: The Power of Self-Control*, writes, *"Without self-discipline, we not only risk failing to meet our full potential and jeopardizing what we have already achieved, but also ensure a lifetime of regret and shame. With it, we hold the key to greatness."* Paul echoes this idea, but he takes it one step further: as

believers, we already *have* the key. Self-control is not about striving to achieve something outside of us, but about unlocking what is already within us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Living a life of self-control doesn't mean restriction; it means freedom. When we rely on God's strength rather than our own willpower, we find joy in the discipline that shapes our lives. We make wise choices not out of fear or obligation, but because we are empowered by the Spirit to do so. When we embrace this truth, our lives become a testimony to God's power at work within us.

Practice for Today: Today, instead of striving for self-control on your own, pause and pray. Ask God to help you recognize and lean into the self-discipline He has already placed within you. Make one choice today—big or small—that reflects this gift.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for the gift of self-control. Help me to trust in Your Spirit rather than my own strength. Teach me to use this gift to make choices that bring joy, peace, and goodness into my life and the lives of those around me. Amen.

Recipe: Whitworth Yummy Protein Shake p. 5

APRIL 12TH, 2025

God's Love Thoughts by Jean Ford

Can you imagine God big... really big, no I mean even bigger than really big? To imagine this, we need to address God's love.

God's love is big...very big, but can you conceive of the over 10,000 ways God has shown His love to you?

I've thought about these questions many times in my lifetime. At times I don't realize just how big God is because I can't see him. He sometimes seems far away and in the clouds. I fail to appreciate the amount of Love He offers me daily. But I'm finding ways to keep connected to God through prayer.

My prayer time is almost always at night. That is when I enjoy reliving my day and reflect on the needs of family and friends. I take my daily prayer seriously. I am quick to ask for God's help for all those I love in times of need. I try and remember to thank God for His care, but this is where I fall so short. God's grace and love is immense! It is hard to grasp how to even begin measuring His grace and love! I'm rethinking how

I commune with God and feel His presence. Praises now fill my heart. And now I spend most of my God given thoughts praising, glorifying, exalting and celebrating His love.

My prayer time needs to include some of the 10,000 times God has stepped in to help me get through each day. God's grace and love have no boundaries.

My inspiration for writing this short devotion is from Galatians 5:22-24. My heart sings with words from the song titled 10,000 Reasons Bless the Lord. Written by Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin. I will share the website so you can listen to this beautiful song.

I pray that the words from this song inspire you to spend time focusing on God's love.

Song Suggestion: Matt Redman - 10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)

Find Music Video by searching "Matt Redman 10,000 Reasons" (Thumbnail is in black and white) or type in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtwlT8JjddM>

Recipe: Jean's Apple Pie p. 24

SEVENTH WEEK OF LENT

THE FRUIT OF LOVE

APRIL 14TH, 2025

God is Love by Rev. Kim Long

"because God is love." - 1 John 4:8b

"**4** Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant, **5** it isn't rude, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't irritable, it doesn't keep a record of complaints, **6** it isn't happy with injustice, but it is happy with the truth. **7** Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things. **8** Love never fails." - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

God is love. This is verse and truth about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that I hold dear. It has been a guiding, sustaining, and life giving theme throughout my teenage and adult years. This truth about God first impacted my life when I was a teenager at church camp north of Houston Texas. During this particular week at camp, we were all divided into small groups that meet each afternoon to talk about the lesson for the day. There were a couple of teenagers in my small group that were not being kind to another student in our group. By Wednesday of the week, it was becoming very uncomfortable for everyone. The adult who lead our small group decided to do not do the lesson on Wednesday afternoon. Instead, he put us all in a circle with two chairs in the middle. Then one by one we each sat in one of the chairs as he sat in the other. He looked us in the eye and then proceeded to list off positive characteristics and strengths he had observed. I do not recall exactly what he said to me that day, but what I do remember is being seen as beloved child of God. I remember being valued by his words and deeply loved, a love that could only come from God. Now, I did not have all of those words that day, but over the years have come to understand that is what was happening. I was being seen as Jesus sees me. I was experiencing first hand in a very close and personal way, "God is love".

Since then, I have experienced this in other ways. One way I have experienced this is through reading 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8 using the ancient method called *Lectio Divina*. I want to invite you to do the same a few times during Holy Week. Here is one way to participate in *Lectio Divina*:

1. Spend 1-2 minutes in silence, breathing deeply, and focusing your scattered senses on the presence of God.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 13: 3-8, one time, slowly. Consider reading it this time, replacing the word "love" with the name "God". After you finish, be silent for 1-2 minutes.
3. Read the text slowly once again, pausing between phrases. Be aware if any of the words or phrases catch your attention or stand out in some way.
4. Reread the passage a third time. When you reach the word or phrase that stood out to you, stop and read it a few times.
5. Reflect for a while on the word/phrase that moved you. You might consider writing a few thoughts down about the word/phrase and what you are thinking or feeling. Begin to wonder "What might God want to say to me specifically?" Sit quietly and listen.
6. Pray. Ask God "what do you want to say to me today?"
7. Be still and silent for another minute or two. Simply enjoy being in the loving presence of God. Close by thanking God for the word/phrase and for God's love for you.

Closing prayer

God of love - Thank you for your love. Thank you for being with me always. As I go through my day, help me to experience your love. Lead me to rest in that love. Amen

Recipe: The Long Family Swiss Chicken Quiche p. 18

APRIL 15TH, 2025

TIME=LOVE by Bob King

SCRIPTURE READING: Galations 6: 2 "Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ."

My wife, Marilyn, and I have been married for 52 years. In the early years of our marriage I thought that the best way to show her my love was a nice gift, a trip, or a dinner at a great restaurant. Many years into our marriage she admitted that the best way to show her my love was to spend quality time with her.

In the book, The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren says time is the most precious gift we have because we only have a set amount of it. When we give someone your time we are giving them a portion of your life we will never get back.

It's not enough to say relationships are important, we must prove it by investing time in them. Relationships take time and effort, and the best way to spell love is T-I-M-E.

The essence of love is not what you think or do or provide for others, but how much you give of yourself.

Men in particular don't understand this. We often say, " I don't understand my wife and kids. I provide everything they need. What more could they want? THEY WANT YOU! The most desired gift in the world is not diamonds, roses, clothes, or chocolates for your wife, or toys, games, or other neat stuff for your kids. It is focused attention. That's not just being in the same room with them; that's focusing on them.

This is love that concentrates so intently on another person that you forget about yourself for a while. This is love that says, "I value you enough to give you my most precious asset-my time and focused attention." By doing this you are making a sacrifice, and self-sacrifice is the essence of love.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, help me to express my love and give my family and others the most valuable gift I can give them; my focused time and attention. In Christ's name. Amen

Recipe: KING FAMILY'S LASAGNA p. 17

APRIL 16TH, 2025

Love by Connie Stone

This is how everyone will know that you are disciples, when you love each other. John 13:35

The very first fruit of the Spirit listed in the Bible is love. Maybe it is listed first because Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart (Matthew 22:37). Loving God is a commitment of total devotion in all aspects of your life.

Another word for love is Agape which means an unconditional, redemptive, selfless and perfect love. This is the way God loves. Through the Bible you can read over and over about God's unfailing love. We cannot force love or produce it. It can only be grown inside us through a daily, intimate relationship with God.

This love should be the one factor that differentiates Christians from unbelievers. For us to be able to carry out God's love, we need to be the hands, feet, eyes, ears and heart of Jesus. We need to show love differently than unbelievers.

The first step is by asking the Holy Spirit to live within you. This is where love comes from. You cannot obtain love by your actions, works or deeds. Each day you intimately walk with Him, your love will produce a greater love inside you, an Agape love.

Father—as I walk through my daily life, let me grow and produce the intimate relationship I need with you so I can attempt to love like you do, unconditionally and selflessly. Let me read and remember your word daily to reassure my heart and mind to be full of truth. Amen

Recipe: Stone Family Banana Nut Bread p. 6

APRIL 17TH, 2025 (Maundy Thursday)

Love by Guy & Candy James

“Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you Ephesians 4:32 .”

