



SALT & LIGHT

a hope church publication

LENT 2021



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OUR FAITH

Hope Church is called by God and equipped by the Holy Spirit to be a witness to the unity, reconciliation and justice given in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. These touchstones drawn from the Belhar Confession give voice to the historic Christian faith in our time and place.

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EDITORIAL & DESIGN

Lois Maassen, Megan Arevalo, & Michael Kolk

Lent 2021:

By Gordon Wiersma

The wisdom found in Ecclesiastes 3 that begins with “For everything there is a season” is familiar to and meaningful for many. It poetically weaves the interplay of experiencing gain and loss, abundance and need, pain and healing, and in doing so we see our own lives. Together with the writer, we look for meaning and God’s presence in all of those seasons.

So what do we look for in this particular season of Lent in 2021? As the Worship Ministry met in January to reflect on that together, we could plainly feel and see within us and around us that the past year has been a season of much loss and pain, of challenge and disorientation and weariness. In some ways, those are themes that could be suitable for Lent, as there is a well-worn place for repentance and lament in the Lenten season. But given what we have all been journeying through individually and corporately, we sensed that something different is needed for this Lenten season. What we felt the Spirit surface in us were calls to germination and growth, to grace and renewal, to awakening and emerging. These are themes that belong in Lent as well, as it is the time in our part of the world of light increasing and days lengthening, of the dormant earth stirring, connecting us in our spirits to threads of discipleship and growth.

In this Lenten season at Hope Church, the themes we trust you will hear in the worship and life of Hope Church are not so much that of joy, but rather as one person so beautifully put it at the Worship Ministry gathering, “the energy that comes before joy.” It is the energy reflected in the beautiful title and text of the song, “Light Dawns in a Weary World,” and that is the energy we look to the Spirit for together in this particular time and season.

Lenten blessings to all,

~Pastor Gordon

For Everything There is a Season



Ash Wednesday, February 17

6 to 7 p.m.

You can stop by the Hope Church parking lot to receive the imposition of ashes. While we typically include this symbolic ritual as part of a service of worship, the pastors have participated in recent years in Ashes on the Go on the streets of Holland. On the Ashes to Go website, the impetus for this relatively new practice (at least among protestant congregations) is described this way: "Imagine: It's an ordinary weekday, and in the middle of your daily tasks, you stumble into a moment of prayer. The street corner, the coffee shop, or some other

ordinary place is suddenly a place where God has come to meet you. The church has come out from behind the comfortable pews and doors to be in the places where the rubber meets the road.

It's Ash Wednesday, and you're invited to wear your ashes, to claim repentance, grace and deep relationship with God for the challenges of your daily life. 'Ashes to Go' is about bringing spirit, belief, and belonging out from behind church doors, and into the places where we go every day. It's a simple event with deep meaning, drawing on centuries of tradition and worship to provide a contemporary moment of grace." (ashestogo.org)



Seder Dinner, March 24

6:30 p.m.

Sign up (tinyurl.com/hopesedersignup) by March 14 to join this tradition via Zoom.

The Jewish tradition of Seder has long been a household and family tradition. While we will miss the opportunity to gather together for Seder as we have traditionally done during Holy Week, this innovation will bring us closer to the traditional Jewish practice. Watch for confirming details, but in the days before Wednesday, March 24, there will be home Seder kits available in the church vestibule for pickup. We will then celebrate a simplified Seder liturgy together over Zoom. For families with children who complain that they never find the Afikomen and have never gotten the prize, this will be a year to right all wrongs! Every household with children who sign up will receive an Afikomen to hide and a prize to award. Our Jewish friends will begin their celebration of Passover in the days that follow with the first night Passover on Saturday evening, March 27.

Tenebrae Service, Maundy Thursday, April 1

7 p.m.

Via Facebook Live (facebook.com/hopechurchholland), we will share in our traditional Tenebrae Service on Maundy Thursday. By interweaving readings, music, and the symbolism of extinguishing candles to denote the gathering darkness, we will walk with Jesus from his celebration of the passover with his disciples through his death on the cross. This service will prepare us for the joyful celebration of Easter day.

A Lenten Opportunity for Growth: 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge, March 1-21

During the month of March, there will be an individual/group opportunity for challenge and growth in our commitment to racial justice. We will use the resources in the 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge, originally developed by Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr., and used extensively in congregations and organizations throughout the country.

