



Devotions for Lent 2021
Heather Roth Johnson, Editor

February 17

Sorry!

"And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us." (Matthew 6:12)

No matter what age, I always have loved games. Online gaming, cards, and board games - I will play anything. But the best game is Sorry! That feeling of squashing someone else's pawn, sending them home, and claiming their spot while saying in a snotty voice, "SORRY!" is exhilarating. As a kid, I would follow the "sorry" with "not!" These days "sorry not sorry" is a common phrase used to express a lack of regret or repentance. Sometimes people say it to be funny, but sometimes when people are forced to apologize, you may hear "sorry...not sorry." Today marks the first day in lent. We ash our foreheads, hear the call to repentance, and relearn about the forgiveness of sins. Isn't that what we get in Christ Jesus? True forgiveness? No "sorry not sorry" from him, but instead everlasting life, love, and forgiveness. Who do you need to forgive today?

Jesus, in the game of life, help us to love and say we are "sorry" to others. Amen.



February 18

Crazy 8's

Jesus said, "Don't store up treasures on earth! Moths and rust can destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal them. Instead, store up your treasures in heaven....Your heart will always be where your treasure is." (Matthew 6:19-21)

It's been said, "the one who dies with the most toys wins." In other words, life is all about accumulating stuff. With the game of Crazy 8's, the opposite is true. The point is to get rid of your cards as quickly as possible. You don't have much control over what's in your hand, and if you don't have the right cards, an almost-winning hand becomes a brimming hand, and it might as well be a beginning hand because you've got a ways to go. Jesus invites us to travel lightly. "Don't hold onto things too tightly," he says. "It's far more blessed to give than to receive." How do you handle things that seem out of control?

Dear God, help me have a Crazy 8 mindset today and give back what you have given me.
Amen.



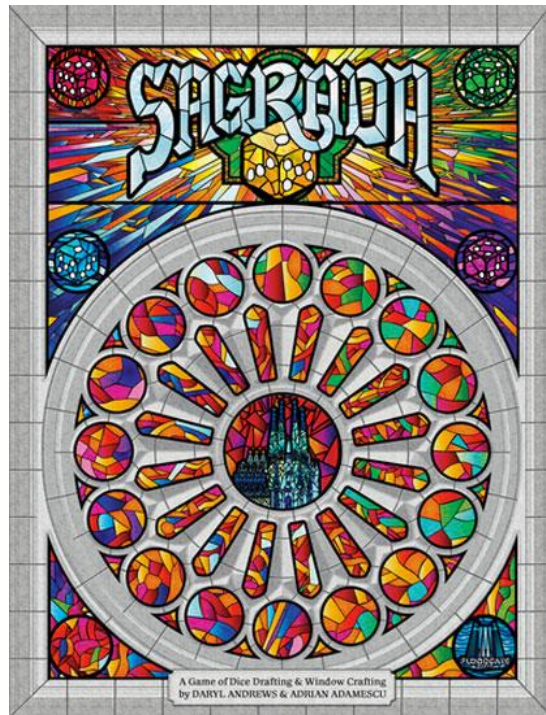
February 19

Sagrada

"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ." (1 Corinthians 12:12)

Sagrada is a game designed around the *Basilica La Sagrada Familia* in Barcelona, Spain, specifically its stained glass windows. If you think about stained glass, there are many smaller pieces fused together to make one whole window. The body of Christ works this way, too. It is made up of many pieces including all the parts of creation and all the people. The body of Christ is reflected and resembles a stained glass window. In playing Sagrada, players roll a colored dice to create a stained glass window. Every time you play, different windows are pieced together. It is like when we gather together for worship, in community, or even virtually! Different people of a variety of shapes, sizes, and color come together to make the body of Christ. What stain glass windows do you love?

Creator God, you made each of us unique, so help us to see our place in your beautiful pieced-together creation. Amen.



February 20

Sequence

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven ...He has made everything beautiful in its time." (Ecclesiastes 3)

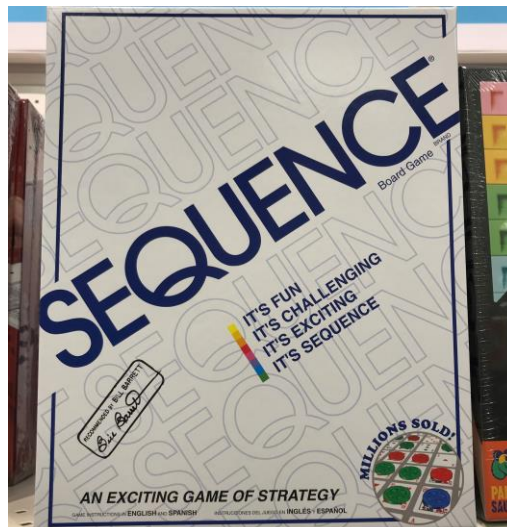
Sequence was invented by Douglas Reuter in Owatonna, Minnesota, in the 1970s. The object is to get a "sequence," or a row of connected playing chips. Players form sequences by using strategy. The word "sequence" means the following of one thing after another and helps things make sense.

As humans, we like order in our lives and to limit the chaos. *Sequence* is a board game that I enjoy because there is order and strategy to it. Unfortunately, life doesn't always happen in a sequence so that is where faith comes in.

In Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon observed, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven ...God has made *everything* beautiful in its time."

Sometimes the word "beautiful" can be understood as "appropriate" - meaning that everything is appropriate or happens in its own time. Chaos. Disorder. Things often out of sequence happen. But we need to remember that when things are out of control God is there. When did you feel close to God? What brings order to your life?

Dear God, thank you for each new day. Help me to be accepting of the chaos in my life. Amen.



February 21

Candyland

"The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel...and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass." (Revelation 21:19,21)

What do you think heaven looks like? When I was five, I thought heaven must look like and be like Candyland. Filled with huge, colorful lollipops, and giant ice cream cones, the Kingdom of Sweets was the happiest, most beautiful place I could imagine. When I grew up, my vision of heaven changed, but I still believe it is really amazing. So what does heaven look like? Golden streets? Gumdrops Passes? Everyone has their own ideas, and we'll find out someday. Meanwhile, Jesus walks along the path of life with us, and we can try our best to help bring God's heavenly Kingdom of Happiness to earth by loving and taking care of each other.

Dear Jesus, thank you for walking with me through life. Help me to make the world a better and happier place by showing kindness and love. Amen.



February 22

Uno

"No one can serve two masters." (Matthew 5:24)

Just like the game of Uno, our life has many choices that can steer us towards WILD adventures or the tendency to SKIP over opportunities. Our choices can help us DRAW TWOgether in support of one another, or it can feel like our choices put our lives in REVERSE. The problem is that we don't always set good limits and our lives can easily become overwhelmed and burdened with too much in our hands. We get busy and distracted and forget what is really important. God knows this tendency and asks us to get rid of all that extra. Stop focusing on ourselves so that we can be more focused on God's numero UNO desire for us: a life of love. How do you keep God first in your life?

God, help us get rid of all the clutter in our lives so that we can be more focused on loving others the way you have loved us first. Amen.



February 23

Dominoes

Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-39)

Did you know the dots on dominoes are called pips, which means spots? Domino sets can have up to 18 pips and some have fewer. No matter how many dominoes in your set, the rules of the game are the same – match the pattern of the domino played before you. When it’s your turn, depending on the dominoes you have, sometimes it’s easy to follow the pattern and sometimes it’s not. Following Jesus and the pattern of what he did - loving God and loving others - is sometimes easy and sometimes hard, don’t you agree? But it’s always the best move! Have you ever lined up dominoes close to each other, then touch the first one and ... chain reaction! A “domino effect” means that one small movement causes a change that causes something else to change. Why not go for a “Jesus effect” as you follow his pattern of love! What do you think will happen?

Jesus, I want to follow you by loving God and loving others like you did. Help me to learn your patterns of love by reading my Bible and talking with you in prayer. I know it won’t always be easy but teach me how to create a chain reaction of love for God, for myself, and for my family and friends. I pray this in your wonderful name. Amen.