In preparing a devotional based on the high spiritual gift of Love, I searched for bible verses about Love. With a list of twenty verses, it was very meaningful and comforting to read through that list, and realize that God is the author of love. With His ways being higher than mine, just reflecting on what He says about love was the desire, not just my ideas about it. I would highly recommend this as a spiritual exercise and plan to do it from time to time.

So, the verse above was the last in the list I read and really spoke out to me upon reflection on the verse. From personal experience, as I had an occasion where I felt really hurt by someone, angered and at first desired retaliation. But having read God’s ways from a prior time as to the incident, I had reflected on what God says about it, reflecting on an emphasis of His ways, with the command to be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, and then reflecting on the reference to God’s love for us.

God through Christ has forgiven us, as He is our savior and laid His life down for us! This ties in to this other verse: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you”. John 15:12. So back to my personal experience in the previous paragraph, when I simply accepted to really ‘let go & forgive and hold no animosities and see the other person as one of God’s children that Jesus forgives and laid His life down for, it was an amazing experience for me. Learning this, it was and is one of the most freeing emotions and acts in my experience! I realize I never have to carry any injuries or toxic feelings that enslave one to a bad situation.

Let me invite you to choose one area or incident where you feel slighted or hurt, or hold some feeling less desirable and reflect on God's way to handle it, turn it over to Jesus and accept His thinking and trust Him to handle it for you. Meditate on His peace, about turning it over and letting go, and letting Jesus let you love.

Praise God for his gift and example of love!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you showed me forgiveness and mercy, and love when you went to the cross and died for me, now I pray let me let go of ill feelings, animosity or hate, and follow your example and experience forgiveness and love each other as you have loved us. In Jesus name, Amen.

Recipe: The James Family-Mom's Banana Bread p. 6

APRIL 18TH, 2025 (Good Friday)

Good Friday Elizabeth Childress

John 19:38-42 NIV

38 Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. **39** He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.^[a] **40** Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. **41** At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. **42** Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Passover was and is one of the most important Jewish holidays as it honors the ancient Israelites liberation from slavery in Egypt. To celebrate the Sabbath and Passover, you had to be ritually clean. Leviticus is full of ways to become "unclean until morning" or longer - such as 7 days for touching a dead body.

Throughout the gospels Jesus continually chastised the Pharisees for their hypocrisy in following the letter of the law but not the intent. For them, washing their hands was

more important than having a clean soul. Jesus called them vipers, serpents, and fools. As Pharisees and members of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were members of the group despised by Jesus and responsible for his condemnation and eventual death on the cross.

So why in the world would two devout Pharisees ask Pilate for Jesus's body and risk being unclean for the entire Passover celebration in order to take him to a tomb and prepare his body for burial?! It's almost like Pastor Melissa calling in sick so she could hunt Easter eggs with Ellis and skip all the Easter services. Although commonly condemned by modern commentaries for meeting at night, sitting on the fence, or secretly following Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were there when the disciples were in hiding. They got it! They risked their reputations, probably got kicked out of the Sanhedrin, became unclean and unable to worship and celebrate Passover in the temple. Why? Because they understood the love Jesus had for the world. They worshipped the Son of God who gave his life for us. In the book of John, the passage immediately after Nicodemus' nighttime meeting with Jesus says "for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..." Jesus' willingness to be our Passover lamb is why Easter is Christianity's most important holiday.

Instead of celebrating Passover in a traditional manner, they celebrated the final Passover - even before he had risen, they understood his sacrifice. Maybe Nicodemus and Joseph weren't the first ones to love our Messiah, but they loved him at his lowest.

I'm not an overly emotional person, so logic and reason help build my faith. Sometimes this makes me feel "less than" those who have a more emotional faith. Stories like those of Nicodemus and Joseph encourage me because they experienced a love firsthand that defied logic.

Recipe: The Childress Family's Rich Cream Coffeecake p. 4

APRIL 19TH, 2025 (Holy Saturday)

Love by Cassidy Barrett

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of

wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

Love isn't just about the big, dramatic moments. It's about the quiet, consistent acts—the kind that often go unnoticed. It's listening without waiting for your turn to talk. It's choosing empathy over judgment. It's forgiving when it would be easier to hold a grudge. Love is active. It requires effort, vulnerability, and a willingness to put someone else's needs ahead of your own. Here's the thing—real love isn't always reciprocal. Sometimes you'll show up for people who won't show up for you. That can sting, but it also mirrors the kind of unconditional love God extends to us. Love, in its purest form, isn't about what we get back; it's about what we're willing to give, even when it costs us something. Recently, one of my best friends went through a tough breakup. She was heartbroken, overwhelmed, and trying to piece everything back together. I had my own life to worry about but I knew she needed someone to lean on. It wasn't about grand, movie-worthy gestures. It was late night phone calls, spontaneous dinner, and just being there when she needed to vent or sit in silence. I realized that love shows up in the everyday moments. It's not always loud or obvious—it's simply being present when someone needs it most, even when life feels chaotic.

So, ask yourself today: *Who in my life could use a little more love?* Maybe it's a coworker, a family member, a friend or even yourself.

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your unwavering love, even in my moments of imperfection. Grant me the strength to extend that same love to those around me, especially in times of difficulty or inconvenience. Bless me with patience, kindness, and a heart that recognizes others through Your perspective. Amen.

Recipe: Barrett Fudge p. 29

APRIL 20TH, 2025 (EASTER)

EASTER BLESSING by Pastor Melissa McDuffee Beal

As the pages of this devotional close

May the journey of Lent lead you to Easter's dawn with renewed spirit and deeper faith,

May the Fruit you produced in the Wilderness blossom 100 fold as you exit the Lenten season,

And as you've tasted the goodness of these recipes, may you also savor the sweetness of God's presence.

May the healed scars of Jesus Christ be seen on your hands and feet as you go out transformed.

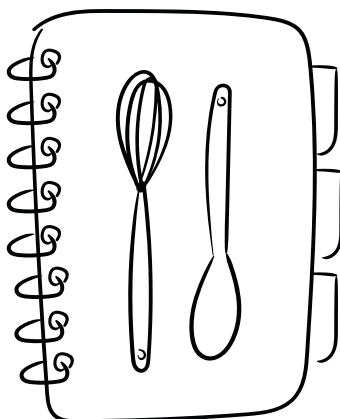
Go forth nourished in body and soul,

carrying the light of Christ into the world.

And may the Holy Spirit empower you to live as witnesses to resurrection hope, guiding your steps and kindling your heart with divine love.

Until we gather again at the table of grace, may God's peace sustain you.

Amen.



FAMILY RECIPES

Written in 2025 by the congregation of:



**FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
CLEBURNE**

BREAKFAST

Lois Koehlinger's Egg and Meat Casserole

submitted by Rene Valdez & Todd Dubbelde

At my childhood church that my father started, there was a lovely German Woman named Lois Koehlinger. Lois was like an extra grandmother to me, and whenever we would visit her at the lake, she would always have something amazing cooking on the stove. Her Apple Strudel and Homemade Stollen Bread were my favorites. She was also well known for her Egg and Meat Casserole, which I used to make with her recipe. Over time I have made a few changes to her recipe, but I know she would smile knowing I think of her every time I make it. I'm going to give you her original recipe then my recipe that evolved from hers.

1 lb. Sausage fried and drained, or ham, or bacon	1 tsp dry mustard
6 Eggs beaten	1 ½ cup grated cheddar cheese
2 Slices of bread cubed and toasted	2 Cups scant milk (scant means cooked in a pan, but you stop before it boils)
1 tsp salt	

Combine all ingredients and pour into a 8 ½ x 11 ½ buttered baking dish. Sprinkle the remaining ½ cup cheddar on time. Bake at 350 for 45 min. 325 for a glass pan. If doubling the recipe use 3 cups scant milk, not 4, and add 8-10 extra minutes. serves 4

The Valdez-Dubbelde Easy High Protein Breakfast Casserole

serves 8 or more.

This recipe can be made the night before, refrigerated, and baked in the morning.

2lbs. Meat cooked and crumbled. These are a few of my go to choices: sausage, turkey breakfast sausage, turkey taco meat, and the easiest by far is Jimmy Dean pre-cooked turkey sausage crumbles in the red bag.

