

JAN/FEB 2026

# CROSSROADS

The Official Newsletter of Cross of Christ Lutheran Church

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## NOTE FROM THE OFFICE:

These deep winter months, replete with snow days, can feel very long and often isolating. I'm certainly relearning the essentiality of faith in and through stillness during this season. Grateful as always to be working here in such a warm-hearted, spiritual space.

With love,

**Erin Shea**

**Office Assistant**

**Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 - 4:30**



**Cross of Christ Lutheran Church**  
Guiding our journey of faith.

# PASTOR'S COLUMN

“I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—***self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love***—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus’ death and resurrection.”

These words are part of the Ash Wednesday service, and I think they sum up how we are being called during this time of Lent. Lutherans haven’t always focused on this aspect of Lent, but I find great meaning in this practice of intentional sacrifice and prayer and the ways in which we can feel closer to God through this season. Though Jesus cautions us in the Gospel of Matthew not to be demonstrative with our piety and prayers, I do wish to share with you all what my practice will be and why, in the hopes that you all might find some encouragement in your own Lenten journeys.

This year, after much reflection, I have decided that my focus would be a fast on complaining. Between the unrest in the world, the uncertainty with our neighbors who are in need of food, shelter, and resources, and the frenetic pace of our days and lives, I have found that I complain about things entirely too much. When people cut me off in traffic. When technology isn’t cooperating. When red tape seems too thick to cut with a chainsaw (particularly at banks!)

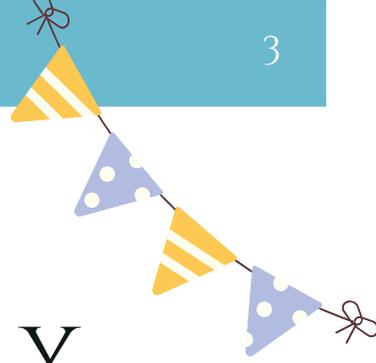
Now, we do know that we can feel some relief when we vent our frustrations to a good listener - and this is a good thing - as long as we remember to close that vent when we are done. Because it can be all too easy to keep that vent open, and to constantly allow our frustrations to be voiced in the form of complaints and frustrations. When complaining becomes a regular habit, we can just become downright miserable. We can forget to find joy. We can forget to express thanks to God for our many blessings. We can even forget how to recognize some of those blessings.

For me, it is important to practice the pause, think before I speak, and decide if what I am about to complain about is really necessary. Is this thing really so bad? Do others have it much worse? Is it something that my complaining will help? So I will endeavor to pause when I’m about to complain, think critically if my complaint will be helpful, pray for discernment if there is something I can actually do to help remedy the situation, and find something to voice my gratitude about.

Lord, bless us throughout these forty days, in all the ways in which we will dedicate ourselves to turning our hearts to God and to God’s ways, and away from all the things in the world that try to drive a wedge between ourselves and God. Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word. Amen.

~Pastor Sam

# CELEBRATING KAY LAROSA'S 94TH BIRTHDAY



Photos by Lisa R.

# THROWBACK PHOTO!

Blessing of Animals  
October 2017



***I would like to share a daily tradition from my community that includes the verse of the day, a reflection, and then community prayer petitions (which are for community only). These are just a few recent examples, and ends with February 1st.***

### **VERSE**

*“We are being transformed... from one degree of glory to another.” —  
2 Corinthians 3:18*

### **Reflection:**

Transformation rarely happens all at once. More as a new month that places us all in the season of Lent, God works in moments — small glimpses of truth, unexpected grace, sacred conversations, flashes of clarity. Today we look with gratitude at the moments — large or small — that have changed us, healed us, softened us, and made us braver.

### **VERSE**

*“Jesus did this, the first of his signs... and revealed his glory.” — John 2:11*

### **Reflection:**

Jesus’ first miracle wasn’t dramatic or public — it was an act of quiet generosity at a celebration on the brink of embarrassment. Christ reveals glory not through spectacle, but through abundance, hospitality, and joy. This is God’s way: meeting needs before they are spoken, restoring joy where it is fading, bringing abundance where there is lack.