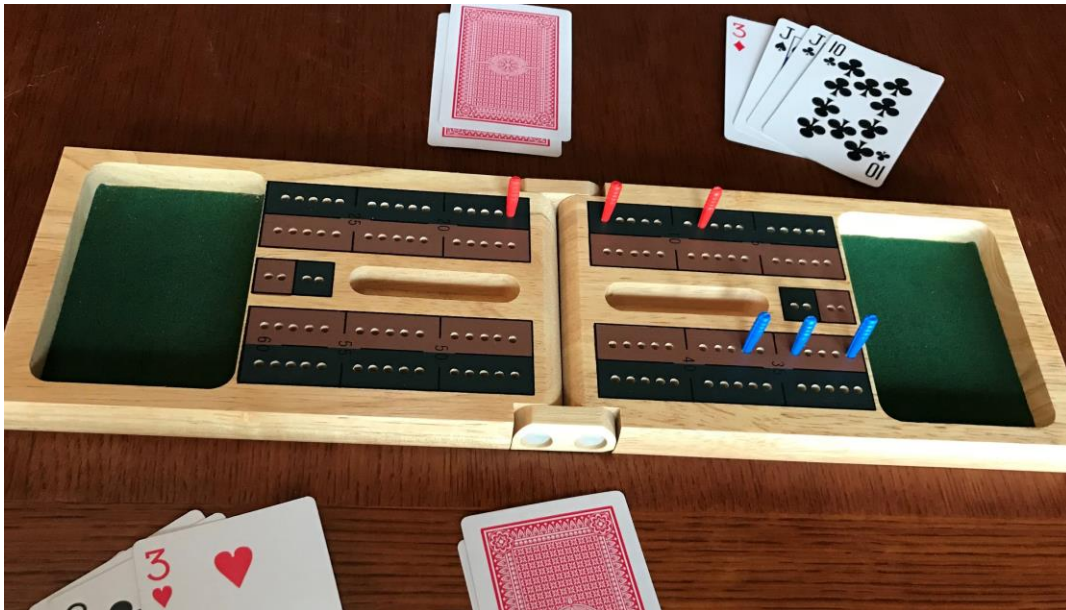
February 24

Cribbage

"A time to keep and a time to throw away." (Ecclesiastes 3:6b)

In our family, we love to play games - it is the glue that has held us together. When the children were young, it was Candyland. Now that they are adults, it is Cribbage. This card game is about what cards to keep and what cards to throw away. Now, what I have not mentioned is that we "edit" the rules of games. For us, it is Extreme Cribbage! We feel this makes games more challenging. Why? Because as we make our way through life with the twists, turns, starts, stops, hopes, plans and dreams, the skill of knowing what to keep and what to throw away will be a gift to ourselves. When have you had to toss your plans or ideas and start over?

Lord, give us the gifts of wisdom and the courage to know what things to keep and what things to throw away. Amen.



February 25

Boggle

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

(Matthew 11:28)

I like to play Boggle. The game begins by shaking a covered tray of cubes with a different letter printed on every side. Then you put the tray down on the table, wait for the cubes to settle into a grid, and set the timer for 3 minutes. Every player searches for as many words as they can find with the letters that have settled on top. It's amazing how many words you can find. Sometimes you even learn new words.

Sometimes it can feel like we're in a covered tray getting tossed about. Everything feels up in the air and none of us is sure how things will land. But in faith we trust that God holds us close. We settle into God's promised love and by God's grace we see things we hadn't seen before. Sometimes we even learn something new.

Dear God, I'm glad you're always with me. Help me to trust you so I worry less and love more. Amen.



February 26

Scrabble

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” (Mark 13:31)

One Christmas, Grandma gave our family a “Super Scrabble” game. It’s just like Scrabble, but the board is three times bigger with three times as many letter tiles. At first, we thought it would be easier to play with so many more letters to choose from. Several of us set up the board and started the game. But guess what we found out? It wasn’t easier—it was harder to think of SO MANY WORDS! We wanted to quit, but we didn’t. Instead, we asked the whole family to help, and we made lots of words together that day! We also love the words of Jesus. In fact, we try to memorize them, sort them out, and make sense of what he is saying. But our brains and hearts scramble them up! Jesus promised that his words that shape our lives will never go away from us. What words of Jesus do you love best?

Jesus, thank you for your lasting words of love and for the people who help us hear what they mean. Amen.



February 27

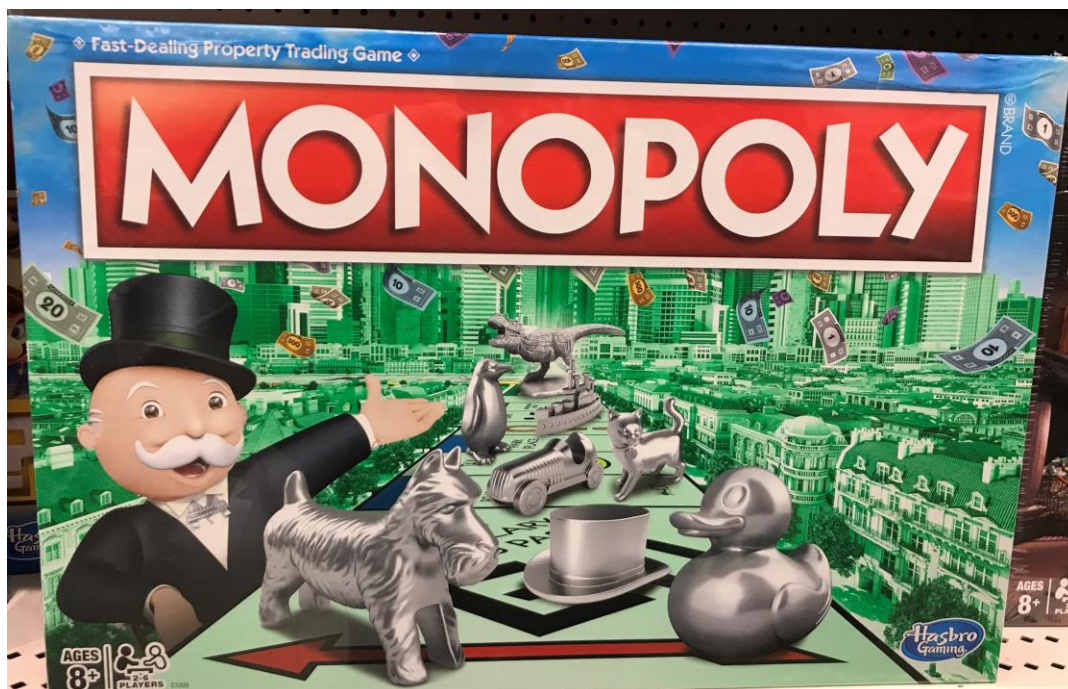
Monopoly

"Be merciful, just as your God is merciful." (Luke 6:36)

Growing up in Wisconsin, many families had a cabin "Up North." At our cabin, we had games that we did not have at home, like the great game of Monopoly. It wasn't until I was in college that I learned you needed to purchase ALL of the properties of the same color before you could add a house or hotel. Our dad never wanted any of us to go bankrupt, so we were able to put houses on at any time and all stay in the game until it was time to go to bed.

Jesus asks us to show mercy and grace in all of our relationships. It isn't always easy to do but we are called to be merciful in all we say and do. Now when we play Monopoly, we do follow the rules, but also try to show grace when making trades to help one another complete a property set! It's more fun when everyone feels like a winner. When have you felt like a winner?

Dear Jesus, remind us always that grace and mercy are a gift from you! Amen.