1 dozen eggs
1 small carton of egg whites (whatever you use you want the equivalent of 18 eggs total)
2 tsp ground mustard (yes, I've used a couple squirts of yellow mustard in a pinch)
1 tsp salt
4 to 6 pieces of your favorite sandwich bread torn into pieces.
1 24 ounce container of low fat cottage cheese.
2 cups cheddar cheese (save half for topping)

Optional

Diced jalapenos in the jar
Precooked real bacon pieces
½ - 1 tsp black pepper optional

In a large bowl beat all the eggs and ground mustard, then add the meat, bread, cottage cheese, salt, half of the cheddar cheese and mix gently. (add optional jalapenos and bacon)

Pour into a large greased 9x12 glass pan. I always put a cookie sheet under it because I'm afraid it will bubble over, but doesn't. Top with remaining cheese and optional bacon pieced and diced jalapenos.

Bake at 325 for about 70 minutes or till knife in center comes out clean.

The Mahaffey's Christmas Morning Cinnamon Pull-Apart Buns

2 loaves frozen bread dough
1/2 cup butter
1 cup brown sugar
1 large or 2 small boxes of vanilla** pudding mix NOT INSTANT
2 Tbs milk or cream
1Tbs Corn syrup (optional)*
Cinnamon to taste

Thaw bread but don't raise.

Butter a 9x13 cake pan.

Break one loaf in small pieces (slightly larger than dice) and spread evenly over the bottom of the pan.

Melt butter, then add brown sugar, pudding mix, milk, and cinnamon (to taste- about 1 Tbs), mix until smooth.

Pour over bread bits in pan.

Break second loaf on top and let rise 2 1/2 - 3 hours.

Bake at 350 for about 30 minutes. Turn out on a cookie sheet while still warm.

*The corn syrup helps keep the sauce from becoming sugary.

**Also yummy with butterscotch pudding.

Uncle Vic Bierschenk's "Famous" Cinnamon Rolls **submitted by Mary Lewis**

Bread has been a symbol of peace and hope throughout history. In the Bible, bread has several meanings, including being a gift from God, a sign of sharing and a symbol of the Word of God. I love bread and I love the Bread that God gives us...the bread that nourishes our souls.

This bread recipe is a tribute to one of my favorite uncles. He's been gone for many years, but my love for him is in my heart forever!

My Uncle Vic was the coolest and funniest man on the planet. He was so sweet, caring and fun! He always was a jokester and always someone who the kids and adults wanted to be around for that matter. A WWII Veteran who sustained a significant injury during battle, Vic had a hunched gait and looking back now, I know must have suffered with daily, intense pain. However, that pain never manifested in grumpiness or a scull, rather his happy, cheery face beamed with love...always.

Uncle Vic's Cinnamon Rolls are a Christmas morning staple for many of my Bierschenk cousins to this day...and I too enjoy making them!

In ¼ cup of lukewarm water, dissolve 2 packages of dry yeast. Meanwhile, scald 1 cup of milk. Add 1/3 cup of shortening, 1 cup of sugar, 1 tsp. of salt to milk. Add this to the yeast/water mixture. And mix well. Add 3 well-beaten eggs.

Begin adding flour with dough hooks on your mixer or use a lot of muscle as you stir in the flour by hand. Flour will total about 4 cups. Leave the dough as moist as you can but not too sticky because you will need to work with it (Can't you just see Uncle Vic grinning with this precise directive?)

Turn dough into a well-oiled bowl for rising. Cover with a clean dish cloth and place in draft-free warm area. Once doubled in size, punch dough down.

On a well-floured surface, roll the dough out in a rectangular shape about ¼" thick.

Slatter on real, softened butter (a couple of sticks). Sprinkle liberally sugar and cinnamon. You can add nuts or raisins if you'd like too.

Roll the rectangle up to form a log. With a floured knife, slice into about ½" slices.

Place slices in well-oiled baking pan with sides as butter and sugar will melt into a gooey, yummy mess. Allow slices to rise again until doubled.

Bake 375 degrees oven for about 20-25 minutes. Watch them closely and do not overbake!

Mary's addition to Uncle Vic's Cinnamon Rolls: I like to make cream cheese frosting (Powdered sugar, butter, cream cheese, homemade vanilla or store-bought will do, heavy whipping cream) and slather those hot rolls up once out of the oven. If you're going to go, go big! Add those calories!

Serving Size: A small army or a normal size German household.

The Childress Family's Rich Cream Coffeecake

4 large eggs

1 c sugar

1 t vanilla

1 T grated lemon rind

1 c melted butter

2 c sour cream

2 ¼ c flour

2 t baking powder

1 ½ t baking soda

1 t salt

Topping

½-¾ c brown sugar

1 t cinnamon

1 c pecans

Beat the first 4 ingredients on medium speed until light and fluffy. Add butter and sour cream just until blended. Fold in rest until smooth. Put ½ of batter in greased 9x13 pan. Mix together topping. Put ½ on top of batter. Repeat with the rest of the batter and the topping.

Bake 35-40 minutes at 375 degrees.

This is my mother Mary Edmondson's recipe which we always had for Christmas and Easter breakfast. We call it Sour Cream Coffeecake now. I didn't like sour cream as a child, and was devastated when I found out it was in the recipe. I got over it. It is a family favorite now on Robert's side of the family too. It's best served warm and without the pecans (in my opinion.) My niece adds chocolate chips, which I don't advise.

Overnight Coffee Ring **submitted by The Ford Family**

24 frozen dinner rolls
½ cup of sugar and 1.5 tsp of cinnamon mixed.
½ cup of chopped nuts (optional)
½ cup of brown sugar
1 package of butterscotch pudding (not instant)
1.25 sticks of margarine

Pam Bundt pan and layer in the order listed above.
Bake at 350 for 30 minutes and then flip on a tray lined in foil.

Whitworth Yummy Protein Shake

Personal Story: I have found that self-control extends beyond spiritual discipline—it also influences how we care for our bodies. Just as God has already given us the key to self-control, we can apply that gift in everyday life, making choices that nourish both body and spirit. This protein shake is my post-workout reward, a reminder that discipline leads to strength and a yummy treat!

Ingredients:

- 1 scoop of 100% pea protein
- 1 tbsp of 100% unsweetened cocoa
- 1/2 cup of creamy peanut butter
- 1- 2 cups of baby spinach
- 1 cup of almond milk (more if needed for consistency)
- 1 frozen banana (chopped before freezing)
- 2 cups of frozen strawberries
- (Optional) 1 scoop of creatine powder (if consumed after exercise)

Instructions:

1. Place all ingredients in a blender.
2. Blend on high until smooth and creamy.
3. If the shake is too thick, add more almond milk to reach the desired consistency.
4. Pour into a glass and enjoy immediately.

I use all organic ingredients. It takes approximately 10 minutes from start to cleanup.

Serving Size: 1

BREAD

The James Family-Mom's Banana Bread

Makes 1 Loaf

1/2 C Crisco
1 C Sugar
2 Eggs
1 1/2 C Flour
1 Tsp Baking Soda

1/2 Tsp Salt
1 1/2 C or more Bananas
Nuts optional

Mash Bananas, set aside,
Cream Crisco, and Sugar together
Add eggs
In separate bowl mix flour, baking soda and salt
Add bananas to wet ingredients alternating with dry ingredients, Mix well
Pour into a greased loaf pan
Bake 35-40 minutes or until tooth pick comes out clean
For a fun treat add Chocolate Chips

Most of all my Mother's recipes were from memory. This is one of several she wrote down for her family. There was nothing more wonderful than the smell of fresh baked Banana Bread around the holidays.

Stone Family Banana Nut Bread

Time: 50 minutes

Temperature: 350

Serving size: two loaf pans

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups sugar	1/2 cups of pecans
1/2 cups of shortening	1 tsp soda
2 eggs	1/4 tsp salt
1 1/2 cups of bananas about 3 bananas	1 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cups of flour	1/2 cup milk
3 tsp lemon juice	

Mix sugar, shortening, eggs, milk and lemon juice together. Stir in the rest of the ingredients. Pour mixture in bread pans. May need to lay foil over the top to prevent early browning. This does not last long so the recipe is usually doubled.

When there are bananas that look quite ripe, one of the children usually make a comment like "must be time to make banana bread".

