

# Don't worry, God comes down to us

When I was young I had a unique experience of growing up in several different Christian traditions and church communities.

This experience sparked in me an interest of religion and led me to ask questions concerning the Christian faith. I listened to all the different teachings that were being instructed in the various churches.

One of the first teachings I picked up on was that we are all born sinners and needed to ask Jesus for forgiveness. I was taught that lying, stealing, cheating, cursing, etc., was not only bad but that they were sins.

And if you sinned you needed to ask for forgiveness, because if you didn't you couldn't enter heaven.

Therefore, at a young age, this caused a deep sense of fear and shame. I truly wanted to be forgiven and saved. Who doesn't want to go to heaven?

In hindsight, this installed a relatively unhealthy obsession with trying to make sure I was forgiven and saved. I was fearful that Jesus would come again and I wouldn't have asked for enough forgiveness.

I feared that I would be locked out of the heavenly gates. As a child this deeply bothered me.

So, as I aged, I kept listening to what was being preached at the different churches I attended — seeking answers to my doubts and fears.

When I finally settled into a single faith community and entered confirmation, I inquired about this longtime concern of mine to my late mentor, Pastor Mark Anderson,

of Crosslake Lutheran Church. The response was simple but profound. He explained that God always comes down. There is nothing that we can do to make our way up to God.

It is God's grace, love and forgiveness that is freely given to us and ensures us of our salvation. Not of our own doing but a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

This tiny bit of wisdom freed my fearful soul. My childhood angst concerning whether I would ever be worthy enough was removed.

And I have carried this life-changing wisdom with me ever since, returning to this truth any time I have my doubts.

There is nothing that we can say or do that can exclude us from the love of God. That is the radical and profound nature of the Good News that Jesus shares with us all.

There is no work or charity that can make us righteous. No specific tithe that can grant us salvation. No prayer that can magically save us.

Often you hear certain Christians calling on people to pray, "Jesus, I repent of my sins. Come in my heart. I believe in you. I want you to be my Lord and Savior."

I prayed this prayer incisively as a child, yet gained no consolation. All this prayer does is centers it around yourself and your desires, thus becomes works righteousness.

Rather in this reframed thinking, it's not about us. We have been freely given salvation and forgiveness through faith in Jesus. Nothing more.

We don't deserve this gift, but it is ours to have, for God always comes down and meets us where we are.

Austin Nelson, of Minneapolis and Crosslake, is a pastor, church historian and Pequot Lakes High School graduate.

# Faith in Action volunteers promote quality of life

HACKENSACK — People in Cass County have a heart for service and caring for their neighbors. It is no surprise to find many special individuals who care enough to volunteer their time and talents to help others.

In 2022, 98 Faith in Action volunteers helped 372 individuals throughout Cass County (up 8%), including 169 new people.

Volunteers filled 2,918 requests for services and gave over 9,000 hours of assistance.

Volunteers drove over 107,656 miles to transport people and provided 2,131 rides (up 10%).

And yet, studies show that only 20% of Minnesota residents have ever volunteered in their community.

According to the Minnesota Association of Volunteer Administration, over 60% of emergency food, activities for youth, firefighting and transportation for older adults is reported to be done primarily through volunteers in rural communities.

Volunteers add significantly to our quality of life in rural Minnesota, and it is easy to get connected to volunteer opportunities.

A locally supported, nonprofit organization, Faith in Action for Cass County connects community volunteers to provide nonmedical, neighborly assistance to seniors, the disabled and people in



Contributed / Theresa Eclow  
Faith in Action for Cass County volunteer Denny Ganz delivers meals and provides occasional rides in the Hackensack area.

need throughout Cass County.

Faith in Action volunteers provide transportation, friendly visiting, respite for caregivers, light homemaking and chores, and basic home repair, and they build accessibility ramps.

Volunteers can choose how, when and how much they want to volunteer. They receive scheduling coordination, training, liability insurance, recognition, mileage reimbursement and the smiles and joy of being with and helping others.

For more information about Faith in Action volunteer services or volunteering, call 218-675-5435 or visit [www.faithinactioncass.com](http://www.faithinactioncass.com).

# Area churches to participate in Lenten food shelf challenge

PEQUOT LAKES — Feb. 22, Ash Wednesday, will bring the season of Lent, and seven area churches will once again work cooperatively to help local food shelves.

The following churches will be involved:

- Crosslake Lutheran Church.
- Crosslake Presbyterian Church.
- Grace United Methodist Church, Pequot Lakes.
- Lutheran Church of the Cross, Nisswa.
- St. Alice Catholic Church, Pequot Lakes.
- St. Christopher Cath-

- olic Church, Nisswa.
- Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Pequot Lakes.