February 28

Dodgeball

“Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

No matter how many times the rule “only hit below the waste” gets repeated there is ALWAYS somebody who gets hit in the face. With balls flying through the air, the occasional bloody nose, and the growl-like sound of competition, Dodgeball is a game of strategic chaos. I’m a highly competitive player, and it’s easy for me to get caught up in the predatory nature of the game. And yet, when I get out, I find it to be a bit of a relief. I can sigh and wipe the sweat off my forehead. Life can feel like a blood-thirsty game of Dodgeball sometimes. When I remember to step out of it for a minute, to wipe the sweat off my face, maybe put an ice pack on my black-eye, that’s often when God shows up. God is willing to sit with me in my weariness and in my pain. When have you felt God’s presence?

Dear God, help me to sit out for a minute and to be still. Remind me that you are always near. Amen.



March 1

Animal Upon Animal

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8)*

One of my family’s favorite games is *Animal Upon Animal*. The idea is simple: stack wooden animals on top of each other, until sooner or later the whole stack falls. It’s a balancing game, full of bright colors, odd shapes, and engaging animal figures. When it all comes crashing down, we laugh, pick up the pieces, and hope for better luck next time.

I often think following Jesus is a balancing act, too. If I do everything just right I’ll win at being a good Christian. But like the game, sooner or later, it all comes crashing down. I can’t win. Good thing I don’t have to! Jesus already won for us — it’s a gift! We know we can try our best, and love our neighbors, and when we fall, Jesus is already there, smiling and helping us pick up the pieces. We don’t have to balance everything.

Loving God, you catch us when we fall and forgive us when we mess up. Thank you for the gift of Jesus! Amen.



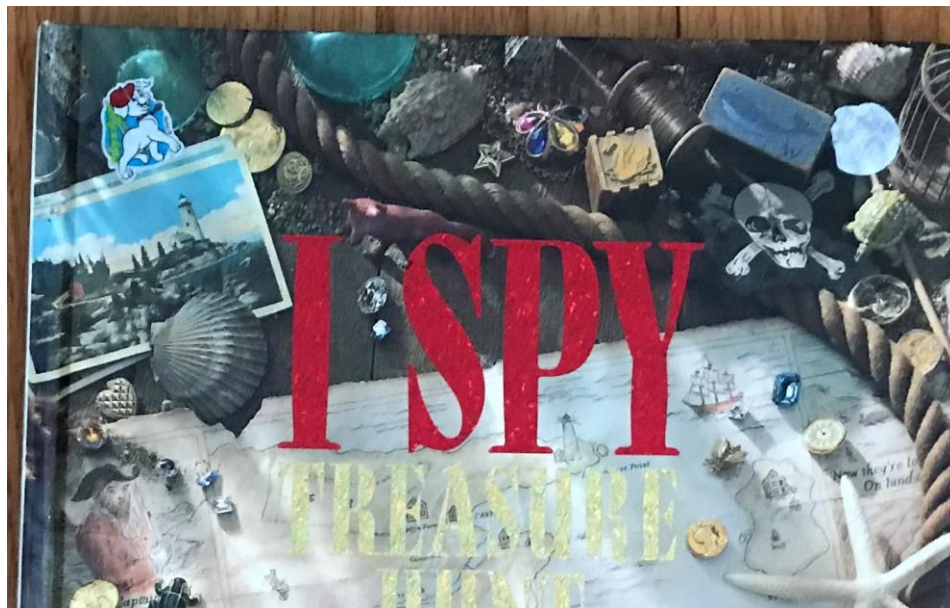
March 2

I Spy

"Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'" (Exodus 3:1-5)

God is all around us waiting to be seen! Our God makes the grass grow, the wind blow, the sun comes up, and the stars shine. Our God is everywhere, all the time. Sometimes we need help SPY what is right in front of us. God is in the muck and mud of the swamps thriving with life and in the vibrant butterflies of the air. So take out your spyglass and see how God works in this beautiful world all around you because you are always on Holy Ground! What did you spy today with your little eye?

Dear God, as we go out into your world help us spy your majesty all around us. Help our feet tickle, our eyes see, our nose smell and our body feel your presence in all things.
Help us spy your Holy Ground! Amen.



March 3

The Game of Clue

Read Mark 10:46-52 to play Jesus Clue

In the Game of Clue there is an envelope with three cards in it. The object is to figure out who was killed by whom, in what room, and with what weapon. But what does this game have to do with Jesus? Well, Jesus had all the power but seemed to use it at specific times and for specific purposes. Let's take a look at the Bible story mentioned above and use the clue questions to solve a mystery:

One day, Jesus was walking with his disciples along a road and a guy started yelling his name. The disciples basically told the guy to knock it off. Instead, he ran to Jesus. Jesus used a miracle to show his disciples (and us) about the power of faith – and that everyone is a recipient of God's love and attention.

What was the name of the man who received the miracle?

What was the miracle?

Where did this take place?

Healing God, open our eyes to see the clues of your work in our daily lives. Amen.



March 4

Trouble

“So, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.” (Matthew 36:4)

What will happen next? Will I get sick? Will school be in-person? When can I see my friends and family? When can I play sports or go to other activities? Jesus tells his friends and reminds us that we should focus on today. Try not to worry and trust God to help you figure it all out. When you play the game of Trouble, you don't know what number is going to pop up for you on your next turn. If you get a 6, you could move that piece, but if you get a 2, you could jump your opponent. But the other players take their turn and you have to wait. By the time you push that Pop-o-matic, everything might have changed. That's how it is with life. But thankfully, we have a God who is always with us, no matter what number or trouble pops up!

Thank you, God, for being with us every day, helps us focus on today's troubles. Amen.



March 5

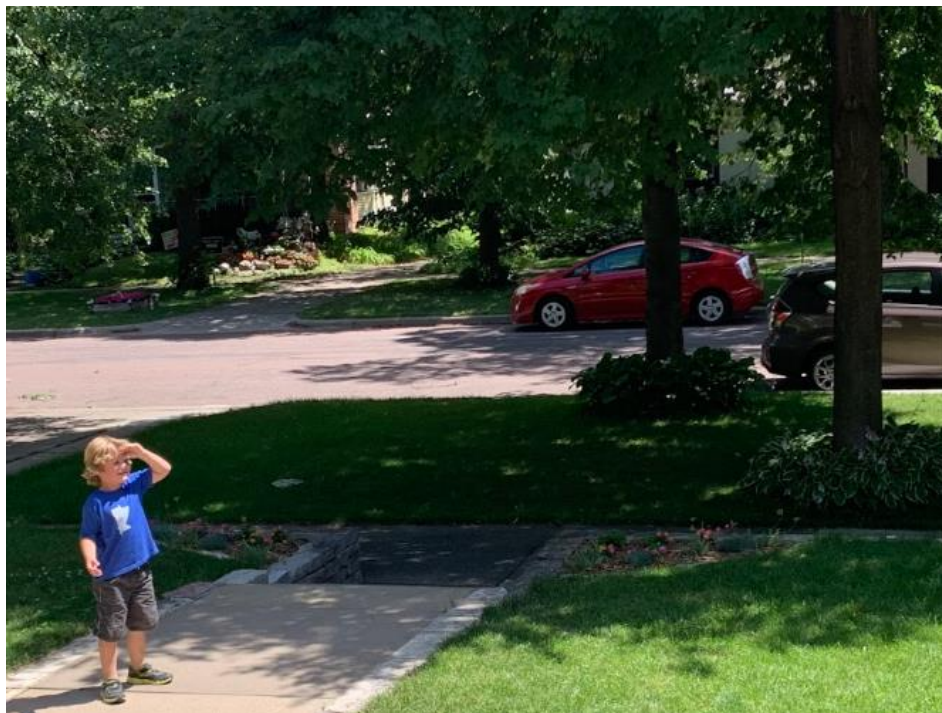
Hide and Seek

“Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened unto you.” (Matthew 7:7)

When you play hide and seek, do you want to be the hider or the seeker? Seems like it's natural for most people to want to hide. What do you hide from? Challenges, mistakes, dreams that don't seem possible? Sometimes we stuff ideas or situations back in our minds so we don't have to think about them. God sees what we are hiding and wants to help us through all circumstances both good and bad.

