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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

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PASTOR WENDA FRY

1 PASTOR WENDA FRY: Last week we marked a milestone
2 in our life together as pastors and people, celebrating
3 twenty years of ministry together as a people of God in this
4 place and time.

5 Pastor Griess, our guest speaker, said at one of the
6 services that the average stay of a pastor in a congregation
7 is three to five years.

8 And I got to thinking to myself, you can't get much
9 sinning done in that time, sinning against one another,
10 actually.

11 I mean, how do you get that done in that time, if
12 you have the time to be able to go to a brother or sister in
13 Christ and say I can't go to the table without making it
14 right with you.

15 In fact, one of my brothers in faith after the 10:30
16 service said that to me.

17 He said, "Wenda, I couldn't believe it, that the
18 average is three to five years. How do you build any
19 relationships in that time?"

20 And he actually is a person who called me and had
21 something that he needed to talk with me about.

22 I was so glad he had the courage to do that. That
23 happened just a few years ago.

24 That's what I mean when I say how do you have enough
25 time to sin against one another and come to the table

1 together so that we can practice and live out our faith in
2 Christ.

3 I was curious, though, I wondered how many
4 congregations have their pastors for twenty years or more.

5 So I wrote the ELCA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church
6 in America, and I asked for a couple of statistics.

7 Marty Smith, senior research analyst for the ELCA,
8 wrote me back and he said that out of 10,721 congregations in
9 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 580 of them have
10 had their pastor for twenty years or more.

11 I thought, wow, we're one of those. We are one of
12 those statistics.

13 And I was amazed by that and last week we marked a
14 milestone and we celebrated that. You celebrated that with
15 us in great fashion.

16 Mark's eyes were red all morning and I didn't have
17 any mascara on by the end of the morning. It was awesome.
18 Thank you so much.

19 After the 9:00 o'clock service I went up to Brown
20 Productions and I said can you get a picture, I didn't know
21 it was going to happen at the end of the service, but we were
22 able to get a picture of the communal blessing at the end of
23 the service, at the 10:30 service, and that was overwhelming.

24 I didn't know what was going to happen at 9:00, but
25 Carolyn, one of the council members, invited you to

1 participate in a blessing for us, and by the time I got to
2 that place in the service I lost it.

3 I knelt down, and we both just cried, and we could
4 feel your presence, could feel the hands going shoulder upon
5 shoulder as you lifted up a blessing for us.

6 And I piled up the notes, Mark and I haven't even
7 had a chance to read them all yet, but I piled them up here
8 and sort of made a stone altar of them to offer to God.

9 Because what happened is, one of the reasons why we
10 have not gotten through them is that every time we read one
11 we cry and we talk about that family or that individual.

12 And then we can hardly move on to the next one
13 because then we get to laughing about stuff.

14 That's why we have not gotten through all of them,
15 but I have marked them as a milestone, along with the picture
16 of the blessing.

17 This is what God's people have done for a long,
18 long, long time.

19 And this is the kind of thing that binds a people
20 together before God.

21 Individual claims of what God has done in their
22 life.

23 That's what these notes represent. You relived for
24 us and you reclaimed for yourself the promise of God.

25 You told us, many of you, through these notes what

1 God had been doing in your life, so as individuals and as
2 families you offered that.

3 And then as a people of God in this place we offered
4 that together.

5 Individual recollections of what God has done and
6 marking a milestone has always bonded the people of God
7 before his throne, and that's what we did last week.

8 Throughout the Bible there are tons of stories about
9 individuals remembering, reliving, reclaiming what God has
10 done in their life.

11 And then together as a people, because we don't do
12 faith alone, together as a people remembering that God has
13 been faithful, God has been gracious, God is a God of
14 providence and has provided for our every need.

15 And one of those stories that we are going to look
16 at today is from Deuteronomy, Chapter 26, so I invite you to
17 turn to that.

18 Many places in the Old Testament recollect God's
19 deliverance as a people of God, and the individuals also
20 relive and reclaim God's redemptive act for yourself, which
21 is what you did.

22 Deuteronomy, Chapter 26, Verses 1 to 11. I invite
23 you to follow along as I read.

24 This is Moses speaking to the people of God before
25 they head into the promised land.

1 "When you have come into the land that the Lord your
2 God has given you as an inheritance to possess, and you
3 possess it, and you settle in it, you shall take some of the
4 first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from
5 the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

6 "And you shall put it in a basket and go to the
7 place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for
8 his name.