This resource has been helpfully adapted locally through the United Way: [21-Day Challenge Catalogue | Greater Ottawa County United Way \(ottawaunitedway.org\)](https://ottawaunitedway.org), providing daily email content for participants to engage with. The Equity Challenge uses teaching, reflection, and advocacy to deepen our understanding of and engagement with issues of racial equity and justice. There will be further details and sign up shared for this opportunity through upcoming congregational emails, but the details for you to know for now are:

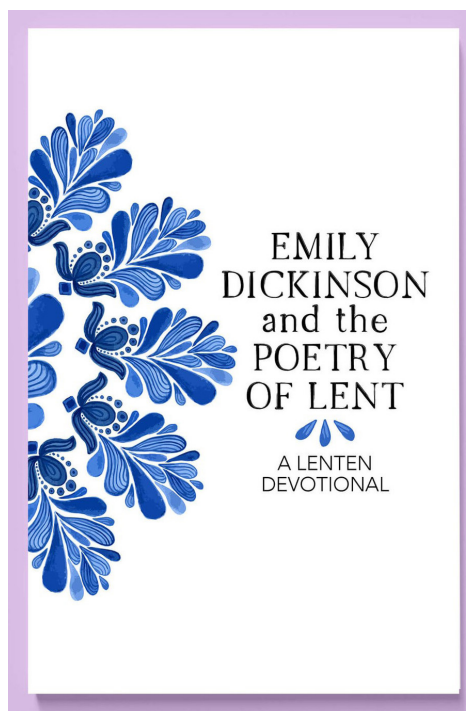
- Sign-up will be through an online form to gather your email address.
- You'll then receive daily emails beginning March 1.
- Three group Zoom sessions led by the pastors will offer discussion, encouragement, and collaboration; these will be the Thursday evenings of March 4, 11, and 18, from 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- We will extend an invitation to some of our sister churches engaged in racial justice issues to join with us in this Lenten commitment, so we are hopeful for some broader connection and engagement to be woven into this experience.

One final note: A number of folks may have already participated in the 21-Day Challenge over the past year—which is wonderful!—and you can join in again! There are a wealth of resources that provide more than enough to engage in for a repeat participant, and it is also an opportunity to bring together your insights and questions with others. So watch for additional information on sign up and Zoom meeting details as we look forward to starting this Challenge together in March.

Lent Devotional Resource: *The Poetry of Lent*

This year's devotional for adults is entitled *Emily Dickinson and The Poetry of Lent: A Lenten Devotional*. Lent is a time of reflection and insight, a change of seasons—and Emily Dickinson, one of the world's most beloved poets, was also an avid gardener and a careful observer of the natural world. In this Lenten devotional, biblical texts and simple, accessible practices weave together with Dickinson's poetic vision, creating a 40-day journey into the heart of the holiest week of the year.

Pick up a copy from the vestibule, and all you'll need is your favorite Bible (Dickinson's poems are included in the devotional). Week by week, we'll walk through the garden together toward Easter morning, with Emily Dickinson as our guide. (saltproject.org)



Adult Education

Sundays, 9:40-10:40 am on Zoom: tinyurl.com/hopeadulteducation

February 21 - What's the Big Deal about Israel/Palestine?

John Kleinheksel, retired RCA/ PCUSA pastor, educator, and musician, will provide an introduction to the realities on the ground there, past and present.

February 28 - Aren't We Supposed To Support Israel?

Pastor Kleinheksel will show how fundamentalist Christian support for Zionism is thwarting the human rights of indigenous Arab Christians and Muslims.

March 7 and 14 - Daughters to Disciples

Hope College Religion professor (and Hope Church member) Lynn Japinga will present two sessions on her just published book, *From Daughters to Disciples: Women in the New Testament*.

March 21 - What Lockdown & Sabbath Do—and Don't—Have in Common

Carol Bechtel, professor of Old Testament at Western Theological Seminary and Hope Church member, will talk about her sabbatical research and experiences in Italy during the first half of 2020.

March 28 - The Migration Crisis in Southern Europe

Carol Bechtel will lead a discussion of a recent webinar on "how NGOs and churches in southern Europe are working together to welcome refugees facing xenophobia and racism. Parallels will be drawn between the migration issues facing Europe and the U.S."