So what about seeking? In looking for an elephant, one wouldn't look under a bed. Know what you are seeking. Is it forgiveness, love, acceptance? Where are you looking for in life? The Bible says to ask, seek, and knock. What we are given won't always look like we imagined it would be, but God will answer our prayers. Choose to be the seeker; look for Jesus. He is not even hiding. He wants you to find him!

Dear Jesus, help me remember to seek for you every day and ask you for help when I need it. Amen.



March 6

Jenga

"Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing."
(1 Thessalonians 5:11)

"Sticks and stone will break my bones, but names will never hurt me?" I've never quite understood that phrase, because we know words are powerful and can indeed be hurtful! I'm sure many of you have played the game Jenga. Next time you play – try this. Each time you take a block out, try saying something hurtful, and each time you put the block back on top, say something nice. What will happen eventually? The blocks will tumble to the ground, right? Even though you said the same number of nice and hurtful things? That is because the hurtful things left a hole, that couldn't be filled up. Jesus wants us to build each other up and encourage one another. What is one way you can build someone up?

Dear Jesus, help me build up others with my words and actions. Amen.



March 7

Taco Cat Goat Cheese Pizza

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4)

“Taco, Cat, Goat, Cheese, Pizza” is a card game, and the object of the game is to get rid of all your cards. It’s hard to do because the game is action-packed and fast-moving. If you are the last player to slap your hands on the stack of cards then you have to pick up the whole pile. But along the way, there are action cards that make you do funny things, and it really doesn’t matter if you win because the game is so fun! That’s the point of life, too. Right? When I play this game, I am reminded that it’s not about winning! It’s about having fun, and with life, we are to enjoy it with friends and family. God wants the best for you and for me. We can’t win all the time, but just being together, playing games, and loving life brings all of us great joy! (There is a point though in the game where my gorilla impersonation is a bit much, and laughter fills the room! Yes, there is a gorilla impersonation card!) What brings you joy?

Loving God, help us find JOY in life and use the gifts you have given us for the good of all. Amen.



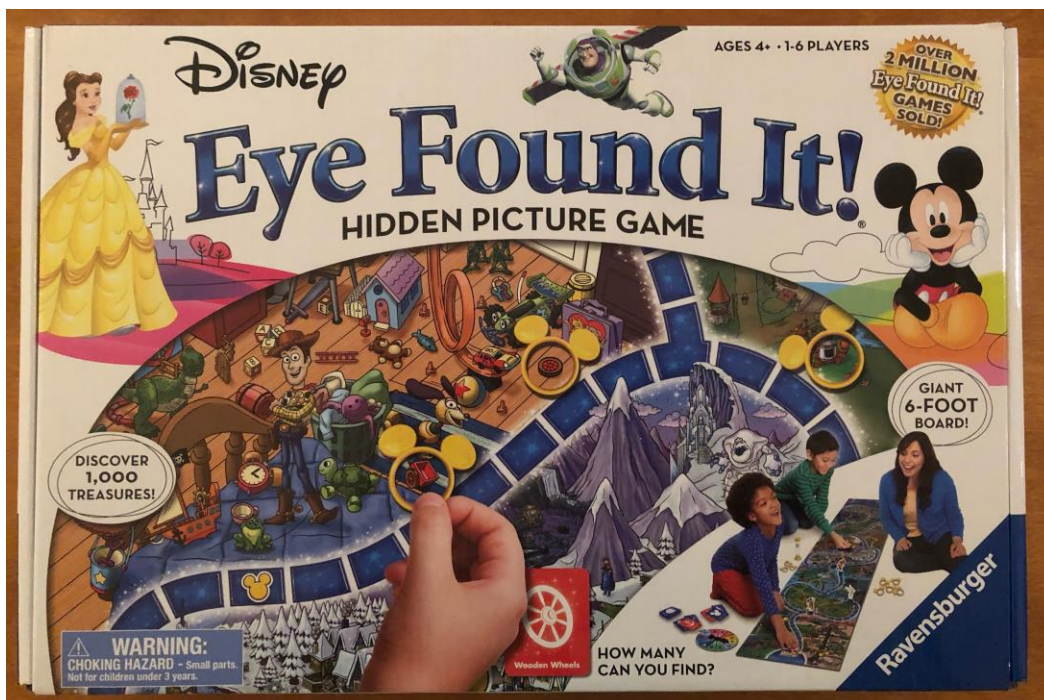
March 8

Eye Found It!

"Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits." (1 Corinthians 12:7)

In "Eye Found It!" each player moves forward according to what they spin on their turn. But if someone spins or lands on a "Search" space, then it's all hands on deck – every player must race to help find a certain type of object hidden all over the game board. Some objects are obvious and easily spotted; others are well hidden. When time's up, all found objects are counted, and all players advance that number of spaces. It's a big and busy board, and each person notices different things; so the more sets of eyes that search, the better for everyone in the game! In real life, signs of God's love can be hidden – sometimes we need to look pretty hard, and when people with different perspectives share what they find, we all notice more evidence of God's love. By helping each other see God, everyone "wins!" How can you share God's love today?

Dear God, please give us eyes to see you and a spirit of teamwork so that, together, we can find signs of your loving presence all over our world. Amen.



March 9

Twister

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:58)

The game of Twister is about relationships. In addition to being fun, this game can be used to strengthen relationships. Like Jesus, we find ourselves working with people and sometimes working around them. When playing the game, some people are accommodating and understanding while others may be spiteful and be poor sports. Jesus calls us to make the effort to work with others and to be in relationship with them. This can sometimes be the fun and easy thing to do but it can also be stressful, like Twister.. The choices that we make can cause us to fall or someone else to fall. Fortunately for us, there is always grace, and the game is what we make it. How has life gotten twisted up for you?

God, when our lives and relationships seem twisted up, may we always see your grace and you in others. Amen.



March 10

Simon Says

"Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31)

Let's play! Stand up and get ready to do what Simon says!

"Simon says...touch your toes. Simon says...touch your nose.
Simon says...reach for the sky! Stop reaching for the sky."

Did you stop reaching for the sky? But Simon didn't tell you to! Now you're out and will need a do over.

Now this time, let's play it again do what Jesus says!

"Jesus says...give yourself a hug. Jesus says...feed the hungry.
Jesus says...love your neighbor. Stop loving your neighbor."

Whoa! Did you stop loving your neighbor? Jesus didn't say stop! Jesus says to always love your neighbor. But sometimes we don't listen and do the unloving thing. But with Jesus, there's always a do over.

Dear Jesus, help us do what you say. When we don't, help us get back in the game.
Amen.