From Feb. 22 to April 2 (Palm Sunday), the public is invited to contribute both food and funds to help restock food shelves in Crosslake and Pequot Lakes.

## CARD GAMES

**500 scores**  
**1 p.m. Tuesdays**  
Pine River American Legion  
**Tuesday, Jan. 24**  
► Bill Ellis 3660, Edie Watson 3450, Ken Schrupp 2920, Jim Hawkinson 2730. Don Jacobson won the door prize.

PINE RIVER — The Senior Nutrition Program offers a nutritionally balanced meal for all people and is open for in-person dining.

Meals are served at 11:30 a.m. Monday-Friday at the Heartland Apartments, 445 Snell

Ave., in Pine River.

The suggested voluntary donation is \$5 per meal for those over 60 and \$8.50 for those under 60.

To make a reservation, call 218-587-2921. Menus are subject to change. Meals are

served with low-fat milk.

**Feb. 6-10**  
► **Monday:** Liver or pepper steak, buttered boiled potatoes, stewed tomatoes, dinner roll with margarine, dessert.

► **Tuesday:** Biscuits and sausage gravy, roasted potatoes, cinnamon apple slices, dessert.  
► **Wednesday:** Ginger citrus chicken, rice pilaf, peas and carrots, peaches, bread with margarine.

► **Thursday:** Sloppy Joe on a bun, potato wedges, vegetarian baked beans, banana or fresh fruit, cookie.  
► **Friday:** Baked fish, macaroni and cheese, broccoli florets, pears, Jell-O with whipped topping.

# AREA CHURCHES

**BACKUS**

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN  
Hwy. 64 off Cass Co. #2

BACKUS CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE  
618 State Hwy 371 NW • PO Box 41  
218-947-4243

EMMANUEL LUTHERAN (LCMS)  
603 State Hwy 371 NW PO Box 12  
218-947-4182 • [www.emmanuelbackus.org](http://www.emmanuelbackus.org)

LAKESIDE BAPTIST  
125 Church Lane • 218- 947-4955  
[www.lakesidebaptistchurch-backus.org](http://www.lakesidebaptistchurch-backus.org)

PINE MOUNTAIN GOSPEL  
Located at the Old Backus School Building  
218-838-1123

**BRAINERD**

AFLC GOOD SHEPHERD FREE LUTHERAN  
5878 Pine Beach Rd (CR 77), Brainerd  
218-824-3052

[www.goodshepherdfreelutheran.church](http://www.goodshepherdfreelutheran.church)

CHURCH ON THE WISE ROAD  
10345 Wise Rd. 11 • 218-829-4673

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE  
2530 Johnson Rd  
218-829-9005 • [www.brainerdnaz.org](http://www.brainerdnaz.org)

LIVING WORD NORTH  
2389 Hwy 371 North • 218-829-0612  
[www.livingwordnorth.org](http://www.livingwordnorth.org)

ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC  
16898 Carlson Lake Rd • 218-828-7738

**BREEZY POINT**

EAGLES NEST  
6714 County Road 11 • 218-568-5252  
[www.eaglesnestmn.org](http://www.eaglesnestmn.org)

OPEN DOOR COMMUNITY  
Breezy Point City Hall Community Room  
218-829-7596

**CROSSLAKE**

CROSSLAKE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY OF GOD  
13919 Cty Rd 36 • 218-692-4673  
[www.crosslakechristian.com](http://www.crosslakechristian.com)

IMMACULATE HEART  
35208 CR 37 • 218-692-3731  
[www.crosslakecatholic.com](http://www.crosslakecatholic.com)

MISSION OF THE CROSS LUTHERAN (LCMS)  
13716 CR 103 • 218- 692-4228  
[www.missionofthecross.org](http://www.missionofthecross.org)

CROSSLAKE EVANGELICAL FREE  
37218 County Rd 66  
218-692-4141 • [www.crosslakeefc.org](http://www.crosslakeefc.org)

CROSSLAKE LUTHERAN (ELCA)  
35960 CR 66 • 218-692-3682  
[www.crosslakelutheran.com](http://www.crosslakelutheran.com)

CROSSLAKE PRESBYTERIAN  
14444 Daggett Pine Road  
218-692-4769  
[www.crosslakepresbyterian.org](http://www.crosslakepresbyterian.org)

**EMILY**

CORNERSTONE CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
41563 Birchwood Dr., Emily  
218-763-2939

ST. EMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH  
218-763-2510

EMILY WESLEYAN CHURCH  
40141 State Hwy 6 • 218-763-4673  
[www.emilywesleyan.com](http://www.emilywesleyan.com)

