

## Pastor Stahl's Weekly Message of Faith



Hello Everyone!  
It has been very cold! I hope everyone is doing well in spite of the weather. Remember, each day that passes is one day closer to Spring! Pitchers and Catchers report to Spring Training in about a month.

When I was young, we celebrated Abraham Lincoln's Birthday on February 12 and George Washington's on February 22. Then a few years ago they changed it to President's Day. It gives us the opportunity to celebrate all the men who served as President.

When I was in the Third Grade, I had to do a big report. Our teacher, Joanne McNeil at Wiley school, suggested I do it on the Presidents of the United States. We all went as a class to the Wiley library where I checked out a book on the Presidents, "The Arrow Book of Presidents", by Sturges F. Carey. I read that book from cover to cover, and it began a life long love of the Presidents and American History. Mom and Dad and I went to Washington D.C. that Summer (1972). We had a great time looking at all the historical sights, including the White House. Every President tried to do the best they could. There is a wonderful story that illustrates this point.

Abraham Lincoln had been a failure in just about everything he had tried. He was running his general store in New Salem, Illinois and was just about on the verge of bankruptcy. He was just about at the end of his rope, and he told his partner, "You know, I wouldn't mind so much if I could do what I real-

ly want to do. I want to study law. I would sell everything we have and I would buy one book: "Blackstone's Commentary on English Law." But I guess that will never happen." Then God Stepped in. At that moment a wagon pulled up by the store. The driver said, "I'm moving my family out west, and I'm out of money. I've got a good barrel here that I could sell for 50 cents." Lincoln said, "I suppose I could use a good barrel." He pulled out his last 50 cents and paid for it. All day long the barrel sat on the porch of the store. Late in the evening, Lincoln cleaned out the barrel. His long lanky arms reached down and pulled out a dusty old book. He stood there dumbfounded. It was "Blackstone's Commentary on English Law." He read the book from cover to cover, and you know the rest of the story. Lincoln went on to become a lawyer and the 16th President of the United States. His life was truly lived "with malice toward none, with charity for all."

From Isaiah: "Do not be afraid, for I Have Ransomed you. I Have Called you by name; you are Mine. When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown." (Isaiah 43:1-2) When we go through rough times, God Will be with us, Holding our hand.

God will come to our rescue. He Will Save us and Redeem us. God Can Do Amazing things for His children!

God Bless all of you!  
Pastor Jeff Stahl  
Countryside and Ogden United Methodist Churches

## Ramblings from The Village Idiot

The weather was quite mild as the first week of the new year drew to a close. I had noticed a stand of Creeping Charlie growing in a new garden bed. It was green, hence easy to spot, and the ground was not frozen. Wednesday the 7th was in the fifties, so it began my 2026 gardening season. Carefully winking out the runners revealed another troublesome weed growing lustily - mock strawberry. An hour, and half a 5-gallon bucket of weeds later, the area was nearly clear of these pests. The night of the 8th, we got a bit under 2 inches of much-needed rain.

Perhaps my most surprising experience of the first week of the year occurred on Friday the 2nd. I'd forgotten some things on my last shopping run of 2025, and went to Wal-Mart to get them. When I got to checkout, there were 2 cashiers available, both with customers. I got in line at the nearest one. I noted a continuation of a recent innovation. There were no dividers to place between orders. Luckily, there were a couple of dried-out hand wipes in my cart, so I put those in front of my order.

Then another customer

got in line behind me. There being no dividers handy, I looked at the next lane, which was closed, and saw a divider there. I went and got it. I placed it behind my order so he could put his stuff on the conveyor. And as he did so, he said, "You've just got two items. Let me pay for them." He was buying stuff for kids, so naturally I tried to decline - I said he needed that money more than I did. He said, "I'll just make some more money." I tried other blandishments, but he was not to be dissuaded. So eventually, I accepted, and put the divider in front of my order in place of the wipes.

After he'd paid, I suggested we leave the store together, because last time I'd been shopping there, someone near the exit had demanded to see my receipt. As we left, we talked a bit. It turned out that he (I will call him Sergeant X) had worked with a man in Sidney, where I live. I sent word through a mutual acquaintance, who informed me that the man wants to know where I met Sergeant X. Alas, I have been unable to communicate with him directly. But when he reads this column, he will know where I met Sergeant X.



John 1:29-50

New International Version  
John Testifies About Jesus  
29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

30 This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'

31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

32 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.

33 And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

34 I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

John's Disciples Follow Jesus  
35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.

36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb

of God!"

37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?"

They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

39 "Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding

## Hook, Line and Sinker

With Tony Hooker

Submitted originally by Carle Health

It takes a special person to successfully combine spirituality and nursing skills in support of community members. For Danna Williamson, MSN, NPD-BC, it's a mission she started at Carle Health, first as a registered nurse 20 years ago and continuing in 2021 when she became a faith community nurse for Community Health Initiatives.

She is among 11 individuals chosen nationwide and honored at a Wholeness of Life celebration in November for patient care contributions. Bestowing the honors were the Healthcare Chaplaincy Network and the Spiritual Care Association. The network is a New York-based non-profit that trains chaplains to serve in hospitals, the military and first-response positions. The association is a network affiliate and a professional membership association for spiritual care providers.

"I am humbled and honored to have received this recognition from the Healthcare Chaplaincy Network and the Spiritual Care Association. It is more than an award - it's a reminder of why I do what I do. It is a reminder that healthcare is not just about treating illness: It's about healing the whole person - mind, body and spirit - through compassion and caring. Through my work in Community Wellness and Faith Community Health Services, I've been blessed to combine my nursing skills with my calling to provide spiritual support. Every interaction is an opportunity to bring hope, comfort and dignity to those in need," Williamson said.

She completed the faith community nursing course in 2010 and serves her church with compassion and purpose. "My passion lies in fostering spiritual growth, nurturing relationships and empowering individuals to care for their physical, emo-

Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."

44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

47 When Jesus saw Nathana-

el approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

49 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

50 Jesus said, "You believe[c] because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that."

Scott said, "Danna has a real talent for motivational interviewing that brings calmness to often stressful situations. She asks questions in a conversational manner, so others feel comfortable in sharing their challenges or concerns. Danna is a shining example of what it means to care for the human spirit."

Williamson said the greatest reward is witnessing positive transformation in the lives of others, whether it is independence gained, confidence restored or the ability of individuals to provide for their families.

"Transforming lives, one person at a time, is the essence of community health and I am privileged to play a small role in that process," she said.

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