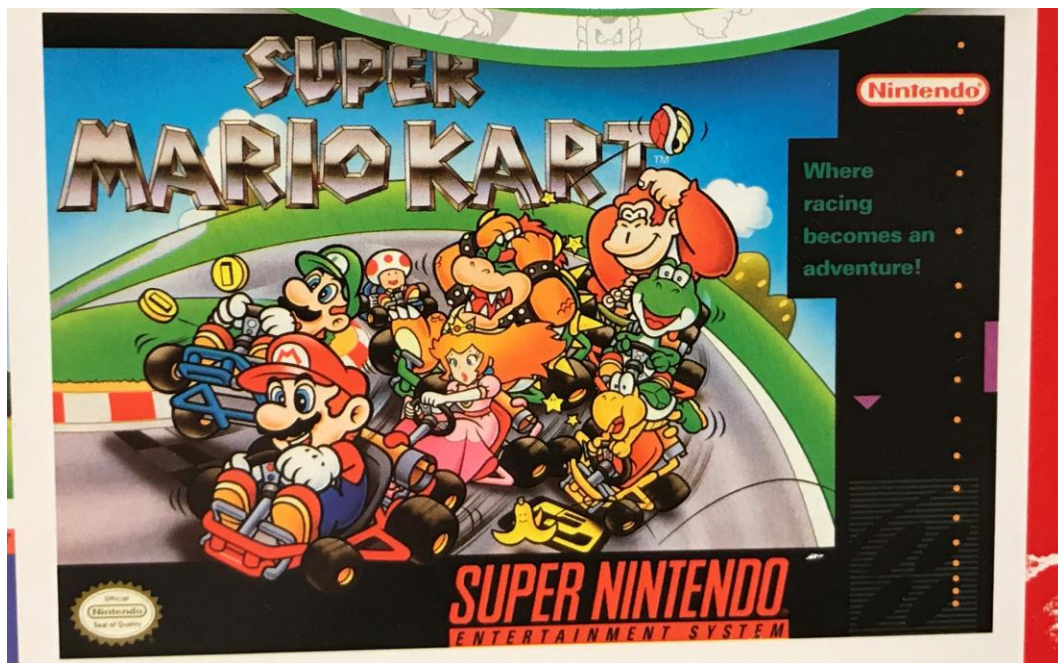
March 11

Mario Kart

"I am the way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6

I am TERRIBLE at video games. When my kids were little, we played Mario Kart. If you haven't played it, it's a racing game where you drive on a track and try to beat the other characters. I lost every time because I couldn't stay on the track! I'd run into something or drive off the track into the darkness. Sometimes we think loving God is about staying on a certain track. We get this idea that we have to be good all the time and not mess up to stay on the right track. We can't stay on the right track by ourselves. We're always going to mess up, BUT God knows this and sent Jesus to remind us of God's great love for us. We don't have to live in this world alone! There's nothing we can do to make God love us less, and nothing we can do to make God love us more. God loves us always!

Dear God, thank you for your love. Thank you for always being with us and never leaving us alone. Amen.



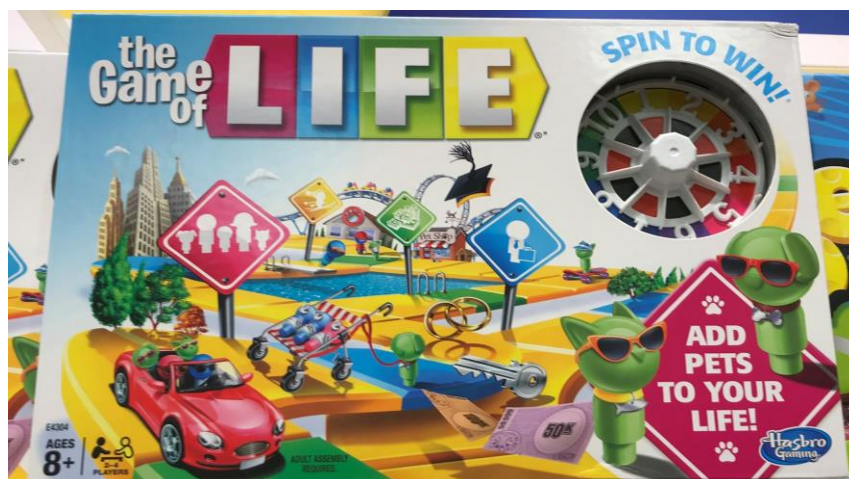
March 12

The Game of Life

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

One of my favorite games when I was young was the Game of Life. There was just something so great about trying to get all the things I wanted in my future: a big house, money, a spouse, and children. Though as the Game of Life often teaches us, we do not always get exactly what we want. As an adult, I am still waiting for God to answer some of my prayers. Yet I know that life does not always end up the way we want. God often has something better in store for us. This verse from the book of Jeremiah reminds us that God is always with us. God is journeying along the road of life with us and promises to never leave us or forsake us. We can trust in that promise. What are some things in life that you are waiting for to happen?

God, give us strength and courage as we journey through life. Help us remember that you are journeying with us. Help us to trust in the promise that you will never leave or forsake us. Amen.



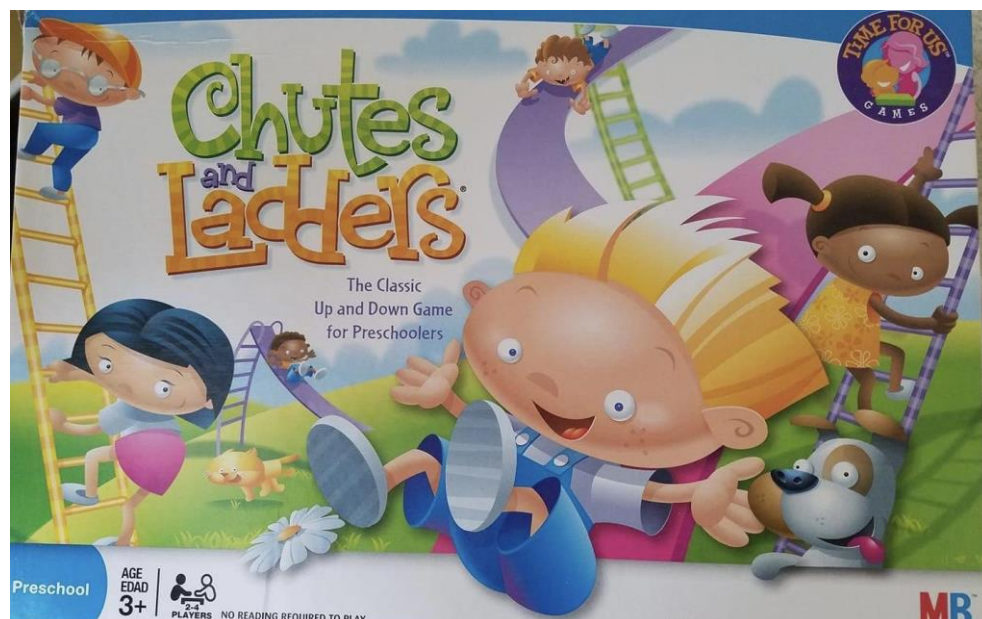
March 13

Chutes and Ladders

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight" (Proverbs 3:5)

Chutes and Ladders is a classic game where you move forward along the spaces based on the number that you roll. Sounds simple but there is a catch! You have to watch out for the chutes (or slides) because if you land on these then you end up sliding back down the path. This reminds me of my faith journey. Sometimes a rough period in my life or even just a really bad day where I'm not focused on Jesus has me feeling like I've slid back down the path. Sometimes in Chutes and Ladders, you get lucky and land at the bottom of a ladder where you get to advance up the path. There are times in our lives that sort of feel like this, too. You feel more connected to God and typically things are going pretty well in your life. It's important to remember that we are called to love God and not get frustrated when we land on a chute. Afterall, we all make it to the finish line. Did you feel like today was full of chutes or ladders?

Heavenly Father, through life's ups and downs help us to remember that you are always with us. Amen.



March 14

Hopscotch

“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassion never fails. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Following Jesus isn’t always easy or graceful, just like playing a good old-fashioned game of Hopscotch. Sometimes we find our footing steady and controlled, like when we are able to land on both feet or we find a good rhythm. We stay the course, going from one round to the next. We make it to “10” and return successfully. It appears to be straightforward with little challenge. But sometimes it gets messy. We lose focus, lose our balance, and fall off the path we are trying to follow. Challenges are everywhere! Thankfully, in both hopscotch and life we are allowed to learn from our experiences and get up and try again. Each new learning or experience prepares us for what is to come. We aren’t expected to be perfect and get it right every time. God’s mercies are new every morning. What is one new thing you did today?

Awesome God, we thank you for your faithfulness and second chances! Amen.



March 15

Ticket to Ride

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." (Romans 8:14)

"Ticket to Ride" is a game that reminds me of following God. In the game, you build paths of little train cars from one city on the map of the United States to another city. For example, you get 21 points if you can strategically make your way from Seattle to Boston. And guess what? There are loads and loads of ways to get from Seattle to Boston! You can go through Vancouver or Bozeman or Detroit on your way, but the route doesn't matter as much as the destination. This reminds me of following God because God doesn't give us one narrow path in life. Instead, God gives us the Holy Spirit and tells us that God is with us wherever we go! How cool is that? Our "ticket to ride" in God's kingdom is the promise we receive in our baptism that God is always with us. How did you feel God's presence today?