### **VERSE**

*“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.” — Isaiah 43:1*

### **Reflection:**

Before we do anything for God, God declares something about us: You belong. You are precious. You are mine. This is the grounding truth of baptism — a holy naming that shapes every act of ministry, every moment of service, and every step of servant leadership.



**VERSE**

*“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit... was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.” — Luke 4:1*

**Reflection:**

God’s leading does not always take us to easy places. Sometimes the Spirit leads us into wilderness — seasons of uncertainty, discernment, waiting, refining.

Wilderness is not punishment; it is preparation. It deepens faith, clarifies identity, and teaches resilience. We trust that the same Spirit who leads us *into* wilderness will lead us *through* it.

**A NEW MONTH! (From the Deaconess Community):**

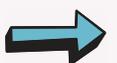
*February* carries us through shifting seasons of the church year—ordinary days, holy recognition, dazzling glory, and the quiet truth of ashes. Yet beneath each turn of the calendar, one promise remains steady: we are marked by love. Before we are named by the world, before we succeed or fail, before we repent or begin again, God has already claimed us. This month’s prayers invite us to rest in that truth—to live honestly, humbly, and courageously as people whose deepest identity is belovedness.

**Verse**

*“I have called you by name, you are mine.” -Isaiah 43:1*

**Reflection**

Before we take our first step into this month, God speaks our name. Not as a demand, but as a promise. We belong—not because we have earned it, but because love has claimed us.



## **ONE LAST THING!**

Let me share a word from Bishop Ken Untener (1937-2004)  
Catholic Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan:

**“Yes, this church is made up of imperfect, sinful, yet hopeful people. It’s not the only place Jesus said he would ever be. It’s the only place he said he’d always be.”**

**Love has claimed us!**

**With prayer, love, faith and justice,**

Sister Carol, Benji, and all my dog angels



# ON STEWARDSHIP



When we think of Stewardship, we automatically think of money; let's face it, there is never enough to go around. But as I thought of our little church, I found that we give so much to our church and our community besides monetary needs. Small but mighty, as Tish once said to me. Our Pastor Sam is a dynamo! She serves our church, filled in as our administrative assistant before our wonderful Erin arrived on the scene. Pastor visits our shut-ins and goes out into the community, leads Bible study and seasonal services, and even directs the Christmas pageants and does it all with calm, cool aplomb.

We have members directing a complete room makeover, maintenance needs for the church, serving the community with food insecurity needs, singing in the choir, helping with the weekly service, leading a service, serving on altar care, serving refreshments, welcoming new faces, making prayerful decisions for the church, and much more than I can list here.

God continually answers our prayers and guides our flock of believers. I believe we forget sometimes that it's all in His hands anyway. My family is so thankful for our Cross of Christ family.

I think Erma Bombeck said it best: "When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left and could say, 'I used everything You gave me.'"

Submitted by Lisa Rapisarda

## **This Time of Reflections**

With Pastor's Sunday sermon and discussion at our EcoSpirituality Meeting this month the word "REFLECTION" is much in my thoughts. What does it mean in our spiritual lives, our daily lives? Thinking back, do we find the answers we seek? Matthew 4:1 tells of Jesus spending 40 days alone in the wilderness—he was tempted, tested, challenged. I reflect upon his courage, strength, hardships he faced. Who among us has never felt a mountain of challenges, or the valley of despair, or found hope where we may have least expected. I think of the song "I Believe." Matthew 26:36-46 tells of Jesus going to the Garden to pray. God many times said Jesus was his son in whom he was well pleased. Yet people still failed to trust—but why. Then the Passion of Jesus—a week of triumph, and wonder; cruelty and tragedy; and salvation. God sent Jesus to come to know us (beyond a name or face, but our hearts and our lives)--ultimately bring salvation to a seemingly undeserving world. Genesis tells God created all of life and said it was good. Through it all God still cared, the strong light of good still shone brighter than darkness and tragedy. When I was a teenager, I found a thinking place in the farmer's field. I called it "my rock." Tiger (our miniature Doberman) came with me—if I got lost, I knew she would find the way home, and she would not let me step in a hole or on a reptile. I was not as brave as Jesus. I am human, we are human. I wondered how Jesus felt when alone, but he knew God and he knew we needed to know God. I asked God a lot of questions sitting there, pondered dilemmas, next steps in life's journey. I sang songs. I could touch the immensity and beauty of creation. Viewing the mountains in the distance, I realized there the vastness of the world and was thankful for this one small safe place. I saw a butterfly. I touched the wandering nearby wild white rose--yet upon that outreach a thorn pierced my hand forcing me to keep a distance—the beauty and the warning; and the scent of cut hay drying in the sun added relief and calm in a chaotic world. Have you found that special place where you can breathe, and you can be you; where you are free to speak and the overwhelming din of the world is turned off? It is okay there to cry the tears of loss or hurt--the sunlight shines them away. Jesus walked those steps through the week of Passion from respect and honor, to uncertainty, to disrespect, to pain. I wondered about that trial--it was decided before Jesus was in court, the pain of Holy Friday. Then what many thought was the end of it all. Even in such pain, Jesus cared about us and talked to God.