9 "You shall go to the priest who is in office at that
10 time and say to him, 'Today I declare to the Lord your God
11 that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our
12 ancestors to give us.'

13 "When the priest takes the basket from your hand and
14 sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, you shall
15 make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering
16 Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived
17 there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great
18 nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us
19 harshly and afflicted us by imposing hard labor on us we
20 cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors. The Lord heard
21 our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our
22 oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty
23 hand and an outstretched arm with a terrifying display of
24 power and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this
25 place and gave us this land, the land flowing with milk and

1 honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground
2 that you, O Lord, have given me.'

3 "You shall set it down before the Lord your God and
4 bow down before the Lord your God.

5 "Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens
6 who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty
7 that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house."

8 So before we look at that text, I want to give you
9 some background on the Book of Deuteronomy.

10 It's Moses' last chance with the people he loves.
11 That's what the Study Bible, the blue Study Bible suggests in
12 the introduction to the Book of Deuteronomy.

13 I just love that and you know that I recommend that
14 every opportunity I get.

15 If you don't have a Bible that you can read, that
16 you get frustrated when you read it, we have one here at
17 Bethany, it's called the Study Bible, and it's so helpful,
18 because it always gives an introduction to the book and gives
19 the background.

20 And I think that's helpful when we are reading
21 scripture, so then we know what kind of literature we're
22 reading, whether it's a poem, or a speech, or a confession,
23 or a hymn. It's really helpful.

24 And what the book of Deuteronomy is, really what it
25 is, it's Moses' personal diary.

1 It's really divided into three different speeches,
2 if you will.

3 Chapters 1 to 3 recount the amazing miracles of God
4 when they were wandering together in the Sinai desert for
5 those forty years.

6 So it tells about that and if you read Chapters 1 to
7 3 later on this week you'll say yes, this is like a diary.

8 You know how it is when we write in our diary. We
9 say first we went here. Then we stopped and we got gas
10 there.

11 That's just exactly how Chapters 1 through 3 of
12 Deuteronomy read.

13 We went here, we went there, and then so and so said
14 that when we met them.

15 And then you'll read that Moses says that's when you
16 guys grumbled.

17 He reminds the people about when they grumbled and
18 reminds them of what God said when they grumbled.

19 And it's kind of cool if you look at it like that,
20 like it's a speech, and also written like a personal diary,
21 you'll get a lot out of that. So that is Chapters 1 to 3.

22 And Chapters 4 to 26, where our reading is from, we
23 are right at the tail end of that, they are the codes or the
24 commandments that the people of God agreed to keep with their
25 God.

1 Let's take a look at that for a second. Let's go to
2 Chapter 6, Verse 4.

3 For our Jewish brothers and sisters it's called the
4 Shema and it is said every morning.

5 "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord
6 alone.

7 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your
8 heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

9 "Keep these words that I am commanding you today in
10 your heart.

11 "Recite them to your children and talk about them
12 when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down
13 and when you rise.

14 "Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an
15 emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of
16 your house and on your gates."

17 This is just an example, probably the best example
18 in of the second speech in the Book of Deuteronomy, because
19 it's about remember what you agreed to do, and here is how
20 you ought to do it.

21 Recite them, fix them, write them. All the
22 commandments, of course, are given in the Book of Deuteronomy
23 as well.

24 So that is where our text comes from, because it's a
25 reminder of what the people of God have agreed to do

1 together, because God wants to be their deliverer.

2 God wants to be their savior. God wants to be their
3 God.

4 And the third speech is, there are three fireside
5 chats, I got that from the Study Bible as well, because the
6 author of that particular introduction likened Moses' speech
7 to FDR's speech during World War II, fireside chats.

8 When Mark and I were in DC this past spring we went
9 to the World War II Memorial for the first time.

10 And when you walk into the memorial, on either side
11 before you get into the circle and remembrance of each state,
12 there are these bronze impressions.

13 And one of them is a picture of a family listening
14 to the radio.

15 When FDR would give those speeches, that was really
16 an important part of our history as a nation, because people
17 felt like they were being talked to.

18 And some members told me after the 7:45 service that
19 FDR used to start those, because they were remembering that
20 they heard them, he used to start those "My friends" and
21 everyone got their ear up close, and maybe some of you in
22 this place had an opportunity to hear that in your lifetime
23 as well.

24 But that's what these are. He loves his people so
25 much, the same way that FDR did, a great leader.

1 So Moses was a great leader and loved his people and
2 wanted to remind them of the things that they promised to do
3 before God.