Dear God, thank you for being with me no matter what winding and twisty path my life takes. Amen.



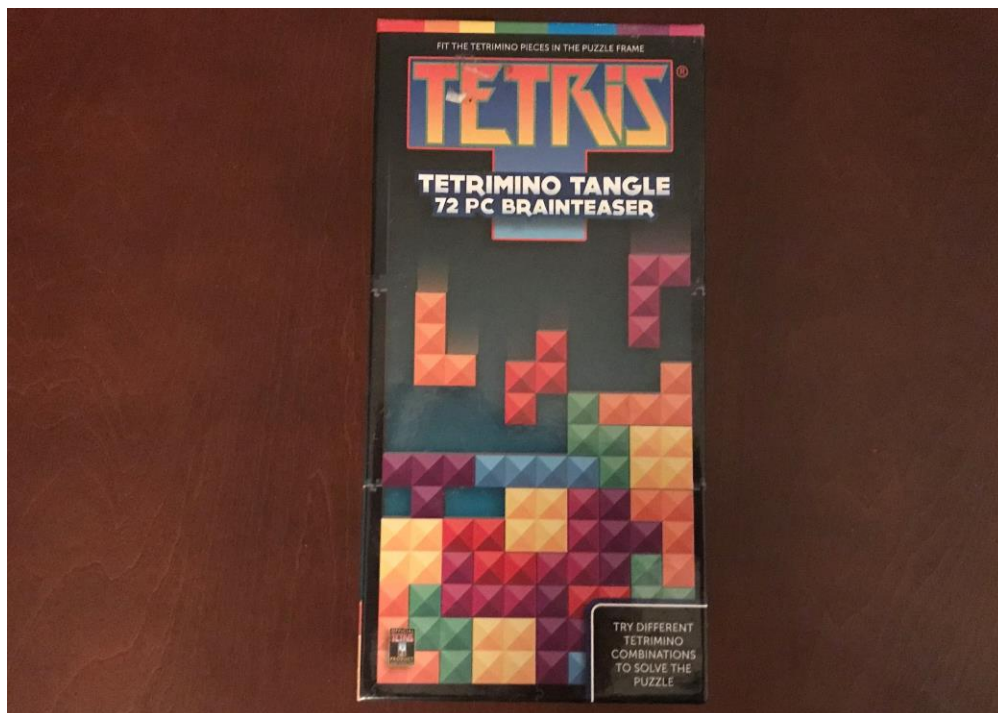
March 16

Tetris

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to [God’s] purpose” (Romans 8:28).

The goal of the video game, Tetris, is to make pieces fit together, like a puzzle—except they move so quickly you barely have time to think! Sometimes, when a piece doesn’t land the way I want, I get frustrated and anxious. I wonder if I will lose? I wonder if I’m good enough? I have these moments in my life beyond the game, too—like when I don’t do well on a test, or I get in a fight with my friend. It helps me to remember that, because of Jesus, we always win. In Jesus’ eyes, I am loved, and I am enough! Even when the pieces don’t land right, God works them all together for good anyway. God can bring good from anything—even my bad game. Yay, God!

Dear God, when things don’t go right, help me to remember that you work the pieces together for good. Amen.



March 17

Guess Who?

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me." (Psalm 139:1)

When my now adult children were young, one of their favorite board games was "Guess Who?" If you are not familiar with the game, essentially, it's a little like the game "20 Questions" - asking questions to narrow down you guess as to who the "person" on your opponent's card might be.

The good news is that God knows who we are! God knows every hair on our heads, every feeling in our hearts, and God sent Jesus to show us that most importantly, who we are! We are God's own beloved child. God wants us to know God's desire for love and wholeness for the entire world. We know who God is through Jesus, who came to be God's love in the world. We now can show others this love too. No need to guess!

God of life, thank you for knowing and loving us. Amen.



March 18

The Game of Things

"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13)

While hanging out with his disciples, Jesus seemed to be playing The Game of THINGS – the game where you draw a card with a question like "Things that could use a good cleaning" or "Things you would do if you had superhuman powers." Everyone writes down their answer and you figure out who said what. So what's the question on Jesus' game card? "Who are the THINGS that people say the Son of Man is?"

The answers that came in included John the Baptist, and Elijah, or possibly Jeremiah, or just a prophet. One last entry came from Simon Peter. His answer: Messiah, Son of the living God. Ding! Ding! And with that, Jesus let him know that God had revealed that to Peter and he had the winning answer! Who do you say Jesus is?

Jesus, you are many things but most importantly you are the Messiah! Amen.



March 19

Spot It

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27)

“Spot It” is a fast-paced card game. Each circular card has eight images, and each card has one image in common with all the other cards. Players earn points by being the first to spot a common image. Whenever I play Spot It, our group is transformed by joy! We laugh at how people express themselves when they spot the common image. We joke as we decide who spotted the image first. We form friendships. Can you find common images between the three cards?

God, when we are looking for you in this world help us to “spot it.” Amen.



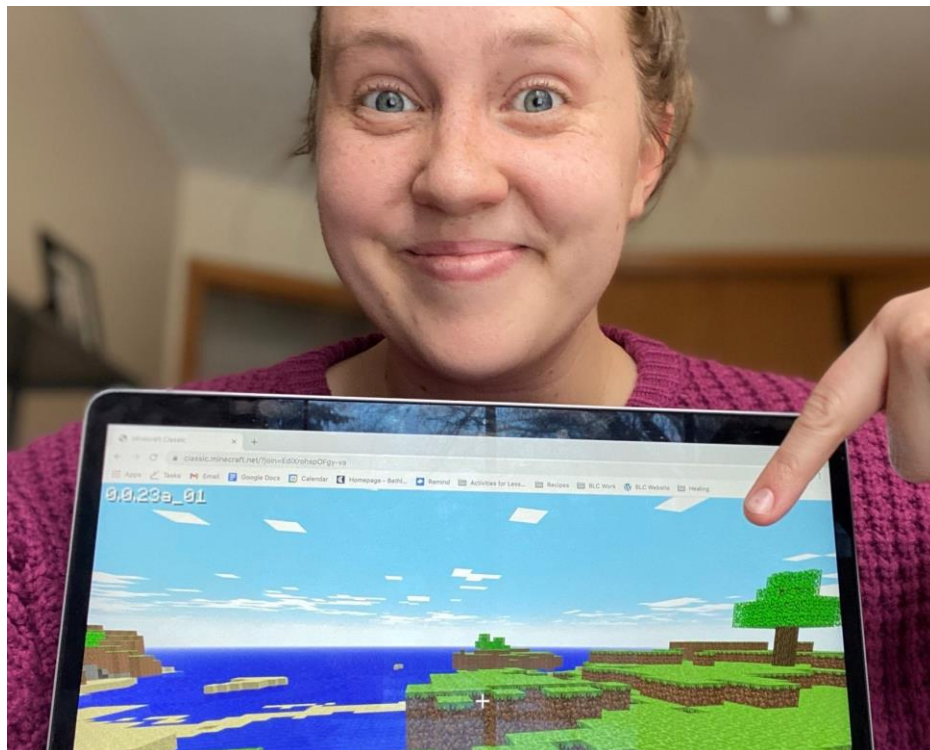
March 20

Minecraft

“Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored...” (Mark 8:25)

Minecraft is a game where you create and explore your own world. It's where your imagination can be brought to life. Jesus imagined a new world that could be brought to life through each of us. Just as in Minecraft, Jesus invites us to join that process by using our imaginations to make the world a loving place. In Minecraft, when you create something that you don't get right, you can try again. When Jesus healed a blind man at Bethsaida, he didn't get it right the first time. *“Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored...”* Both Jesus and Minecraft invite us to give things a try even when we aren't sure the outcome. How can you use your imagination today to share God's love?