Each Holy Friday in my hometown, every business closed at noon, and every afternoon it rained--raindrops washing away sin, pain, sadness; a bridge from darkness to the light of salvation--the message that death did not win, Jesus was alive. It is at "my rock" where I confronted fears and uncertainty, and found peace and calm. Do you feel that too? I miss "my rock"--now replaced by a too large house. "My rock" was a gift from God to walk closer, to feel/see/hear more, a saving place, a treasure of memories. I reflect now on where the path I have walked has brought me, and where and who I am today because of the experiences at "my rock." I talk to God in my gardens and treasure each butterfly. We all need a "my rock." I yearn for open churches where we can pray during any day. Thanks to God for all of the "my rocks" and for family/friends who become our rocks. Most of all I pray for all to find the words of Jesus sent by God to be forever rocks in our journey. Jesus showed us how. Where is your thinking rock? *Psalm 25:4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me.*

In fourth grade, our assignment was to write a poem. I think of these words as I reflect and walk the path in life. It was a challenge, a struggle of many hours. Then, I prayed--this is what I wrote...

*Master, Mighty let me be as  
Thou wouldst have me be;  
Let me do as right I should  
What thou hast mapped for me...*



*Sharon L. Samoska, 02-18-26*

# NEWS + NOTES

**Care Card Ministry:** First Thessalonians 5:11: “Therefore encourage one another and build up each other...” Cards sent: December 2025: 46 (includes Christmas mailing); January 2026: 14. Our outreach is much appreciated. **Good News:** Two people sent us thanks for this outreach—cards bring joy, hope, connection, and one person told us we are the only people who care. Thanks to Nadia, our health care checker, and to each of our volunteers. A few minutes shared makes every day better. 😊



**GWIM:** Deuteronomy 15:11: “I, therefore, command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor & needy neighbor in our land.’” Barbara Dublin thanks us for our continuing donations. We thank GWIM for their dedication to those in need in our community. **Statistics:** Data for December 2025 and January 2026--not yet available. **Donations to Food Pantry:** December 2025—59; January 2026—none. **Special Food Pantry needs:** Alfredo sauce, chili powder, boxed mashed potatoes, and garlic powder.

**Learning Committee--For Children:** Materials (booklets and crafts) for Lent have arrived for toddlers through teenagers. If you would like one for your child or grandchild, contact Sharon. Pollinator/Memory Garden areas: When the mounds of snow disappear, children will have the opportunity to add painted faith rocks to our garden, help with some planting plans, and sharing some surprises with our members. **Good News: Children joining in worship.** Mark 10:14-16: “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.”

**Social Advocacy:** “We are called to be a voice and spirit for the voiceless.”

(We remember Linda Leigh especially in this month of reflection for her grace, insight, and her deep faith and devotion. **Good News—OPPORTUNITY IS**

**YOURS TO SHARE IN OUTREACH of a thankful moment---send me a note to share here or to put on our bulletin board)** God has given us precious gifts to share through our

committee ranging from smiles to those we meet, responding to advocacy alerts from our ELCA, reaching out to our members, supporting Creation Care and God’s words of unity and hope shared at meetings I attend. Matthew 7:12 “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you...”