Koscielniak Family's Cream Cheese Braid

Ingredients:

For Bread: 1 cup sour cream, ½ cup sugar, 1 tsp salt, ½ cup margarine (melted), 2 packages dry yeast, ½ cup warm water, 2 eggs (beaten), and 4 cups all-purpose flour

For Filling: 2 (8oz) packages cream cheese, ¾ cups sugar, 1 egg (beaten), 1 tsp vanilla, and 1/8 tsp salt

For Topping: 2 cups powdered sugar, 4 tablespoons milk, and 1 tsp vanilla

Heat sour cream over low heat and slowly add ½ cup sugar, 1 tsp salt, and ½ cup margarine (melted). Cool to lukewarm. Sprinkle yeast over water in large mixing bowl, stirring until yeast dissolves. Add sour cream mixture, 2 eggs, and flour. Mix well. Cover and refrigerate overnight. The next day, divide dough into four equal parts. Roll each part on a well-floured board into a 12x18 inch rectangle. Combine cream cheese, ¾ cup sugar, 1 egg, 1 tsp vanilla, and 1/8 tsp salt. Mix well. Spread ¼ of this mixture on each rectangle. Roll up jellyroll fashion, beginning at the longer side. Pinch edges together and fold under, slightly. Place on well-greased baking sheet. Slit each roll at 2-inch intervals about 2/3 of the way through the dough to resemble a braid. Cover and let rise, free from draft, until double in size, about one hour. Bake at 375° for 15 minutes. Combine powdered sugar, milk, and 1 tsp vanilla. Mix well. Spread over braids while still warm.

Makes 4 braids

Pumpkin Log Recipe **by Lydia Shea**

3 eggs	1 tsp. baking soda
1 c. sugar	8oz. cream cheese
$\frac{2}{3}$ c. canned pumpkin	2 tbsp. soft oleo
$\frac{3}{4}$ c. flour	$\frac{3}{4}$ tbsp. vinnila
	1 c. chopped pecans

Cooking Directions

Mix eggs, sugar, pumpkin, flour, and baking soda for batter. Line a 10x15 inch jelly roll pan with wax paper. Pour batter on and spread evenly. Cook for 15 minutes at 375 degrees. Turn out on paper towels that have been dusted and powdered sugar. Peel off wax paper and let cool.

Filling: 8 oz of softened cream cheese, oleo, vanilla, powdered sugar, pecans. Mix until smooth. Spread on cake. Then roll like a jelly roll. Wrap in wax paper and place in the refrigerator to chill for an hour before slicing.

Patricia's Welcome Loaf **Submitted by: Ann-Katherine King**

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream
3 cups flour	1 stick butter, melted
1 tablespoon baking powder	1 can beer
1 tsp salt	

Preheat oven to 375. Heavily grease the bottom of a loaf pan with butter. In a large bowl, stir together flour, baking powder, sugar and salt. Add the sour cream, $\frac{3}{4}$ amount of melted butter and the beer. Mix all of the ingredients until well blended. Pour into the loaf pan and drizzle remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ amount of melted butter on top of the bread. Bake 50 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. Enjoy! :)

APPETIZERS & SIDES

Mauldin Family Bacon Cheese Puffs

These are a hit at gatherings. Branda would make these when we would have youth over to our house and the kids loved them. So much in fact that one of those youth asked Branda to bring some to her wedding rehearsal dinner. At that dinner, Branda was a minor celebrity as “the Cheesy puff lady” because the bride used had gotten the recipe from Branda and used to make them for her gatherings and they were a fan favorite.

2- 8oz cans of layered biscuits

2 cups shredded Swiss cheese (gouda is also good-a)

½ cup of mayo

1 small onion diced

8 slices of cooked bacon (or enough bacon to make you happy)

1 tablespoon of sugar

½ teaspoon of garlic powder (or let the ancestors tell you when)

5 dashes of chipotle tobacco

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

Spray muffin tin with non-stick spray (if have muffin tin with small cups but regular biscuits, if using full size muffin cup tin, buy bigger Grands biscuits.

In a large bowl add cheese, mayo, onion, bacon, sugar, garlic powder, and chipotle and mix together thoroughly

Split each biscuit in half (using layers) and stretch out a little, then place in muffin tin making a cup

Fill the basic cups with mix, if making big cups I use a small cookie scoop and if doing small cups I use a melon baller - don't overfill, the biscuits will expand in baking

Bake for about 10 minutes - until the biscuit edges are golden brown

Shelly Samuel's Corn Casserole

submitted by Allyson House

- 2 boxes of Jiffy corn muffin mix
- ½ Stick of Butter (House Family uses WHOLE stick!)
- 2 Cans of cream style corn
- 2/3 cups of grated cheese (whole bag is better!)
- 2 eggs

Soften the butter and mix with the eggs. Add the cream style corn and grated cheese. Add the Jiffy Mix last. Mix together and pour into a 9 x 13 pan (spray with baking spray). Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes, or until set in the middle and golden brown around the edges.

Gramby's Cornbread Dressing (Alice Finley)

When my youngest granddaughter, Addie, was about 9 years old, she was helping me prepare cornbread dressing. We were mixing the ingredients together, and Addie said, "Gramby when is it going to be ranch?" Ranch was the only dressing Addie knew about at the time. She had no idea we were making cornbread dressing and not Ranch dressing. This makes me laugh anytime I think of making dressing.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 6 cups cornbread, crumbled | Salt to taste |
| 4 cups biscuits, crumbled | ¼ tsp sage |
| 1 cup chopped celery | 4 eggs, beaten |
| ¾ cup chopped onions | 1/8 tsp pepper |
| ½ cup butter or chicken stock | 1 cup water |
| 1 can cream of chicken soup | 2 cups broth from the turkey |

Prepare cornbread and canned biscuits. Cook celery and onions in 1 cup of water over low heat, until tender. Add the cornbread and biscuit crumbs and seasoning. Stir in beaten eggs, soup, and enough broth to make moist dressing. Pour into a butter greased pan and bake at 400 degrees for about 30 minutes or until browned.

Amy Daniel's "My Mother's Fruit Salad"

Ingredients:

1 lb 4 1/2 oz can pineapple tidbits. (well drained)

11 oz can mandarin oranges (well drained)

1 cup seedless green grapes

1 cup miniature marshmallows

1 cup flaked coconut (optional)

1 cup sour cream (set aside)

After the fruit is well drained, gently combine all the above ingredients, including the coconut if desired.

Fold in the sour cream.

Chill for several hours or overnight.

Optional: Sprinkle a cup of love on the top before serving. This recipe will serve about 6-8. (I usually double the recipe.) EnJOY - Submitted by Amy Daniel

Patterson's Mexican Rice

This is our favorite rice to make on Taco Tuesdays and any time we make burrito bowls!!

Equipment

Large pot

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups long grain white rice * we prefer basmati rice

1/4 cup oil (vegetable or canola oil)

1 teaspoon garlic , minced

1/4 medium onion , finely diced

1/4 cup tomato sauce , or 2 pureed tomatoes*

Instructions

Rinse the rice in a fine mesh strainer until the water runs clear. Set aside.

2 teaspoons tomato bouillon granulated, or cubes*

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 carrot , diced

1/2 cup peas (frozen or fresh)

3 cups water

1-3 whole serrano peppers , optional

In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, add the oil. Once hot, add the rice and stir to combine. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until the rice is lightly golden brown all over (about 10 minutes).

Add tomato sauce, garlic, and diced onion to the pan. Stir. Add tomato bullion, salt, carrots, peas, and water (and serrano peppers, if using. They add a little flavor, but not spice.).

Bring to a boil, then cover, reduce heat to low and cook for about 20 minutes or until the water is completely absorbed. Remove from heat and allow to rest for 5 minutes before fluffing with a fork.

Notes

Rice: Washing the rice is crucial to remove the outer starch, allowing the rice to cook fluffy. If you'd like to use Brown Rice, increase liquid by 1/2 cup and cook for 40 minutes, following the same resting instructions.

Tomato Sauce: we used this because it's fast and easy, but for a more authentic version, add 1-2 fresh tomatoes to a blender with the onion and garlic, and blend before adding to the rice.