God of love, we ask for your guidance and support as we use our imagination to create a new world together. Amen.



March 21

Ravine

"Though weeping and sorrow last for the night, joy comes with the morning." (Psalm 30:5)

My family spent much of winter break playing a cooperative card game called Ravine. The game begins by imagining a plane crash in which we are the sole survivors. Players have a boarding pass that describes one item they salvaged from the plane - something useful they can share when the going gets rough. Each night presents a challenge to our collective health and survival: animal attacks and harsh weather. In the morning, we check in with each other to see who needs sustenance or rest. We decide who is able to risk their health to forage on behalf of the group. Those who draw forage cards come back with supplies we can share: food, wood, fibers, and other supplies we can use to restore health. This game means we spend a lot of time building a strategy together, practicing empathy for our teammates, and stepping up when others need us. We do our best to keep the faith until the rescue card is drawn. The nights can be hard and long, but morning always comes and with it, a chance to give thanks and check in with each other. Who do you need to check in with today?

God, help us check in with each other after hard and sad things happen so we can remember that joy awaits. Amen.



March 22

Settlers of Catan

"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds."
(Hebrews 10:24)

At times, the game "Settlers of Catan" reminds me more of what it means to turn away from God. The game, like the world, pulls us into thinking just about ourselves. But yet, God seeps into the spaces we don't expect like when a player trades all their best resources to another player or when everyone stops the game to help a player understand why a play is good or bad. This is how God seeps into our daily lives, too like when neighbors share what they have with one another, when parents take the time to explain to their children about decisions they make, or when we just do daily life together. We were never meant to be alone in life; we are made for community. We are settlers living life on the land doing the best we can. Where did your family come from and settle down?

Hey God, it's me. Today I want to pray for my family and friends. Also that you help us to remember that it is important to work together. We need one another just like we need you, Amen



March 23

Connect 4

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13:34)

In order to win Connect 4, you have to connect 4 game pieces of your own color in a row. They have to connect across, up and down, or diagonally. As followers of Jesus, we are called to connect with him and with our neighbor. When Jesus shared his last meal with his first followers, when the meal was finished, he got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and washed his disciples' feet. No one expected this as it was a job not usually done by someone as respected as Jesus. But Jesus said he washed his disciples' feet as an example. We can connect with Jesus and with our neighbor through loving service. Jesus also gave a new commandment that we should love one another as he loves us. As followers of Jesus, we connect with him when we love and serve others in Jesus' name. How do you "connect" with your neighbor?

Jesus, help us follow you by loving and serving others in your name. Amen.



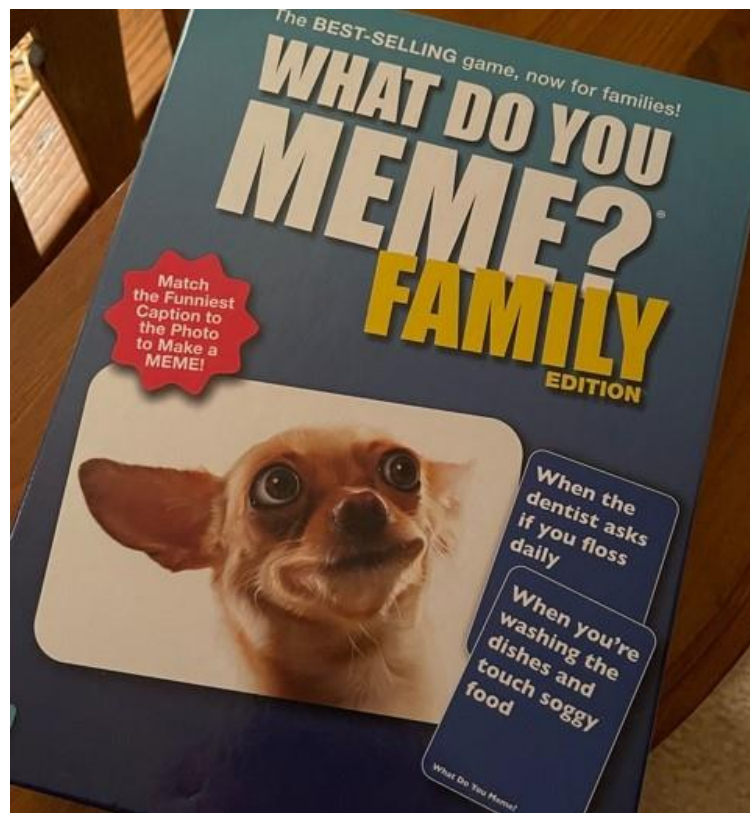
March 24

What Do You Meme?

"Don't jump to conclusions – there may be a perfectly good explanation for what you just saw."
(Proverbs 25:8)

Looking at a funny picture and choosing the funniest saying to go with it. That's the basic part of this game's appeal. It is impossible to know the origin of the pictures used in the game. Their "true" meanings are intentionally unknown. Kids of all ages choose a phrase of what they think makes the picture have the funniest "meaning" so they can win. There are more true meanings behind the pictures than those playing will ever know. This is true with reading God's word as well. It is open for interpretation and will always have different meanings to different people. Life experiences, moods, emotions, age, and education have an impact. What does it mean? What do you meme?

Gentle God, we are so thankful that you allow us the freedom to interpret your word and find the meaning within it. Amen.



March 25

Barrel of Monkeys

"Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."
(1 Corinthians 13:13)

What's more fun than a barrel of monkeys? This game takes faith and hope. With the first monkey, pick up the others by linking their arms together, touching only the first monkey until all unite. If the chain of monkeys breaks, the game starts over. Life can be like this. We start something in faith and hope and then things might fall apart. We pick ourselves up and start over. Sometimes, everything works out. What a good feeling that is! In life, we have the opportunity to be that first person, linking our arms with others, lifting them up and encouraging them with love. God gives us faith, hope, and love for ourselves and enough to share with others.

Joyful Savior, give us faith and hope to connect others with your love. Amen.



March 26

Perfection

“As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.” (Psalms 18:30)

The game Perfection is a race to get everything in its right place before time runs out. All the pieces are ejected if you don’t make it. It is human for us to strive to be perfect or flawless. We work hard to be the best at everything we do – work, school, sports, or home. It is overwhelming to strive for perfection. The pressure comes from different places: within us, parents, colleagues, teachers, friends, coaches, or mentors. Perfection reminds me of Jesus because we can get caught up in the world then something “blows up” and brings us back to Jesus who forgives and renews us. He gives us as many do overs as we need. The do-overs never end like his love for us never ends. The only perfection we truly find is Jesus. We are made perfect through God’s gift of forgiveness, love, and grace. What happens when things don’t go perfectly to plan? How do you handle it?

Dear God, thanks for loving us so perfectly that you always forgive us when we mess up.
Amen.