**Webinars and zoom meetings:** One of my favorites is EcoSpirituality zoom meeting the second Sunday of the month at 7 p.m., where we explore the connections we share with our environment. In programs I attend – NE Synod Green Team, Lutherans



*Restoring Creation, Yale environmental programs, and programs by Lisa Brenskelle (LRC member and a leader for creation advocacy), the importance of taking steps to understand Climate Change and establishing pollinator gardens is vital. I lived on farms as a child, and I have come to see what I could not see or understand then, which inspires me to advocate for Creation. See next edition of "Crossroads" for a glimpse of this.* **God's Work Our Hands at Home:** Thanks to PAL in this City for shoveling snow for seniors and disabled folks, and the gentleman volunteering and shoveling snow on sidewalks! The February edition of "The Brass Bulletin" is available. **Senior Center, Waterbury Residents:** See website for weekly and monthly events. You can register at their site to get weekly updates of menus at the Senior Center. Galatians 6:2 *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."*

**Pollinator Garden:** *"One is nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth."* (Dorothy Gurney). Updates: We are spring planning including a grow box for herbs or the new squash which believe it or not grows upward. Garden flags will be changed as soon as we can find them in the mounds of snow. Opportunity—help us start a 2026 photo journey of the pollinator garden. Of note--in our region, the pussywillow bush/tree blooms during Lent! *"Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving to God the Creator triumphantly raise..." We give thanks for creation moments-- the nourishing and protective white blanket of snow on the garden and the one flag with its message above it. Amen.*



**NE Synod: Green Team: EcoSpirituality:** Members from the New England and other areas meet via Zoom the second Sunday of the month at 7 p.m., exploring insights into the unity of creation of which we are a part and for which God gave us the task to be stewards. February edition Green Team magazine is on NE Synod website. Two notes—the ELCA has a "Creation Care Network," and Pastor Nancy Wright reports the Green Team will partner in 2026 with the Episcopal dioceses in New England for the program "An Episcopal Path to Creation Justice"...to foster ministry for creation care, building on the LRC covenant program..." **Monthly planning meeting**—February 17, Weds, 2 pm. **Camp Calumet:** Lego Weekend, March 13-15, Scrapbooking March 20-22; April has many events including mid-week retreat for women and confirmation camp.

Remembering Martin Luther King Jr. who said at a high school in Philadelphia in 1967 *"Don't allow anybody to make you feel you are nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel your life has ultimate significance."* I think of Genesis--God created the sky and the earth, day and night, every mountain and river, the earth, the sky and darkness and light, every tree and plant, and every living thing. Genesis 1:31 "God saw everything he had made, and indeed, it was very, very good." We are part of God's creation...

The Sanctuary  
before Xmas Eve  
Service

Photo by Gail Faye



# *Altar Care Schedule*

\*2/15: Janine Kifer & Tish Hunter

**\*Change to purple for Lent**

2/22: Charmiane Lawton & Delphine Blewitt

3/1: Tish Hunter & Janine Kifer

3/8: Delphine Blewitt & Sr. Carol Weaver

3/15: Janine Kifer & Charmaine Lawton

3/22: Tish Hunter & Delphine Blewitt

3/29: Sr. Carol Weaver & Janine Kifer



**JANUARY:**

**GARY MARCELLA SR.  
KEVIN ARMINGTON  
NATALIE BLOOMQUIST  
KEITH WESTON  
PR. SAM PERRET  
MARTINA PERSAUD  
RITA VILLANO  
JOSHUA RAPISARDA**

**FEBRUARY:**

**ELLE ROSSI  
ERIC LAWTON  
DOUG FAY  
BARBARA CROFT  
SHIVE ETWAROO**

# LENTEN FAITH PRACTICES

(Used With Permission From Rev. Jess Felici)

Feb 18 - Ash Wednesday

Feb 19 - PRAY for those who hunger to have access to enough food

Feb 20 - FAST from spending today - see if you can buy nothing!

Feb 21 - WATCH for kindness among strangers as you go about your day

Feb 22 - REJOICE! Remember your baptism with a bubble bath/fun soap!