Tomato Bouillon: granules or cubes, found in the Mexican aisle or online. This adds color and flavor to the rice. If you can't find it, substitute chicken Bouillon.

Serrano peppers: It's optional to add 1-2 on top of the rice while it cooks, to add extra flavor (it won't make the rice "spicy").

Squash Dressing **submitted by Amy Sims**

Ingredients:

1 medium onion (optional)

1 stick of butter

2 cups cooked yellow squash

1 can of cream of chicken

2 cups of crumbled prepared cornbread 2 eggs

Directions:

Sauté onion until translucent. Boil squash and drain. Mix remaining ingredients. Add

salt, pepper, onion powder, and garlic powder to taste. Bake at 350° until golden brown; about 25 to 30 minutes.

MEALS

The Snowden Family's Crock-Pot Vegetarian Chili

Ingredient List:

2 Green Bell Peppers (Diced)	2 15 oz cans Diced Fire Roasted Tomatoes
2 Jalapenos (Deseeded and Diced)	1 28 oz can Crushed Tomato
1 Onion (Diced)	1 10 oz can of Tomato Paste (optional for thicker chili)
3 Cloves of Garlic (Minced)	1 cup Quinoa
1 Lime Juice	1 15 oz Corn
2 tbps Oregano	4 cups vegetable stock
¼ cup chili powder	1 15 oz can Black Beans
1 tbsp black pepper	1 15 oz can Pinto Beans
1 tbsp salt	1 15 oz can Kidney Beans
2 tsp cumin	
1 ½ tsp Crushed Red Pepper (add more or less for spice)	

Optional Toppings:

Cheese, green onion, sour cream, and avocado

Preparation Instructions

1. Add Bell Peppers, Jalapenos, Onion, Garlic, 2 tbps Oregano, ¼ cup chili powder, 1 tbsp black pepper, 1 tbsp salt, 2 tsp cumin, 1 ½ tsp Crushed Red Pepper (add more or less for spice), Diced Fire Roasted Tomatoes, Crushed Tomato, Tomato Paste (if using), Quinoa, Corn, and vegetable stock to crock pot
2. Stir and cook on high for 4 hours.
3. After 4 hours add in black beans, pinto beans, and kidney beans to the crock pot and stir and reduce to low and cook for 1 hour.
4. Serve with desired toppings

Cooking Time and Temperature: Total Cooking Time 5 hours

Serving Size: 6-8 servings

Pioneer Woman Chicken Spaghetti (Ree Drummond) "Goodness in a Casserole Dish" - Sarah Moulden

Ingredients

2 cups cooked chicken	1 (4-oz.) jar diced pimentos, drained
3 cups spaghetti, uncooked and broken into two-in. pieces	2 cups reserved chicken broth from pot
2 cans cream of mushroom soup	1 tsp. Lawry's Seasoned Salt
3 cups grated sharp cheddar cheese	1/8 tsp. to 1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper
1/4 cup finely diced green pepper	Salt and pepper, to taste
1/4 cup finely diced onion	

Directions

1. Cook 1 cut up fryer chicken and pick out the meat to make two cups. (I often use a rotisserie chicken.)
2. Cook spaghetti in same chicken broth until al dente. (I use chicken broth to boil noodles if I use a rotisserie chicken.) Do not overcook. When spaghetti is cooked, combine with remaining ingredients except additional 1 cup sharp cheddar.
3. Place mixture in casserole pan and top with remaining sharp cheddar. Cover and freeze up to six months, cover and refrigerate up to two days, or bake immediately: 350°F for 45 minutes until bubbly. (If the cheese on top starts to get too cooked, cover with foil).

The Woodard Family's Chicken Spaghetti

Serves 6-8

4 Chicken breasts	1 can of Rotel
1 medium onion, chopped	1 small block Velveeta cheese (~16 oz)
1 c celery, chopped	1 lb sliced mushrooms
½ bell pepper, chopped	Worcestershire Sauce to taste
¼ c butter	Tabasco to taste

1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 can cream of chicken soup

garlic powder to taste
1 12 oz package of spaghetti

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Cook *chicken breast* (We usually crockpot it during the day or you could use fresh deboned rotisserie chicken).

Cube or shred chicken.

Boil *noodles* until al dente, do not over cook.

While noodles are cooking, saute *onion, celery, bell pepper and mushroom* in *butter* until onion turns clear and veggies are soft.

Add in *soups, Rotel, Velveeta* and stir until Velveeta is melted.

Add noodles to sauce.

Once noodles are coated with the sauce, pour into a 9x13 greased pan.

Bake for 20 minutes or until bubbly.

(Freezes well)

Jonni Davis's Creamy Chicken and Green Chili Soup

1 can chunked chicken or 1+ cup of chopped or shredded chicken

1 can of cream of chicken soup or cream of celery soup

1 can of diced green chilis

2+ oz of Velveeta cheese or other melting cheese as desired (I have recently started using cream cheese to help make the soup a bit creamier.)

½ cup or more of milk and/or broth to thin as desired (I usually just start adding and stirring and gauge how much to add as I go. It's probably more than a half cup.)

Optional - seasonings to taste

Make sure the canned chicken has been shredded for even distribution. Add to pot with soup and green chilis. Stir in milk/broth to desired thickness. Add cheese and stir to melt.

Cook until hot and all ingredients are blended. Use medium heat to start. Reduce to medium low or low heat to simmer. Best not to boil.

Serving suggestions: serve plain or over chips

top each bowl with cheese, salsa, sour cream or avocado as desired

add Tabasco or other hot sauce as desired for spice

Makes about 3-4 medium servings. (I make this for two people and have leftovers that I add to if needed. Double the recipe for larger groups as needed.)

Variations: add Rotel diced tomatoes and green chilis for a more queso style, add more cheese as desired, add white beans for a heartier soup, add more chilis for a spicier soup

This is the Davis family go-to for a cold day. It doesn't take long to make. I actually came upon this after making my chicken tortilla soup - a simple broth soup using green chilis, canned or diced chicken, broth over chips. I had some leftover and wanted a more hearty soup with what I had on hand. I added cream of chicken soup, cheese and milk to the chicken tortilla soup and had creamy chicken and green chili soup. One time I didn't have cream of chicken soup but did have cream of celery soup. To me it tasted just as good if not better.

At the Gathering, I used both cream of chicken soup and cream of celery soup.

The Walker Family's Company Casserole

(This is an easy 'lasagne')

Ingredients

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 t. salt
- 1/2 t. pepper
- 1T. sugar
- 2 8-ounce cans of tomato sauce
- 1 cup sour cream
- 8 ounce cream cheese
- 5 green onions, chopped
- 8 lasagne noodles
- 4 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated

Directions

- Brown the ground beef (drain if necessary) and add salt, pepper, sugar and tomato sauce. Let simmer while doing the remaining steps.
- Mix together the sour cream, cream cheese and chopped green onions.
- Cook noodles.

In glass baking dish (9x13) put 1st layer cooked noodles--2nd layer cream cheese/

sour cream mixture--3rd layer ground beef mixture. Repeat one time. Sprinkle with grated sharp cheddar cheese and bake at 350 for 15 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before cutting into squares like lasagna.

KING FAMILY'S LASAGNA

2 lbs ground meat	1 pkg lasagna noodles
1 clove minced garlic	24oz cottage cheese or ricotta
3 tbs dried parsley flakes	2 eggs
1 tbs dried basil	1 tsp pepper
4 tsp salt	1\2 cup parmesan cheese
4 cups canned diced tomatoes	1 lb mozzarella cheese slices
2 6oz cans tomato paste	

Brown meat and drain. Add garlic, 1 tbs dried parsley flakes, basil, 1½ tsp salt, tomatoes and tomato paste. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 45 minutes. Cook lasagna noodles until tender and drain. Combine cottage cheese, eggs, salt, pepper, remaining parsley and ½ cup of parmesan cheese. Layer in a 13x9 greased baking dish. Begin with noodles, then cheese mix, mozzarella, and end with meat sauce. You should have 2 layers. Bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes. Serves 8-10

This recipe along with one for Italian Cream Cake was given to me by a family friend when I married 52 years ago. It was a go to when the kids lived at home and both of my daughters still use it as their go to lasagna recipe.