EMILY UNITED METHODIST  
39994 White Pine St • 218-763-2122

**HACKENSACK**

HEARTLAND BAPTIST  
4621 Birch Lake Rd NW • 218-675-6000

Lighthouse

EVANGELICAL FREE  
224 State 371 N • 218-675-5882  
[www.thelighthousehackensack.com](http://www.thelighthousehackensack.com)

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC  
300 1st St N • 218-675-6101  
seventh-dAy adventist

208 S. 1st Street • 218-675-5085

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN  
220 3rd St. • 218-675-6335  
[stpaulselcahackensack.org](http://stpaulselcahackensack.org)

UNION CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
401 Lake Ave. E • 218-675-6300  
[www.unioncchackensack](http://www.unioncchackensack)

**JENKINS**

CHURCH OF GOD  
218-851-3963

LEGACY CHURCH  
33040 Aspenwood Drive • 612-300-5909  
[legacychurchmn@gmail.com](mailto:legacychurchmn@gmail.com)

**LAKE SHORE**

LIVING SAVIOR LUTHERAN (LCMS)  
8327 Interlachen Rd • 218-963-9733  
[www.livingsaviorchurch.org](http://www.livingsaviorchurch.org)

**LONGVILLE**

LONGVILLE COMMUNITY  
194 School Ln • 218-363-2750  
[www.longville.com/churches.html](http://www.longville.com/churches.html)

SALEM LUTHERAN  
1340 Cty Rd 5 • 218-363-2011  
[www.salemlongville.org](http://www.salemlongville.org)

**MERRIFIELD**

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE  
21704 County Rd 3 • 218-829-7536  
[hmerrifieldnazchurch.org](http://hmerrifieldnazchurch.org)

**NISSWA**

CHRIST COMMUNITY  
24646 Hazelwood Drive • 218-963-2626  
[christcommunitychurchnisswa.com](http://christcommunitychurchnisswa.com)

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE CROSS  
5064 County Road 13  
218-963-2564 • [www.lcnisswa.org](http://www.lcnisswa.org)

ST. CHRISTOPHER'S CATHOLIC  
218-963-1119  
[www.ourladylakes.com](http://www.ourladylakes.com)

THE JOURNEY  
5459 Co Rd 18, Nisswa • 218-963-2663  
[www.thejourneynisswa.org](http://www.thejourneynisswa.org)

TIMBERWOOD  
23084 Hwy 371 • 218-967-8888  
[www.timberwoodchurch.org](http://www.timberwoodchurch.org)

**PEQUOT LAKES**

GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN (LCMS)  
30701 Patriot Ave. • 218-568-5668

GRACE UNITED METHODIST  
29432 Patriot Ave. • 218-568-5755  
[www.graceumcpequotlakes.org](http://www.graceumcpequotlakes.org)

OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN  
30985 Front St • 218-568-4670  
<http://oursaviorspl.org>

PEQUOT LAKES BAPTIST  
30050 Rasmussen Road • 218-568-4794  
[www.plbconline.com](http://www.plbconline.com)

PLEASANT HILL COMMUNITY  
3340 72nd St NW • 218-568-5289

ST. ALICE'S CATHOLIC  
30918 Rasmussen Road • 218-568-4760  
[www.ourladylakes.com](http://www.ourladylakes.com)

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST  
Cole Memorial Building and online via Zoom • 218-515-0969  
[www.mnnuuf.org](http://www.mnnuuf.org)

HOUSE OF PRAYER, INC.  
120 Brown St • 218-587-2613

JUBILEE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP  
Meets at the Senior Center  
218-562-5664

**PINE RIVER**

BAPTIST  
CR 2 - 2 blocks W of 371 • 218-587-2684

FAITH ASSEMBLY OF GOD  
510 First St N • 218-587-2109

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH  
10973 County Rd 1 • 218-543-4878

FIRST LUTHERAN ELCA  
309 N 2nd St • 218-587-2316  
Maple Hill Lutheran  
3986 44th St SW • 218-270-3016

MILDRED BIBLE CHAPEL  
218-587-2562

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC CHURCH  
203 2nd St N • 218-587-4203  
[www.ourladylakes.com](http://www.ourladylakes.com)

PINE RIVER UNITED METHODIST  
348 Barclay Ave • 218-587-4091

RIVERVIEW  
310 Norway Avenue • 218-587-2021  
[riverviewchurchpr.org](http://riverviewchurchpr.org)

WHISPERING PINES GOOD SAMARITAN CHAPEL  
518 Jefferson Ave • 218-587-4423

WHITEFISH COMMUNITY  
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