4 So the third section is Chapters 27 to 33. That's
5 his farewell charge.

6 He's getting ready to die, he's 120 years old, and
7 in the last chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, let's turn to
8 that, it's 34, it's really his eulogy of when he dies.

9 And Pastor Mark taught us this summer, he was
10 teaching was about Joshua 3-4 and was teaching us about why
11 Moses wasn't allowed to go into the promised land.

12 But I had forgotten that he showed him the land and
13 then later of course on the Mount of Transfiguration he got
14 to see the promised land, didn't he, with Elijah and Jesus on
15 the Mount.

16 Moses, Elijah, and Jesus were on the Mount of
17 Transfiguration when Jesus was transformed right before their
18 very eyes.

19 So he did get to the promised land in that sense,
20 but look with me at 34.

21 "Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount
22 Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and
23 the Lord showed him the whole land."

24 Looking is so important. It's one of ways we hear
25 God and see God at work, is to look.

1 Look at Verse 4 of Chapter 34.

2 "The Lord said to him, 'This is the land of which I
3 swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying I will give
4 it to your descendants; I have let you see it with your eyes,
5 but you shall not cross over there.'

6 "Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there."

7 And jump down with me to Verse 7.

8 "Moses was 120 years old when he died; his sight was
9 unimpaired and his vigor had not abated."

10 Wow. It's amazing. That will be something to ask
11 God about, that I might live to the end of my day with my
12 sight fixed on you, God, unimpaired.

13 That's what I think that means. I don't think it's
14 a physical thing.

15 My sight unimpaired to see what you're doing in my
16 life, and then with vigor still given, so that all of life is
17 embraced.

18 Back to 26. I just wanted to give you that. I hope
19 that's helpful to you when Mark and I speak a little bit
20 about the behind-the-scenes with these books, because I think
21 it's important.

22 So what we are into is a personal diary, after a
23 fashion, and in Chapter 26 it's just at the end of the speech
24 on remembering what they promised to do.

25 If God was going to be in covenant with them, then

1 this is what Moses is reminding them, now here is what you do
2 when you get in the land.

3 So let's go back to 26 now and look at the verses,
4 just take it apart a little bit.

5 "When you have come into the land that the Lord your
6 God has given you as an inheritance to possess, and you
7 possess it, and you settle in it, you shall take some of the
8 first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from
9 the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

10 I want to make one comment on this. It seems like
11 it's about geography here.

12 I know in this part of the scripture they have not
13 come to the promised land yet, because that's the next book,
14 Joshua.

15 Remember, Moses doesn't go into the land, and he is
16 to bless and anoint Joshua, his assistant, to take the people
17 into the promised land.

18 We talked about that story this summer. We are
19 looking at a lot of those Old Testament stories.

20 Many of you said I had never heard that or seen
21 those things before, so that is good when we do that
22 together, when we study God's word.

23 But I want to say that it sounds like it's geography
24 but really, and it's true, but it's also that there is the
25 idea of deliverance.

1 When you come into the land, it's like a reminder.
2 That phrase, when you come into the land, is a reminder that
3 God is their God, that God is their deliverer, and that God
4 is a God of salvation and will care for his people because he
5 chose them as his own.

6 So it's not about geography only; it's also about
7 this promise of salvation.

8 So then Verses 1 to 4 are the first fruits offering.

9 What does that mean, this first fruits offering?

10 Well, the first fruits offering is, Moses says to
11 the people, now, remember, and I hope you always remember
12 this, God is your God, and he has chosen you, and so you are
13 in a covenant relationship with him and this is what a
14 covenant relationship looks like.

15 God says to God's people I choose you, I want you to
16 my own, I love you, everything I have is yours. Everything.
17 This land and everything in it.

18 And when you stop to think about that, and to let me
19 know, this is God talking now, to let me know that you still
20 want to be in a covenant relationship with me, you still want
21 me to be your God, can you give me something?

22 That's what a first fruits offering is. Can you
23 give me an offering so that I know that you want to be in
24 covenant with me.

25 This is what the Bible means when the Bible asks us

1 for ten percent of our money.

2 God says to us, everything I have is yours,
3 everything, and just so I know that you love me, and you like
4 this relationship, can you give me ten percent?

5 A hundred percent of it is mine, and I give you all
6 of it, can you just give me back a little bit so that I know
7 that you like being in this kind of relationship with me.