Missy Nelson's Mom's Monterrey Chicken

This is one of my Mom's favorite recipes and I think of her every time I make it. She didn't like hot food, so this is pretty bland. If you want yours spicier, add more hot pepper sauce.

¼ cup flour
One envelope taco seasoning mix
10 to 12 pieces of chicken (deboned usually works better)
¼ cup margarine
1 cup crushed tortilla chips

Combine flour and taco mix in paper or plastic bag and mix well. Add 2 to 3 pieces of chicken at a time and shake to coat. Melt butter in a 15 x 10 x 1 baking pan. Dip

coated chicken in melted butter and then roll in crushed chips. Place in pan and bake in 375 degree oven for 45-50 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook onion in oil until tender but not brown. Blend in 2 Tbsp flour and salt. Add evaporated milk (slowly) and pepper sauce; cook and stir till mixture thickens and bubbles. Add cheese, olives and lemon juice, stirring till cheese melts.

Do not boil.

2 Tbsp finely chopped onion	¼ tsp bottled hot pepper sauce
1 Tbsp cooking oil	1 cup monterey jack shredded cheese (4 oz)
2 Tbsp flour	¼ cup sliced pitted ripe olives
¼ tsp salt	1 tsp lemon juice
One 13 oz can evaporated milk	

Serve tortilla crusted chicken with cheese sauce over it. Makes 10-12 servings depending on how big chicken pieces are.

The Long Family Swiss Chicken Quiche

This recipe was first introduced to us by Elizabeth Childress when she brought us a quiche to eat and quiche to freeze when our son, Zach was born. Since that time, we have tweaked the recipe just a bit to make it our own. Now we enjoy this recipe at many of family gatherings.

1 - 9" unbaked pastry shell
2 c. cubed cooked chicken (can use canned chicken like Swansons or rotisserie chicken from the grocery store)
1 1/2 c. shredded Swiss cheese
2 T. flour
1 T. chicken instant boullion
1 c. milk
3 eggs beaten
1/4 c. chopped onion
1 4 oz. Can of Fire Roasted Mild Diced Green Chilies
1 large can french fried onion rings - Durkees

Toss chicken with flour and boullion

Add remaining ingredients

pour into pastry shell

Bake 55 minutes at 350 degrees.

Top with onion rings and cook 5 minutes more

Let stand 10 minutes.

* It is as easy to make 2 at once & freeze the 2nd.

Gina Beal's Peach Whiskey Chicken

submitted by McCarley Beal

12 whole Chicken Thighs, Bone-In, Skin-on	12 fluid oz. Barbeque Sauce
2 tbsp. Olive Oil	1 jar Peach Preserves
2 tbsp. Butter	½ cup Water
1 whole Yellow Onion, Diced	2 tbsp. Worcestershire Sauce
1 ½ cups Whiskey	4 cloves Garlic, Pelled
	3 whole Green Onions, Sliced Thin

1. Preheat oven to 300 F
2. Heat oil and butter in a heavy pot over medium-high heat. Place chicken thighs, four at a time, in the pot, skin side down. Brown both sides, then remove to a plate and repeat until all chicken is browned.
3. Pour off half the grease, then return the pan to the stove. Add onions to pan and stir, cooking for around 2 minutes
4. Pour whiskey into the pot (Careful with open flames!). Stir and scrape at the bottom of the pan, allowing for the whiskey to reduce.
5. Pour in barbeque sauce, peach preserves, water, and Worcestershire sauce. Throw in garlic cloves. Stir until combined, then return the chicken to the pot, skin side up. Cover and put the pot into the oven.
6. Cook for 1 ½ hours, then remove from the oven.
7. Serve pieces of chicken over a big pile of mashed potatoes. Sprinkle sliced green onions over the top

Makes 6 servings

Shepherd Pie Recipe submitted by Garrett & Rachal Watson

For our recipe, we are sharing my Sheppard's Pie using mixed vegetables and ground lamb. This is a dish that brings us together as we enjoy preparing it together. Rachal and I find great peace in cooking together and if you and your significant other have not shared the joy of preparing a meal together, we highly recommend it. As a note,

feel free to substitute ground beef for lamb, just remember to drain the grease as we have found beef has a higher amount of fat.

Ingredients:

6-7 Medium Potatoes	1 Tbsp Garlic
1 Stick Butter	1 lb Ground Lamb (or Beef)
Salt/Pepper	2 Cans Veg-All, drained
1 Cup Milk	1 tsp Smoked Paprika
1/4 Cup All Purpose Flour	2 tsp Dried Rosemary (or 1 tsp fresh, chopped)
1/4 Cup Vegetable Oil	Salt/Pepper (to taste)
2-3 Cups Chicken Stock	1/4 Cup Grated Cheese (Optional)
1 Medium Onion, Diced	

1. Start by peeling and cutting your potatoes into chunks. Place them in a large pot and cover with water. Add a pinch of salt and bring to a boil. Cook until fork tender.
2. While potatoes are cooking, add flour to a good size deep non-stick skillet and cook over a medium heat, stirring constantly to keep it from sticking. Roast the flour until it just starts to turn light brown.
3. Next, add the oil to the skillet with flour and stir until well combined for about 2 minutes. Then add 2 cups chicken stock, slowly. This will begin making gravy. If it is really thick, add in a bit more stock until it is a good gravy consistency. Turn off heat and set aside.
4. Once the potatoes are tender, drain all water. Then, add the stick of butter (cut into pieces) and the milk. Using a hand blender (or masher) "mash" the potatoes until creamy. Add salt and pepper to taste. I have found a good heap of pepper makes for the best mashed potatoes!
5. In another skillet, add a bit of vegetable oil and sauté the diced onion until caramelized. Add the ground lamb and cook until done. During the last minute or two of cooking, add the garlic.
6. Add the ground meat and onions to the skillet with the gravy, then add the two cans of drained Veg-All. At this point, stir in the smoked paprika and rosemary and add salt and pepper to suit your taste. This is the filling for the pie.

7. Now that you have a filling and mashed potatoes, take a deep 9 ½ x 13 baking dish and add the filling. Top with dollops of mashed potatoes to completely cover the filling. If you really want a fancy top, you can use a frosting gun or piping bag and pipe the mashed potatoes onto the top.
8. Place in the oven and bake at 375 degrees for 15-20 minutes, or until the potatoes get a golden brown crust on top. Lightly sprinkle with shredded cheese if desired and once the cheese has melted, it is ready to serve!

Andrea's Quick, Easy and Tasty Spaghetti

Recipe Details Include: - Ingredients (list with measurements)

- 1 lb of ground beef
- 14.5 oz can of Italian Style Diced Tomatoes or Petite Diced Tomatoes with Garlic & Olive Oil
- 1 to 2 Tablespoon of garlic salt
- 12 oz of Tomato & Basil Pasta Sauce
- 16 oz of spaghetti or pasta of your choice
- Parmesan cheese (optional)

Preparation Instructions

1. Boil water at medium high to high for the pasta
2. Add pasta to the boiling pot of water, reduce to medium high

While pasta is cooking in the pot, you can do the next steps:

1. In a skillet, at medium temperature, brown the ground beef. You can drain any fat as you like
2. Add garlic salt to the ground beef
3. Add can of diced tomatoes
4. Add can of pasta sauce
5. Mix ingredients in the skillet and lower temperature to low and allow to simmer for 10 min.
6. Once pasta is cooked, drain the water from the pot and add pasta to the skillet.
7. Mix all ingredients together, let simmer another 5 min.
8. Turn off the stove and serve

9. You can add shredded parmesan cheese, if desired.

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Serves 4

One pan Spaghetti Squash Bacon Goodness submitted by Aley & Austin Lindert

Serves: 2 generous adult portions

Ingredients

1 Spaghetti Squash	1 4oz container of goat cheese crumbles
½ of a package of bacon	(sub feta if you're not a fan, but the goat cheese is better)
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar	Salt & Pepper
1 tablespoon maple syrup	
1 5oz bag of baby spinach	

Preparation

Poke holes in the spaghetti squash all over with a steak knife. Put in a microwavable dish (I like an 8x8 glass baking dish), and microwave for 5 minutes. Flip it over and microwave a few more minutes or until the side of the spaghetti squash is soft. You can also cut and roast it in the oven if you'd like, but it takes longer.