Children's Ministry: Season of Lent

By Jocelyn Van Heest, Children's Ministry Director



In the Worship Centers, the children are well aware that there are important and meaningful seasons before each great celebration in our church year. The season of Lent is the time when we are preparing and making our hearts ready to celebrate Easter. The Lenten journey is a time for each of us to find ways to reflect on our relationship with God, spending more time in hearing Bible stories or reading the Bible, praying, and finding ways to serve others.

The children will continue to see and hear the stories of Jesus through weekly Children in Worship videos and also on Zoom during the worship services on February 21 and March 21. On those two Sundays, families are invited to watch the service live on Facebook and then switch to the Zoom gathering for a story, fellowship, and communion. It is wonderful to be able to see our Hope Church family together.

This time of physical separation from our Hope Church families has been challenging, but we are finding a variety of ways to keep a meaningful connection. Families can receive another special package of ideas and supplies to help in our partnership with parents to foster and develop their children's faith. We hope each family, with their own circumstances, will find some activities, discussion questions, or suggestions that are meaningful.

A Hope Church tradition of "Burying our Alleluias" will be done a little differently, but each family will receive a container in which to put their alleluias until the wonderful

celebration on Easter morning. Each family will be sent devotions to use as we mark the days of Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday and leading to Easter Sunday. Families are also encouraged to participate in some of the special church events, including the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday and the Seder gathering on March 24. The support of our families during these challenging times is important to us all and we hope that you feel that love and support every day.



Youth Ministry: Making it Happen

By Beth Carroll, Associate Pastor of Discipleship

What needs to change? What needs to continue? Though these are two questions I ask every summer before the school year as I plan for youth ministry, they have become crucial questions I now ask weekly. COVID-19 has forced all of us to reassess how we live our lives, including making decisions on the fly without the benefit of feeling complete certainty that you are making the best choice. Decision fatigue is a very real thing! So it is with Youth Ministry as well. Weighing safety concerns with a hunger for a space to process all that is happening is difficult, to say the least. On top of this balance is a very real need for social connection to counteract all of the time in isolation or behind screens.

Despite how hard this is, we are making it happen. Fish Club and High Hopes have continued to meet outdoors for games and connection, while wearing masks and maintaining safe distances from each other. We have gone on several scavenger hunts, played games in Centennial Park and Window on the Waterfront, and even played tag with pool noodles on the grass next to the church. Instead of in-person Bible lessons, our intern Elliot and

I have been creating short videos addressing theological concepts which we share in emails and on Instagram. Ministry is still happening!

With all of the new locations and games, we have still managed to preserve some of our important traditions. Blessed with a sunny and pleasant Sunday afternoon this past December, we had our annual Christmas party! We circled up some chairs around heat lamps and had our “white elephant gift exchange.” (I am still savoring the giant-sized Hershey Bar I took home!) Prizes were given for those who got extra creative with festive Christmas and sponsor Jacki Knoll handed out hot cocoa to everyone. It was a delightfully fun afternoon. Thank you, God, for the grace and gift of sunshine in December.

An even greater grace is the commitment and care of our youth sponsors. Besides Jacki, we are supported by Elliot Weidenaar, Jared Lambers, Rich Perez, and Amber Tejada. We are still trucking along in youth ministry and are so grateful for all the ways you pray and remember our youth. Only a couple more months until spring!

Continuing to Make Room for All: A Conversation

By Lois Maassen, Hope Church and Room for All board member



Hope Church joined the roster of Room for All churches in 2012, joining other congregations committed to affirming that all persons belong to God. In a more normal year, many of us would participate in Room for All events, and we'd welcome Room for All leaders and members to our in-person fellowship. To keep us in touch with the organization and its plans, I planned a conversation with Cameron Van Kooten Laughead, executive director.

Cameron, the pandemic has made it difficult your first year to introduce yourself in your new role as executive director. Could we start with just a bit of your background?

While I've had the privilege of visiting Hope Church and meeting

many of you over the years, it's been a while. I'm a native of Pella, Iowa, and a 2013 graduate of Central College. Through Central, I got involved with Room for All, joined the Board of Directors in Spring 2013, and the staff in 2015. My husband, Ian, and I have been married for five years; we relocated to his hometown of Des Moines in 2018, after some time in Ohio and New York City.

Uncertainty in the RCA denomination about its future has been prolonged by the pandemic, which prevented the General Synod from meeting in 2020. What has the impact of that been for Room for All?