Feb 23 - PRAY for those who teach to have patience and endurance

Feb 24 - GIVE of your time by calling a loved one who might be lonely

Feb 25 - CONFESS to God the idols that distract you from God's Way

Feb 26 - PRAY for those in power to have mercy on the vulnerable

Feb 27 - FAST from anger today, set aside irritations and lean into patience

Feb 28 - WATCH for something hopeful in the news

Mar 1 - REJOICE! Lean into the Sabbath by reading a book or magazine

Mar 2 - PRAY for churches around the world to be beacons of God's love

Mar 3 - GIVE someone a note or mail a card to a friend

Mar 4 - CONFESS to God a way you messed up today and feel God's love

Mar 5 - PRAY for children around the world to be safe and cared for

Mar 6 - FAST from grumbling today. No complaints, only gratitude

Mar 7 - WATCH for a smile on the face of someone else today

Mar 8 - REJOICE! Learn a new joke and share it with a friend or neighbor

Mar 9 - PRAY for soldiers and their families

Mar 10 - GIVE a penny to a stranger by leaving one heads-up in public

Mar 11 - CONFESS to God a time you have been cruel to someone else

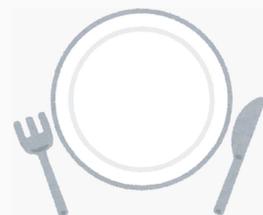
Mar 12 - PRAY for missionaries and peacekeepers around the world  
Mar 13 - FAST from apathy today - put energy into something that feels draining  
Mar 14 - WATCH for the chance to surprise someone with joy  
Mar 15 - REJOICE! Make a special meal with your family or a friend  
Mar 16 - PRAY for those who suffer from pain or illness in their everyday life  
Mar 17 - GIVE from the wish list of a shelter of your choice  
Mar 18 - CONFESS to God a time you have loved yourself more than others  
Mar 19 - PRAY for first responders and the people they help  
Mar 20 - FAST from screens as much as your life allows you to today  
Mar 21 - WATCH for a sign of Spring outside today  
Mar 22 - REJOICE! Plant tulips in a surprise location outside where they can bring joy!  
Mar 23 - PRAY for anyone who is persecuted in their faith  
Mar 24 - GIVE a kind word to everyone you meet  
Mar 25 - CONFESS to God a time you listened to others' voices instead of asking God for guidance  
Mar 26 - PRAY for pastors, deacons and all church staff  
Mar 27 - FAST from busyness as you prepare to enter Holy Week  
Mar 28 - WATCH for the opportunity to invite someone to church with you  
Mar 29 - Palm Sunday  
Mar 30 - PRAY for God's Word to speak clearly to you  
Mar 31 - GIVE money or a canned good to your local food pantry  
April 1 - Holy Wednesday  
April 2 - Maundy Thursday  
April 3 - Good Friday  
April 4 - Easter Vigil  
April 5 - Easter Sunday - Rejoice!!!

# ANNOUNCEMENTS + GRATITUDE



## From Lisa Rapisarda:

Most of us have a family meal prayer that was taught to us by our parents; others may say a new prayer at each meal. I asked my 92-year-old aunt to give the blessing at a family picnic, and I was expecting the usual "Come Lord Jesus" prayer. Instead, she threw a curveball with this one:



**Father, we thank you for our food, for home and health and all things good. For the wind and the rain and the sun above; but most of all for those we love. Amen**



## Mosaic Event:

When: 05.19.26 from 12-1 pm

Where: Hilton Garden Inn,  
1181 Barnes Rd, Wallingford, CT



**Save the date for a one-hour event and discover how you can help Mosaic further its mission of relentlessly pursuing opportunities that empower people. Lunch will be provided.**



THE POLLINATOR GARDEN TEAM WOULD LIKE TO THANK BARBARA SCHMOLLINGER (LISA R'S SISTER) FOR THE BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS GARDEN FLAGS THAT SHE SENT US THIS YEAR. THEY ADDED A FESTIVE MOOD TO A SLEEPING WINTER GARDEN.



PHOTOS BY  
GAIL FAY

THE OLDEST  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH IN  
ICELAND!