Chop bacon into small one inch pieces, and cook in a large pan over medium heat - make sure all the fat has rendered.

Deglaze the pan with the red wine vinegar - scrape the bottom to get the good bacon bits off. After about 20 seconds turn the heat to low and add the maple syrup.

Add the spinach a handful at a time and stir it around. Wait for it to wilt.

When the spaghetti squash is done in the microwave, keep it in the dish and cut it in half long ways. Scoop out all the seeds like you would a cantaloupe, and then use a fork to scrape out all the spaghetti like insides. Plop them into the pan as you go. Add Salt & Pepper to taste.

Stir everything in your pan, turn off the heat and add the goat cheese crumbles. Toss it all together.

Serve immediately. This goodness is typically served in a bowl, in sweatpants, on a soft chair - sometimes with a salad.

Bill Allen's Taco Soup

Ingredients-

2 lbs. ground beef	1 packet of Ranch seasoning
1 medium yellow onion	1 can of Rotel tomatoes
1 packet of taco season	1 can diced tomatoes
1 can of whole tomatoes (Andrea's favorite)	1 can southwestern corn (drained)
1 can of kidney beans (drained)	1 can of Ranch Style beans (drained)
1 can of Pinto beans (drained)	You can add any other beans you like

Sweat the onions and remove from the pan.

Cook the ground beef and drain the grease

Add the beef and onions in a large crockpot

Add the Ranch seasoning

Add all the cans of tomatoes

Add the taco seasoning

Add all the cans of corn and beans

Stir in all the ingredients and set the crockpot to high for about 1 hour, then low. Let cook as long as you want, the longer the better.

DESSERTS

Apple Pie Recipe by Jean Ford

All my pie recipes come from my mom teaching me how to make pies since I was about 10. Her pies were well known!

Ingredients:

2 Gala Apples	1/3Cups flour
2 Granny Smith Apples	1 teaspoon Cinnamon
1Tablespoon lemon juice	1 Tablespoon butter
½ Cups granulated Sugar	Double pie crusts
½ Cups light brown sugar	

Instructions:

Peel and slice the 4 apples in a large bowl. Add lemon juice and stir until apples are coated. In a separate bowl add granulated and brown sugar, flour and cinnamon. Add this mixture to the apples. Mix thoroughly. Place the apple mixture into an unbaked pie crust. Cut butter into small pieces and add to the top of the apples. Cover with a 2nd pie crust. Mold top and bottom pie crusts together and cut slits into the top crust to allow steam to release.

Bake at 350 degrees for 45-60 minutes until golden brown and bubbles form through the slits. Cover with melted butter and sprinkle sugar and cinnamon on top.

Double pie crust:

Blend together 1 cup cold water, 1 cup Crisco shortening, 1 teaspoon salt and 2 cups flour. After stirring together, add more flour if needed. If mixture is still too wet add flour until the dough is pliable enough to roll out. Use ½ for bottom crust, ½ for top. Use a fork to place holes in the bottom dough.

ALAN'S BANANA PUDDING RECIPE

Ingredients:

- 1 Large Box of Vanilla Instant Pudding (not Banana)
- 2 Cups of Milk (not 3 cups as the pudding mix calls for)
- 1 can of Eagle Brand condensed milk
- 12 oz. of Sour Cream
- 1 8 oz. tub of Whipped Cream
- 1 Box of Vanilla Wafers

3-5 medium size Bananas (not green or over ripe)

In a large bowl mix the first five ingredients one at a time with hand mixer.

In a large glass container or bowl, alternate wafers with sliced bananas.

Add 1/3 of your mixture to that layer (smooth out evenly)

Repeat the step 3 times depending on the size of your container. Top off with a layer of wafers. Cover your container and chill two hours before serving. ENJOY!!!

Ruth's Cherry Pie

Ingredients

For the crust:

2 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour (12 1/2 ounces/354 grams), divided

1 teaspoon table salt

2 tablespoons sugar

12 tablespoons cold unsalted butter (1

1/2 sticks), cut into 1/4-inch slices

½ cup chilled solid vegetable shortening, cut into 4 pieces

¼ cup vodka, cold

¼ cup cold water

For the filling:

2 21 oz cans Premium Cherry Pie filling (if 'Premium' is unavailable, an additional can is necessary)

1 8 oz block cream cheese, softened

¼ cup powdered sugar

Necessary equipment

Food Processor

Rolling pin

Plastic wrap

9 inch pie plate

Colander

Mixing bowls

Baking sheet

Wire cooling rack

Instructions

*Vodka is essential to the texture of the crust and provides no flavor—do not substitute extra water. The alcohol is key to this crust recipe; if you don't have vodka on hand, you can use another 80 proof liquor.

1. Process 1 1/2 cups flour, salt, and sugar in a food processor until combined, about 2 one-second pulses. Add butter and shortening and process until homogenous dough just starts to collect in uneven clumps, about 15 seconds (dough will resemble cottage cheese curds and there should be no uncoated flour). Scrape bowl with

rubber spatula and redistribute dough evenly around processor blade. Add remaining 1 cup flour and pulse until mixture is evenly distributed around the bowl and mass of dough has been broken up, 4 to 6 quick pulses. Empty mixture into medium bowl.

2. Sprinkle vodka and water over the mixture. With rubber spatula, use folding motion to mix, pressing down on dough until dough is slightly tacky and sticks together. Divide dough into two balls, one slightly larger than the other. Flatten each into a 4-inch-wide disk. Lightly dust dough with flour, wrap each in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 45 minutes or up to 2 days.

3. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Remove the larger disk from the refrigerator and let it stand at room temperature to soften slightly, about 10 minutes. Roll the dough out on a generously floured (up to ¼ cup) work surface to a 12-inch circle about 1/8 inch thick. Roll dough loosely around a rolling pin and unroll into a pie plate, leaving at least 1-inch overhang on each side. Working around circumference, ease dough into plate by gently lifting edge of dough with one hand while pressing into plate bottom with other hand. Leave overhanging dough in place; refrigerate until dough is firm, about 30 minutes.

4. While the dough chills, pour the cherry filling into a large colander and allow the gel to drain until about half remains. Pour cherries and remaining gel into a bowl and set aside.

5. Remove the smaller disk from the refrigerator and let it stand at room temperature to soften slightly.

6. Add cream cheese and powdered sugar to a medium bowl and cream together until smooth. Spread the mixture over the bottom of the rolled chilled crust. Top with cherry filling.

7. Roll the smaller dough disk on a lightly floured surface into a 10-inch circle. Lay over the fruit. Trim top and bottom dough edges to 1/2-inch beyond pan lip. Tuck this rim of dough underneath itself so that the folded edge is flush with pan lip. Flute dough in your own fashion, or press with fork tines to seal. Cut four slits at right angles on the dough top to allow steam to escape. If pie dough is very soft, place it in the freezer for 10 minutes before baking.

8. Place pie on a baking sheet; bake until top crust is golden, 20 to 25 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees and continue to bake until juices bubble and crust is golden brown, 30 to 40 minutes longer.
9. Transfer pie to wire rack; let cool to almost room temperature. Serve and enjoy!

Granny King's Chocolate Cream Pie submitted by Seth & Kaelyn King

Seth's Granny made cream pies for holidays, birthdays, special events or even just because she had grandkids over. She didn't actually use a recipe and all measurements were based on a small pyrex measuring cup.

"You fill it up to about here with sugar, then you fill the rest of it up with flour and dump it in. Your dad likes it sweeter so I usually put more sugar in it for him but that means the flour will go up over the edge like a mound."

She taught Seth how to make them when he was young and he has carried the tradition on with our kids (although, for what it's worth, the kids really just enjoy cleaning the utensils and mixing bowl with the extra filling). When Kaelyn got the ingredients and estimated measurements, it took some work to figure out the exact amounts below and to be honest, Seth doesn't really measure anything either. So, experiment with it and see what you like.