At first, I noticed many churches just trying to keep their heads above water. I'm not a pastor and don't know exactly what's taught in seminary, but I'm confident there's no class called "Pandemic Pastoring: throwing out the budget, managing your congregants' anxiety, keeping your family safe, and doing it all from Zoom/6+ feet away."

There were many congregations that in "normal times" would have kept digging in and doing work to journey towards an LGBTQIA-affirming ministry, but that needed that to take a back-burner. I'd say in mid-fall we began seeing congregations hitting their stride with digital worship and long-term planning in this new dynamic. The trauma has really clarified what's important.

In the last month alone, we've seen increased interest in joining the roster; many pastors have

reached out about resources for their congregations, and engagement with our online presence and email newsletters has skyrocketed. We all had a learning curve last summer, but it's becoming clear that many folks are ready to reinvest energy in the justice issues they care about.

Room for All's work has traditionally been quite relational, with in-person conferences, training events, and conversations. How has your work continued in our current conditions?

Our work, like that of so many others, has gone online! A significant portion of the RfA's interpersonal communications has always been digital, but that's the reality of having a small staff and a denomination-wide constituency. Room for All has spent this time working to provide resources that can help lighten the load for pastors and congregational leaders. One of these is our Theology Thursday Facebook Live program. We've been exploring other programming too, things that RfA can offer to engage folks so pastors and leaders can catch their breath every once in a while.

You mention the Theology Thursdays, for which our own Beth Carroll has been a guest. Say more about your intent for them. Where can we find them?

Rev. Beth wasn't just a guest, she was the *very first* Theology Thursday guest! Theology Thursday is a weekly Facebook Live "podcast" where the guest/s

and I look through that week's lectionary passages with a queer-inclusive lens. A huge part of its creation was my own curiosity and difficulty finding an engaging breakdown of these weekly passages that make their way into so many of our pulpits. One surprise has been the incredible response from ministers who comment or even email and text me to say "Wow! I've never read this passage in that way. This is definitely changing my sermon for next week." It's been deeply gratifying to see the ways in which this really simple, low-cost program is making its way into sermons around the denomination.

We aim to go live on RfA's Facebook every Thursday between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Eastern, although that can be flexible. RfA's facebook page (www.facebook.com/roomforallrca) is the place to find the episodes and get notified of that week's air time.

What else is in your plans for 2021?

We're looking forward to a productive year. We're in the beginning stages of expanding our staff, outlining educational modules, continuing to provide programs like Theology Thursday and other digital

plug-in opportunities for churches, and rostering congregations! We're going to connect more meaningfully with the RCA's LGBTQIA seminarians and college students and continue to educate ourselves on the ways racism/white supremacy intersect with our LGBTQIA-focused mission and how we're responsible for dismantling that. I hope to provide a community-building space like conferences of yesteryear, even if it needs to be online. In short, RfA is going to continue providing the pastoral care and resources for LGBTQIA people that the RCA hasn't figured out how to do yet.

Connecting with One Another

Gratitude

Thank you very much for your donation to Nestling's Diaper Bank's "Size 6 Skid" Project. We really appreciate your support of Nestlings. WE DID IT!! We were able to purchase the semi load of size 6 diapers, which are desperately needed in our community.

—The Nestlings Team
(nestlings.org)

Thank you, Hope Church family, for the cards, emails, and texts of condolence you sent following the death of my dad. Your support was particularly meaningful to me because my family couldn't be together in the normal ways to grieve. And thank you, again, to the members of the choir who traveled to GR to sing to him back when he was well enough to enjoy it. What a gift that was to my parents, the staff who lingered to listen and join in, and to us.

—Christine and Brad MacLean

Lee and I were touched by the many cards we received from our Hope Church family. We read them in small batches and with the help of the directory, Lee was able to recall our friends. He keeps the cards on the coffee table and enjoys going through them frequently. What a beautiful way to experience the loving spirit of Hope Church through your cards and personalized messages. Special thanks to Hendrik Hoekman and Lucy Arevalo for their adorable contributions. They are treasured! Thank you all so much!

—Joan and Lee Wenke

I would like to send along a heart felt Thank You to everyone who sent cards and emails of comfort and support to me after the death of my mother. As I navigate this emptiness, I look back on those cards, letters, and kind words to find comfort in God and my Hope Church family.