8 You like that I will provide for your every need.
9 You like that I'm your deliverer.

10 You like that I want to be your savior. You like
11 that I want to be your helper.

12 And that's what is happening here, disciples. What
13 is happening here is Moses is reminding them, now, whenever
14 you get to a place ritualistically mark that with an
15 offering, a special offering, a first fruits offering, which
16 means give me your best.

17 Don't give me what is left over after you buy
18 groceries and pay the bills and buy the volleyball shoes.

19 Don't give me what is left over; give me the first
20 of it and then go buy the shoes, because there will be
21 enough, and then buy the groceries.

22 First fruits offering, just part of the covenant
23 that God has with God's people.

24 So that is the first fruits offering, and then
25 Verses 5 to 10 tell the condensed story of the history of the

1 Israelites.

2 Verse 5, "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor. He
3 went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien."

4 This is a phrase, a wandering Aramean, referring to
5 Jacob.

6 Jacob worked in Egypt for his uncle for seven years
7 because he was so in love with Rachel. Maybe you remember
8 that story.

9 But it's sort of a phrase to represent the
10 homelessness of God's people.

11 They were a wandering people. They didn't have a
12 God. They didn't have a home.

13 They didn't have a land. They didn't have anything,
14 and they were at the mercy of some really cruel people, and
15 people that worshipped a myriad of Gods.

16 So it is sort of representative of the homelessness
17 of the Israelites and it's just a way of saying you used to
18 not have a God that loved you like this.

19 You used to not have a home. You used to not have a
20 place.

21 You used to not have so many material blessings, is
22 really what that means.

23 And then the rest of 6 through 10 is a recollection
24 of the mighty hand and deliverance of God.

25 And you see this so much in the scriptures and in

1 fact when Jesus gathered with his disciples on the night in
2 which he was betrayed, they remembered the deliverance of
3 God's people out of Egypt. That was something that they did.

4 That's always a part of our life together as God's
5 people, is remembering how great God has been.

6 Remembering how God has blessed us. Recalling, that
7 even though it has been painful, God was there, because that
8 was a painful four hundred years for God's people in Egypt in
9 slavery, oppressed, beaten, killed at the drop of a hat.

10 They knew the kind of painful things that we have
11 known in life. Death. Abuse. Heartache.

12 So what I find amazing in these stories that
13 recollect that God is God is that they also remember the
14 painful parts, as well as the fact that God delivered them
15 and kept them with a mighty and outstretched arm.

16 Verse 8 is really the history of Israel.

17 "The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand
18 and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power
19 and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place
20 and gave us this land, the land flowing with milk and honey.

21 This first fruits offering by individuals, and the
22 remembrance that God has always been faithful is, as I said
23 at the beginning of our time together, this is what binds
24 God's people together; always has.

25 That's what we did last week. You relived and

1 reclaimed God's providence in your life and shared it with
2 us.

3 We were honored that you would do that, and then
4 together we asked God to bless us as a pastor and a people.

5 You came and laid hand upon shoulder, hand upon
6 shoulder as we asked God to continue to bless his people and
7 pastors, to go forward into the future.

8 And that's what Verse 11 says so well. I like it
9 out of the Message Bible, which is what we have here.

10 "Celebrate, rejoice, celebrate all the things that
11 God, your God has given you and your family, you and the
12 Levite and the foreigner who lives with you."

13 That's Verse 11.

14 "Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens
15 who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty
16 that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house."

17 Again, that's what we did last week. We marked that
18 milestone in our lives together as pastors and people.

19 You marked it by reliving and reclaiming God's
20 promises, and we marked it together communally asking God to
21 bless us.

22 We remembered the good things. We celebrated and
23 remembered the good things that God has done.

24 And what I love about what Pastor Mark said to us
25 was that it has not been all good, has it?

1 It has been painful at times, hasn't it? And it
2 has.

3 He says it hasn't been all good, but it has been
4 blessed.

5 I though that was awesome, that he reminds us,
6 that's what happens when we gather as a people.

7 We don't just remember the good times; we remember
8 the painful times and how God brought us out with an
9 outstretched and mighty arm through the valley of the shadow
10 of death into the summer pasture at the table, into the table
11 full of bounty and fellowship and love.

12 That's what we do when we mark milestones in our
13 lives as individuals and as people of God.

14 I don't know if any of you have ever been to a
15 Jewish cemetery.

16 Instead of putting flowers, they put stones, don't
17 they, lay stones on the gravestone.

18 And if you saw the movie "Schindler's List" you saw
19 a picture of this, stones on the gravestone.

20 That's beautiful. I never really understood what
21 that meant, but what it is is the mourner takes a stone and
22 they lay it on the gravestone to connect themselves with that
23 person, and not only that person, but the history of their
24 people.