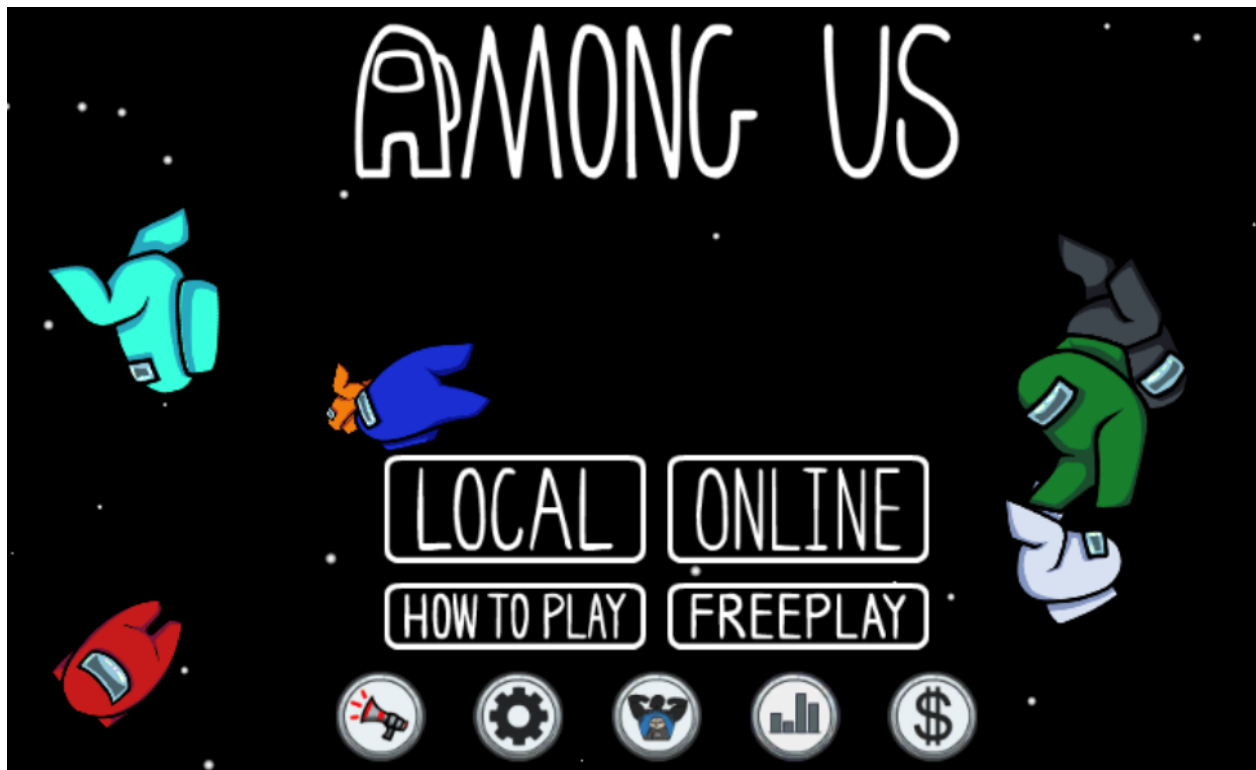
March 27

Among Us

“Keep us from sinning when we are tempted. Save us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:13)

Among Us is an online game where you work together with your crewmates to prepare your spaceship for departure. But watch out! There is an imposter or two on your ship, just waiting for a chance to destroy your crew, one person at a time. When you are a follower of Jesus, you also need to “watch out!” In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus reminds us what to watch out for as he tells us to ask God to help us watch out for the people, events, and situations that might cause us to sin, because sin is Among Us. How do you watch out for evil and sin? How do you avoid it? Is that possible?

Dear God, help us to watch out for evil in our lives, forgive us when we sin, and praise and thanks to you for your everlasting love for us. Amen.



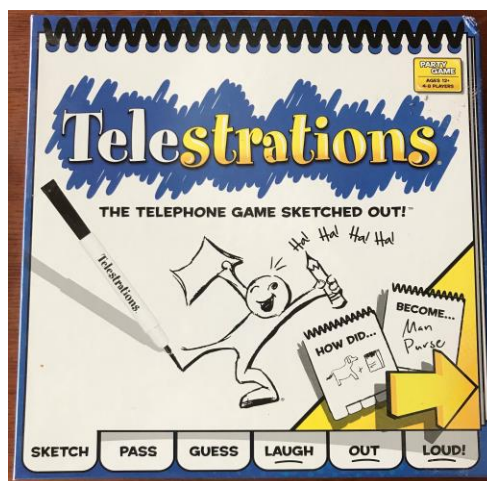
March 28

Telestrations

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—[God’s] eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20)

Telestrations® is like the telephone game with pictures. Each person starts with a prompt, and then the player has to write or draw and pass on their booklet for the next person to figure out. If we were playing this game following the pages of the Bible, the prompt on Page 1 would be to draw something like “Image-bearer of God.” God’s qualities are clear, so, the first drawing would be us without sin, loving, slow to anger, gracious, holy, righteous, and faithful. But as we know, the story goes downhill from there as sin enters the world. In the pages to follow, we’d resemble some God, but the blemishes of sin would start to line our faces until we totally give ourselves to the ways of the world and we don’t resemble God at all anymore. Instead, the drawings would be a mess of a person looking nothing like the start. We need the Holy Spirit working in us, guiding us, and making us holy daily. We need Jesus’ death and resurrection to erase the messiness and have us looking like God again. How do you draw out the best in yourself to serve others?

Jesus, thank you for coming into our lives to make us look like God again. Amen.



March 29

Trivial Pursuit

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

(Philippians 4:8-9)

Why does Clark Kent dash into telephone booths? What unlikely part of its body does a starfish breathe with? These are real Trivia Pursuit questions! I loved playing Trivial Pursuit with my family after holiday dinners; it was fun to think through all the questions and to win from what we knew or guessed. Playing together gave us purpose together. It's all the things the Apostle Paul reminds us to focus on: we learned something new through the game, it was lovely to be together, we admired each other's gifts in answering strange and bizarre questions, and most importantly, God was with us! How might you be in "pursuit" of God's love today?

Loving God, please help us concentrate on the important gifts you give us, and those things you want us doing, make it so. Amen.



March 30

Centipede

No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

The video game, Centipede, is designed to overwhelm the player. As the centipede runs back and forth across the screen, or as the spiders bounce in from the sides, or as the fleas bomb from above, a player's reflexes and focus are important. It can feel like challenges are coming from every direction. Eventually, the centipede, the spiders, the fleas are moving too quickly to manage, and the game is over. There are times when it feels like responsibilities, relationships, and circumstances are overwhelming. Life can feel out of control, and we are so focused on the challenges that we forget that we are not alone in facing them. However, Jesus joins us in those struggles. Jesus joins us in the chaos with a simple invitation: *"I will give you rest...I will share your burdens."* As Paul wrote in 1Corinthians, *"[God] will not let you be tested beyond your strength."* We are never alone, and Christ joins you with gifts of peace, comfort, and love that renew our spirits for the next challenge. What might be your next challenge to take on in life?

Loving God, thank you for meeting us when we feel overwhelmed and calming our spirits with your peace. Amen.



March 31

Puzzles

Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." (-John 18:4-5a)

There once was a Charlie Brown Christmas puzzle with all its pieces spread out on a table in a small hallway nook. Anyone passing through the church building could pause and add a piece or two. A group of youth managed to put most of it together, but there were several hard spots left unsolved. I left it there well into February, in hopes that someone would finish it! Day after day, I picked up pieces that had been knocked to the floor. As I began to find pieces that had wandered farther and farther away into mysterious corners of the building, I finally gave up, sadly separated the pieces and put the puzzle back in its box. Then the covid virus came! My mom took up puzzles as her pandemic pastime, assembling thousands of challenging pieces almost weekly! I lent her that Charlie Brown Christmas puzzle, but warned that I was absolutely certain there would be missing parts. I was wrong! I was in disbelief! She said it was the most difficult puzzle she had ever assembled, with each piece being almost identical in shape, but she did it! Every piece was there, and every piece finally fell into place. Today is Wednesday of Holy Week and it sure feels like everything is falling apart and we are frantically looking for the missing pieces. Last Sunday, we heard the story of people celebrating Jesus as King with shouts of "Hosanna!" and now he begins to say good-bye as power hungry rulers plot his death. Despite our disbelief, each piece of the story of Jesus' final days fits together to form God's finished puzzle. We must trust that God holds all the pieces and will always fit them together. It's God's great surprise! Love wins! Hope remains! Jesus lives!

Dear God, thank you for making all the pieces fall into place. Thank you for surprising us. Amen.



Invitation to Holy Days
Join us for worship online:

Maundy Thursday, April 1 at 7 pm
Celebration of First Communion Families

Good Friday, April 2 at 7 pm
Kid's Good Friday Worship at 10 am

Saturday, April 3, 10-12 noon
Egg Hunt
Must register online for a time slot at either campus.

Easter Sunday, April 4 at 10:15 am
Sunrise Service at 6 am

Thank you to all the hearts and hands that contributed to GAME ON! Lenten Devotions.

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