—Stephanie Beyer



Still Writing, Still Connected: Freedom Writers

By Laurie Baron

Among the many things 2020 upended was Freedom Writers. At the beginning of the year, Rhonda Edgington and I were meeting weekly with a circle at Harbor House, an OAR residential rehab house for women, and Elisabeth Bauman and I traveled weekly to the circle at the Allegan County Correctional Center. Along with everything else, both of these in-person programs were shut down in March.

However, we offered to email some prompts to the writing circles, and these were eagerly accepted. So, every week between March and November, we sent a note of greeting and encouragement and three writing exercises or prompts to Sgt. Tim Commissaris at ACCC and Gabby Johnson, director of Harbor House. As you can imagine, the staff at both places were dealing with unprecedented situations and were very busy. Not surprisingly, many weeks could go by with no response other than a perfunctory thank-you. From time to time, I'd wonder if the prompts were even distributed, but the handful of times I asked how it was going or whether we should continue, the word came back that the women looked forward to the prompts and were writing. As much as I believe in the value of what we are doing, I admit I was pretty surprised! So on we went.

During the summer, we received word that we could come in person to Harbor House, and Rhonda and I went one time. I decided that it wasn't a wise thing for me, given that my age

made me more vulnerable and the protocols seemed a bit loose. After communicating with the director about keeping masks in place, etc., Rhonda went the next week and led solo. When she reported no real change in the protocols, it seemed wise to go back to emailing prompts, rather than put her health at risk.

During the fall, Sgt. Commissaris let me know that the last woman in the Re-Entry Program had been released, and so Freedom Writers was suspended at the jail. Sgt. Tim expressed deep appreciation for our continued connection with our writers and assured us of a welcome when programming inside the ACCC is possible again.

**“Their stories still
bring healing,
still cry out to be
deeply heard.”**

In late November, we learned that we could be present at Harbor House via Zoom. So, for the last few weeks Rhonda and I have appeared there on a single (I believe laptop) screen in their living room while the residents gather around (maintaining their 6-foot distance from

each other as best they can), and we go forward, writing and reading to each other. It's certainly not wonderful—it can be downright awkward to figure out who's talking, to miss cues and too many words and wonder what's going on there in the background...

And yet, the women show up and write and read and thank us for coming. Their words are strong and beautiful. Their stories still bring healing, still cry out to be deeply heard.

In some ways, it feels like Freedom Writers is limping along with a partial program. We've lost touch with women we grew to care for. We spent a year working in the dark. Rhonda and Elisabeth are both parents of active, school-aged children, with the added responsibility and uncertainty that parenthood brought to them last year.

But we are still here, still writing, still connected to one of our circles. I don't know what the coming year will bring, just wanted to bring you up to date and ask for your continued support, wisdom, and prayer.

Serving & Building Together: An Update from CAH

By Scott Rumpsa, Executive Director of Community Action House



What a year. Almost all of us have experienced loss to some degree this year. Since the onset of COVID-19 and resulting disruption, we've seen firsthand what many of us know—challenges like these fall heaviest on those least able to bear them. Fifty-one years ago, a group of community members committed to service and social justice founded Community Action House (CAH) as a community institution where people of all perspectives come together to welcome and serve our neighbors living on the margins. In short, we were created for times just like these. I'm grateful for their foresight, and humbled to be working with an incredible team of staff, volunteers, and supporters now, as a place of welcome and expanded service in a time of so much disruption.

Since **March 16 of last year, our services have been called on as never before.** Thousands of neighbors have relied on us for the first time. Our Community Kitchen now provides 140+ takeaway meals daily. Our Food Pantry provides well over 8,000

meals worth of groceries every week. Our Outreach team has helped house 34 people in the last 10 months, and continues providing partnership, counsel, and support to a growing caseload of more than 70 neighbors experiencing homelessness. Our Resource Navigation team and Financial Wellness teams likewise have adjusted and expanded their offerings to meet the moment, serving new guests and addressing new challenges.

And as a locally funded institution, all of this work is dependent on an incredible local network of support. **Hope Church was one of our founding church partners back in 1969.** That partnership has continued over the years, and **I'm so glad to say thank you for all the ways Hope Church as an institution and as individuals has shown up with CAH since last March.** So many of you have helped by donating family food boxes, through your volunteer efforts, and through your generous financial support that we've relied on to expand all we do. Our relationship with Hope Church is truly special. It runs deep, and our shared values of a radically welcoming and inclusive service have been a part of that since our founding.