Ingredients (Pie):

- Store-bought pie crust (or "homemade if you're fancy")
- ¾ cup sugar
- ¼ cup flour
- Pinch of salt
- 1 capful vanilla (Mexican vanilla is best)
- 4 egg yolks (keep egg whites for meringue)
- 1 can Eagle Brand evaporated milk
- ½ cup milk
- 1 stick of butter melted
- ¾ cup of Cocoa powder (dark chocolate Hershey's is our favorite)

******You can exchange the cocoa out and use lemon, lime, coconut, or really cream pie flavor you like. Kaelyn's mom loves lemon so we Seth takes out the milk and cocoa powder and adds about 3 tablespoons or maybe a bit more of lemon juice. Same if you want lime. Both Seth and Kaelyn's dads like coconut so instead of cocoa powder, you do about a cup of shredded coconut.******

Ingredients (Meringue):

- 4 egg whites
- 4 Tbsp sugar
- ½ tsp cream of tartar

Baking Instructions:

1. Bake the pie crust at 350°F for 10-12 mins or until slightly browned.
2. Prepare the filling:
 - Melt the butter in a big pyrex and then combine all wet ingredients into the bowl (vanilla, yolks, evaporated milk, milk). Mix it up as you go.
 - Mix in the dry ingredients (sugar, flour, salt, cocoa powder). Use an electric mixer for ease.
 - Pour it in a saucepan on medium heat, stirring constantly.
 - Continue stirring on heat until it thickens and is about the consistency of pudding.
 - Remove from heat and pour into the pie crust.
3. Prepare the meringue:
 - Start whipping egg whites in a bowl.
 - Slowly add sugar, followed by cream of tartar.
 - Add additional cream of tartar if the meringue is not thick enough.
 - Spread over pie filling, ensuring it touches all edges of the crust. If you take the back of the wooden spoon and tap the top of the meringue, it'll make peaks and looks good.
4. Bake at 350°F until the peaks of the meringue are golden brown.

**Four Layer Delight (Adaption -- Sugar-Free)
submitted by Lorna Smith**

Mix; Spread in 9 x 13 dish	½ C Butter, melted
Bake 20 min. at 350	1 C Flour
Cool completely.	1 C Pecans, finely chopped
Press together firmly.	

Whip to stiff peaks, <u>Place into another bowl & refrigerate</u>	1 C Whipping Cream (This is layer #4)
	¼ C Sugar (<u>can use Splenda</u>)
	½ t Vanilla

<u>Whip till stiff peaks</u>	1 C Whipping Cream
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Add to above and mix together Spread on cooled crust	8 oz. Cream Cheese (near room temperature) 1 C Confectioner's Sugar (<u>can use Splenda</u>)
Mix & spread on top	1 large pkg. Instant <u>Vanilla</u> Pudding (I use Sugar-Free)–(Or use 2 pkgs. Small) 3 cups of Milk
Mix & spread on top	1 large pkg. Instant <u>Chocolate</u> Pudding (I use Sugar-Free)–(Or use 2 pkgs. Small) 3 cups of Milk
Spread on top	Previously Whipped Cream (above)
Garnish	Grated Chocolate Hershey Bar (small amount)

Note–The whipping cream is done first so that the mixer beaters & bowl do not have to be cleaned or changed. It's also the reason that the chocolate pudding is mixed last.

Note–Original recipe used Cool Whip rather than Whipped Cream.

Barrett Fudge

Ingredients

- 3 cups chocolate chips either semi-sweet or milk chocolate
- 14 ounces sweetened condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions

- Line an 8 inch by 8 inch baking dish with aluminum foil or two pieces of parchment paper overlapping to make an X.
- In a medium saucepan, combine the chocolate chips and sweetened condensed milk.
- Place the pan over medium low heat. Stir constantly until the chocolate is partially melted. Stir in the vanilla extract.
- Continue stirring until the chocolate is fully melted and the mixture is smooth and starts to turn shiny.

- Pour the mixture into the prepared pan. It will be very thick - if it doesn't pour well because of the thickness, don't stress, you're still on the right track. Once it is all in the pan, you can gently shake the pan back and forth to help it settle. You can also use a rubber spatula to spread it
- Allow the fudge to completely set. This can be done on the countertop and will take about four hours.
- Remove the fudge from the pan and take off the aluminum foil. Trim off the rounded edges from the pan. Cut the fudge in half one way and then the other to make four equal squares. Cut each small square into 9 equal pieces by cutting into thirds one way and then the other. This will result in 36 equal pieces of fudge.
- Enjoy right away or store in an airtight container for up to two week

**Squash Pound Cake - Homann Family Recipe (a newly found family)
Submitted by Maryann Brown Patience Recipe**

1 cup butter	3 tsp. Baking powder
2 cups sugar	1/2 tsp. Baking soda
4 large eggs (room temperature)	1/2 tsp. Salt
2 tsp lemon juice	1 cup sour cream
1/2 tsp almond extract	4 cups shredded yellow squash
5 cups all purpose flour	

Beat butter and sugar
Add eggs one at a time
Add lemon juice and extracts

Mix flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt
Alternate beating creamed mixture with sour cream and squash

Bake at 350 degrees for 50 minutes

Four years ago I discovered that I had a half-sister that I didn't know anything about. Now we are family and exchanging recipes.

Memaw's Neiman Marcus Cake submitted by Michelle Inabinet

Ingredients:

1 box of yellow cake mix (preferably
Duncan Hines)
2 eggs
1 stick butter - melted

8 oz cream cheese
1 box powdered sugar (16 oz.)
2 eggs

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 9x13 inch pan. First, mix together the cake mix, 2 eggs, and stick of melted butter, using a hand mixer. Pour that mixture into the pan, spread evenly. Then, mix together the cream cheese, powdered sugar, and 2 eggs, using the hand mixer. Pour the second mixture over the first mixture in the pan, spread evenly. Bake for 35-40 minutes or until lightly browned. Wait to cool before cutting into pieces. **(serves 12)**

Pastor Melissa's Indulgent Pumpkin Chocolate Chip Cookies

Makes about 24 cookies

*freezes well (just add 2-5 minutes on your bake time depending on if straight from freezer or given a little thaw time)

I don't bake often, but when I do I go all in! This recipe is one that I discovered on TikTok and have adapted to my preferences. The first time I ever made them was for our AC/DC group (All Church Dinner Club). When I pulled them out of the oven I really wasn't sure how they would be received but I reminded myself of the wisdom Elizabeth Childress had shared with our group the month before at our AC/DC gathering - (paraphrase), "it's best to try out new recipes when hosting people for dinner that way you don't get stuck with all the leftovers if you don't like it." Well much to my honest surprise the pumpkin chocolate chip cookies were a hit and became my go to bake this holiday season. Each time I made them I altered something and each time I offered them to a new group they were a hit. f

Ingredients

8 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
1 cup granulated sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt (1/2 teaspoon for table salt)
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups puréed pumpkin (from one 15-ounce can - some purees are more liquidy than others - if this is yours it just means you'll need to add 2 minutes to the bake time)
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 12 oz bag of dark chocolate chips
1/2 12 oz bag of milk chocolate or dark chocolate chunks (use extras from bag to top)
(Optional) small pinch Sea Salt Flakes for tops of baked cookie (I like Maldon brand)

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two half-sheet trays with parchment paper or silicone sheet.
2. In a large mixing bowl, beat the butter with a rubber spatula to loosen it up, then beat in the sugar, cinnamon, pumpkin pie spice, salt, baking soda and baking powder. Using rubber spatula to really push the spices into the butter which "blooms" the spices and lets them come through more in the baked cookie.
3. Add the vanilla and puréed pumpkin to the bowl and whisk until combined. (The mixture may begin to look split. Don't worry, it'll come back together with the flour.)
4. Using the rubber spatula, fold in the flour until just a few streaks of white remain, then fold in the chocolate chips just until evenly incorporated.
5. Dole out eight dough balls per tray, about 3 tablespoons each, in a staggered formation. (I like to use a 1.5-ounce cookie scoop but you can also use two spoons to scoop and scrape them out.) Top each dough ball with 4 or 5 of the remaining chocolate chips, if desired.
 - if you leave the cookies in a big scoop form they'll come out deliciously gooey and cakey or you can flatten them out by half and get a gooey more cookie texture both ways are delicious!
6. Bake, one tray at a time, for 13 or 14 minutes, until they look just dry on the tops. Allow to cool on the tray for 5 to 10 minutes then carefully transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.