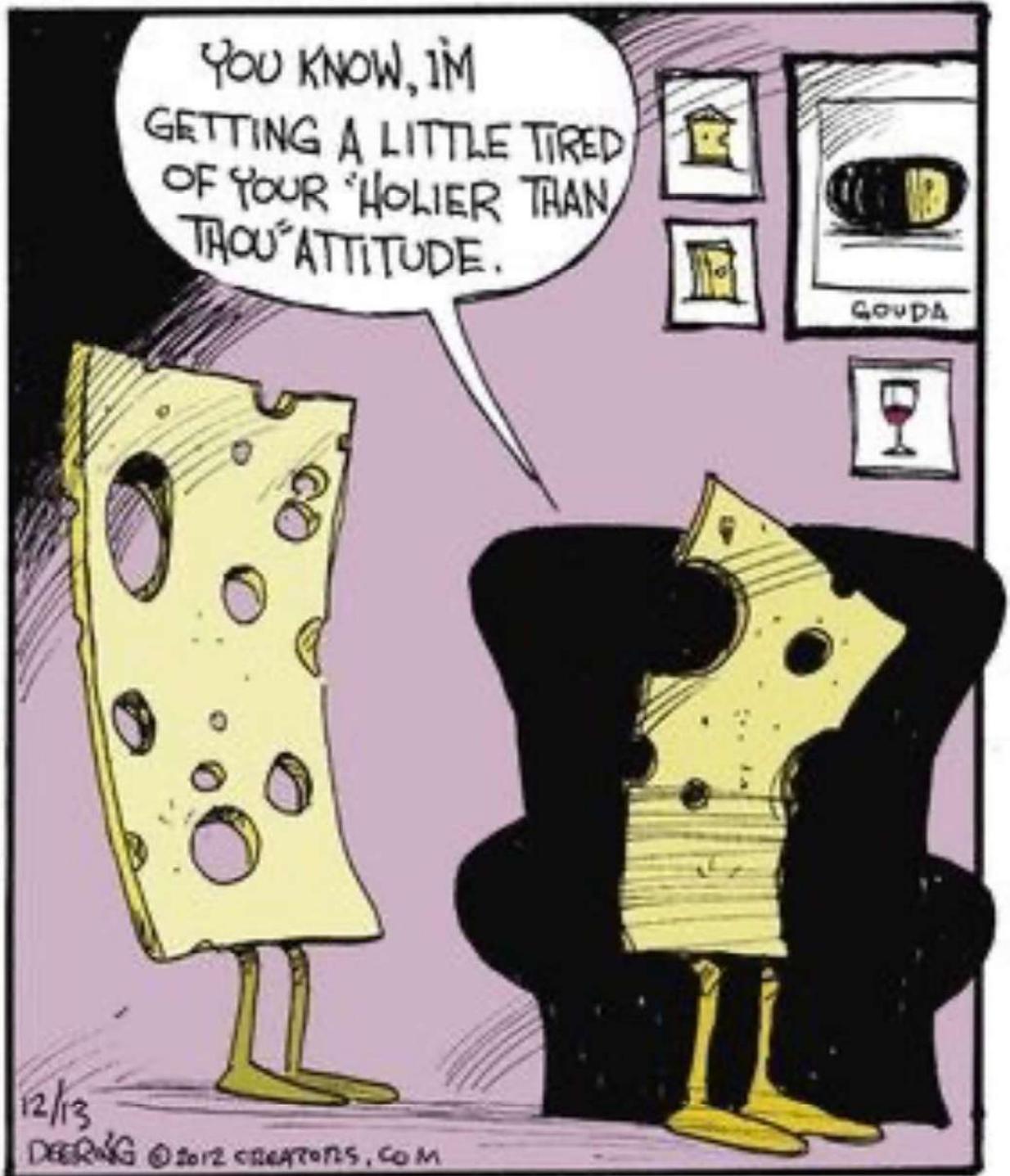


Easter flower orders  
will be taken from  
3/1 through 3/15.  
\$10 each. See  
Nadia with  
questions





# FUNNY PAGES



Cartoon by John Deering