Coming in 2021

So much has changed, and we're adjusting our services to best support our community through this crisis and into a period of rebuilding beyond. As Hope Church has stood with us throughout our 51-year history, I want to share

about a few new initiatives that we're launching this year.

Our Financial Wellness team is launching two new programs this winter. One establishes a new volunteer income tax assistance pathway to help low income filers maximize their Earned Income Tax Credit (particularly important in a year when employment disruptions plus EITC-focused legislative change make this more complex), which can make up to a third of a low-income family's annual income. The second is a Savings Club approach to building Emergency Savings accounts. Enrolled guests will work together with a small cohort, and be provided with a two-to-one match to target turning a regular savings effort into \$400+ in emergency reserves.

But an even bigger new effort in 2021 is the **culmination of a big community campaign** that's been ongoing since October 2019. On March 1, we begin the renovation of a new facility at the corner of 8th and Paw Paw, where we'll open our "Food Club" (target opening in September 2021). Food Club is a proven, innovative model of food assistance that offers greatly expanded service, with wider impact, greater efficiency, and a much more welcoming and guest-centered experience. Essentially, this model switches from our current Food Pantry mode of food assistance to a more inviting grocery-store-style space, with expanded hours and enhanced focus on choice, especially of healthy, perishable foods. We've been working a long

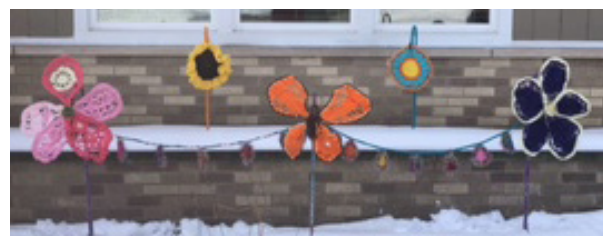


time on this effort, and with all that's happened over the past 10+ months, we believe it's even more aligned with our community's needs. Hope Church has been with us throughout our 51 years, and we hope and trust that our partnership will continue to strengthen in the years to come as we lean into ever more welcoming and effective modes of service. You can learn more about our Food Club effort at <https://www.hzfoodclub.org/>.

I'm always glad to share more with anyone—especially my fellow Hope Church members! Please get in touch at srumpsa@communityactionhouse.org anytime. **Thank you again for all you each do for our community, through your gifts of time and resources, as well as through your advocacy as we all seek a more just, inclusive, and welcoming community where everyone has what they need to thrive.**

Pop des Fleur

Hope Church member Barbara Knoops has been knitting all fall/winter to create this uplifting scene at her home for February when we are all in the middle of the winter blues! Enjoy!



Earth Friendly Snow and Ice Removal Tips

By Lisa Denison, Creation Care Ministry member

Most of us do what we do because, well, we've always done it that way. We learned when we were young; no need to reinvent the wheel. Nothing could be more routine for Michiganders than snow removal. No need to rethink that one, right? Creation Care's Lisa Denison has been pondering that snow removal question. Read her recommendations to see whether your habits need a refresh!



Sooner or later we will be dealing with this... so be ready with these earth-friendly snow and ice removal tips!

The number-one earth-friendly method: shoveling. You can't beat shoveling for getting exercise and fresh air (as long as your health allows it). Maybe you know some kids stuck at home who would welcome earning some money? I can see you rolling your eyes, so keep reading....

How to prevent slips and falls on ice

The best products for traction only are sand, bird seed, and non-clumping kitty litter. For both traction *and* ice melting, try alfalfa meal!

Alfalfa meal is a highly effective ice melting substance *and* is 100-percent natural! It does contain nitrogen, which is what makes it an effective fertilizer, but it contains this element in lesser concentrations, making it less of a threat to local water systems *when used in moderation*. Because it's dry and grainy, alfalfa meal has the added benefit of creating additional traction while it's working on melting the ice. Bags of alfalfa meal can be purchased at most gardening stores or online.

If you are still inclined to buy an "ice-melt" product, read the ingredients, not the claims. If there isn't an ingredient list on the package, don't buy it! Note that "pet friendly" is not necessarily the same as "environment friendly."

When you're checking that ingredient list, avoid sodium chloride, the worst of all the salts, environmentally speaking. The *least* harmful chemical option is calcium chloride. It melts ice faster (almost instantly!) than other options and at a lower temperature point (-20°F). It can be a cost-effective option since one ounce of calcium chloride can melt twice the amount of ice as one ounce of magnesium chloride.

Using calcium chloride ice melts can have negative effects.

- It can be harmful to pets! Always clean your pet's feet after exposure to ice melts to prevent irritation or burns.

- Can corrode metals, causing damage to your car.
- Overapplication of calcium chloride ice melts can lead to plant damage.
- Calcium chloride can damage concrete, especially when the concrete is less than a year old. It's generally considered, though, to be less damaging than other ice melts.
- If tracked indoors, calcium chloride can leave an oily residue that's difficult to remove.

Minimize the negative effects of using ice melts

Use only the recommended amount of ice melts and consider using a mechanical spreader to coat surfaces as evenly as possible. The longer an ice melt sits on a surface, the more damage can occur. Reduce potential damage by scooping up the salty slush and disposing of it. When you move it, though, be careful not to shovel it onto your lawn; you'll prevent damage to vegetation. Apply ice melt only when necessary and remove the slush once it's done its job to reduce the potential for damage.

Use caution when applying ice melts; wear protective gloves and eyewear. Ice melts are chemical compounds that can cause skin irritations or burns.

And don't attempt to use ice melts to remove ice from your roof!

Poetry Corner

Hosted by Randy Smit and Rhonda Edgington

Well known for its beauty, rich history, and preserved colonial architecture, San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico, is also the place where one might find Elena Munoz Ruiz on any given day; gazing out her window, stirring her cardamom tea to warm her hands, dreaming of her next creation. She is the oldest of three, with one brother and one sister, and is cared for by

her parents, Margarita Ruiz and Juan Munoz. Elena is widely known and appreciated on social media among disabled and nondisabled artists worldwide and has become a dear friend in the faith to me since the spring of 2017. It's our joy and privilege to introduce you to Elena for this Lenten season's Poetry Corner. ~ Randy

My name is Elena Muñoz Ruiz. I am from México. I am 42 years old. I'm an artist since I remember and I constantly create illustrations of real and fictional characters that say things about my environment.

On the other hand, if things are not funny and should be serious and dramatic by default, ambivalent messages, with less color and a lot of mystery take place in my watercolors and acrylics.

I create T-shirts with a mix of dream and pop touches and paint eco-friendly bags because there is only one planet to inhabit and take care of before thinking about colonizing Mars. I am a musician as well, a minimalist one, and I like to play with my friends or by myself. You can see and listen to something looking for Orquesta Café Con Pan in Facebook.

I have spinal muscular atrophy, a rare genetic disease that affects motor neurons, leaving the muscles progressively toneless and without strength to move the body. It does not affect the intellect, and it is said that those of us who have this condition are more intelligent than average, but I would say that there is a way to use mind and reason to the fullest, to compensate for such a peculiar physical disadvantage. I do consider myself very intelligent (no matter what). I was diagnosed when I was six years old with type II in a weak spectrum, and with 42 years, I can barely eat with adapted spoons and plastic forks. I use a power wheelchair since I was seven years old, and breathing for me is a miracle. My energy runs out if I speak a little more than needed. I rely on people's help for everything. I consider myself capable to help in many ways, giving instructions to people to do things. I thank those who are willing to help me, being my hands and my legs to do so. On the other hand, I work producing very nice things with

my illustrations for clients from all over the world, and if I talk with numbers, I would say that I have 5 percent of autonomy and mobility in my body. This leads me to think about those who have 100 percent of mobility on their bodies. What they can achieve!

If you want to see my artistic work you can visit:

- @mascotidiana on Instagram.
Thanks for following me.
- www.facebook.com/mascotidiana
- www.etsy.com/shop/catbrush



LIFT ME UP



As you are there. So loyal, so cheerful, patient... So friend, so focused, so smart, so lovely. Just as I am. I lift you up. You lift me up.

SELF HUG



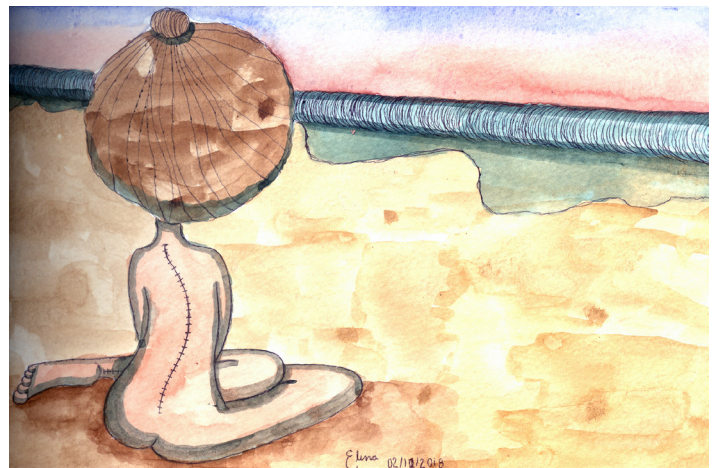
Coldness: You should go, you should feel that the winter did not see you. For I will pretend that you do not exist, and I will cover myself with a thousand rays of sun so that you don't reach to me.

ABSTRACT BURSTING SUN RAYS



The Sun brings to our existence life through colors and bursting powerful rays.

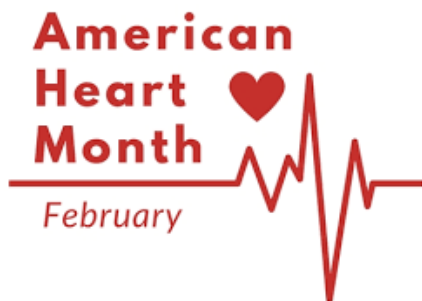
THE WORST IS GONE



I dream about the Ocean, the beach, the sun, the sand, the warm weather. Then I notice the sea, the blue, the seashores, the clear water, and a colorful sky on everything. My scars are there, but the worst and darkest feelings and experiences are gone. I learned.

February Is Heart Month

By Ginger Clark, Parish Nurse, R.N.



It's been nearly a year of coping with COVID-19. You've done the tough job of physically distancing, wearing masks, frequently washing your hands, trying to remain connected with family and friends—and it has been very stressful for most of us. This reminds me of the important tasks we all have to try to maintain our health in spite of this pandemic.

February is heart month, and heart health is clearly one of the most important things for quality and longevity of life. Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in the U.S. Aging can cause changes in the heart and blood vessels. Early heart disease does not always have symptoms, which is why regular check-ups with your doctor are so important. It's never too late to make better life choices. Here are some steps to a healthier heart.

Get active! Exercise helps your heart muscle become more efficient and better able to pump blood throughout your body. It lowers your blood pressure, helps maintain a healthy weight, lowers stress, and slows or stops development of diabetes.

Aim for a healthy weight. Being overweight is hard on your heart. It increases your risk of having heart disease, a

stroke, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Reduce stress and improve sleep.

Stress can contribute to high blood pressure and other heart risks. Not getting enough sleep or regularly getting poor quality sleep increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and other medical conditions. Aim for seven to eight hours of sleep a night. Stick to a sleep schedule, create a restful environment, and manage your worries.

Eat healthy foods. A healthy diet low in sodium and saturated fat is key to heart disease prevention. Try the highly rated Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan. It recommends:

- Eating vegetables, fruits, and whole grains; fish, poultry, beans, nuts, vegetable oils, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products; and
- Limiting foods that are high in saturated fat and sodium, as well as sugar and other sweeteners.

Quit smoking. The chemicals in tobacco smoke harm your heart and blood vessels in many ways. Quitting is hard, but many people have succeeded, and you can, too. Set a quit date and let those close to you know about it. Ask your family and friends for support.

Know your numbers. Meet your heart health goals by keeping track of how much you exercise, your blood pressure, your cholesterol numbers—all of which can impact your heart health—and tell your doctor how you're doing.

Watch for Signs

Warning signs of a heart attack: Most involve chest discomfort, but be alert to pain in your arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach. Also note shortness of breath with or without the chest discomfort, a cold sweat, nausea /vomiting, or lightheadedness. **Call 911.**

Warning signs of a stroke: Remember **BE-FAST**

- **Balance:** loss of balance or coordination
- **Eyes:** sudden trouble seeing out of one or both eyes
- **Face:** drooping of one side
- **Arm:** sudden weakness or numbness in one arm
- **Speech:** sudden trouble speaking or confusion
- **Time: call 911 immediately** with any of these signs. Every second counts!

Resources: American Heart Association (heart.org) and National Institute of Health (nih.gov)