25 So there again is the individuals marking their life

1 with that person, in addition to claiming and celebrating the
2 covenant relationship between God and God's people.

3 What I like about that visual is that it reminds us
4 that that's what we must do.

5 We connect our lives to the person and we connect
6 our life to their history and the history of their God, and
7 we can do that as Christians.

8 What is happening here today really in memory and
9 honor of someone we loved so much, Teri, today we are
10 reconnecting again our life with her life, but the baskets
11 are full of stories.

12 Jody, your story is unbelievable. Jody wrote a
13 story and attached it to her basket.

14 It's a garden basket out there, and I didn't know
15 this, how she met her husband Bill, she has been married
16 almost two years, but one day she's working at Wal-Mart and
17 had some sort of a mishap with a hose and completely drenched
18 Bill, a customer, and she was mortified and thought now maybe
19 I will get fired or something.

20 Anyway, you guys got to talking about how drenched
21 you were and you got to talking about that. Well, that's her
22 husband.

23 Teri heard that story and called her up and said she
24 found a frame that was made out of garden hose, something
25 Teri would do, and said I have a frame for the picture of the

1 two of you. It's a great story.

2 That's what we do. When we come here today, we mark
3 our lives and we join our histories with the history of Teri
4 and her God and her faith.

5 And that's important for us to do as God's people.
6 It's important that we mark milestones as a way of saying
7 thanks for what has been, even if it was painful.

8 We say thanks for what has been, and we say, by
9 marking a milestone like today, like last week, we say we are
10 ready, Lord, for the future.

11 We go with joy and anticipation into the future,
12 because it will be something new, because new life always
13 comes out of death. Always. That's our Easter faith. We
14 are God's Easter people.

15 You received a letter last week announcing that Mark
16 and I will have a new partner in ministry, Lowell Nelson, and
17 we are just in awe of what God has done, because we couldn't
18 have come up with that at all.

19 God really designed that and so we sent a letter out
20 to you and we hope with your blessing on September 30th that
21 we can go forward into a new place together.

22 One of the words that was given to the people of God
23 in this place in January of last year was Joshua 3-4, get
24 ready, sanctify yourselves, which means get yourselves ready,
25 and remember that you are a holy and a chosen people.

1 That's what sanctify yourselves means. You are a
2 holy and chosen people. Get ready, for you have not been
3 this way before.

4 And the only way I believe, people of God, that we
5 can be ready for the joy and the wonder and the new life that
6 God has prepared for us is if we can mark those things in our
7 lives which we have been carrying around. We mark a
8 milestone.

9 Last week we marked a milestone. We carried twenty
10 years of grief and joy and love and laughter and food and
11 misunderstanding and reconciliation and forgiveness.

12 We carried that for twenty years together as pastors
13 and people and last week we marked it as a milestone in the
14 life of this congregation so that we could move forward.

15 So next week Lowell will be preaching, and I was
16 thinking that it would be important for us as a people of God
17 to mark this day in preparation for next week.

18 Each of you were given a stone this morning as you
19 came in.

20 If you don't have a stone, you can go back to the
21 entranceway and receive a stone, pick one up.

22 I would like you to take that stone, if you would,
23 please, and just put aside the Bible and put aside anything
24 else.

25 Just hold that stone in your hand and look at it,

1 hold it, feel that.

2 I've asked a friend of mine, Laura, from orchestra
3 to play during our reflection and response.

4 Did you notice in Verse 5 of our text today that
5 Moses said to the people now this shall be your response.

6 God's people and the covenant with God's people has
7 always called for a response. Always. I had not seen that
8 before.

9 I invite you to close your eyes, if you would, and
10 hold your stone, and I want you to look inside yourself, and
11 Laura is going to play.

12 I want you to look inside yourself and see if there
13 is a memory that you have not laid aside.

14 Maybe it's a memory of a person, something that
15 person said to you, or did to you, that you've been carrying.

16 And as you feel the weight of the stone in your
17 hand, you know that things like this can weigh us down and
18 keep us from the life transforming opportunities and
19 experiences God has for us.

20 As you look within, maybe you can identify a memory
21 or an event that needs healing, something that you need to
22 lay down and lay aside.

23 And as you fasten your mind and heart on what that
24 might be, maybe you want to connect that to some piece of
25 architecture in this worship center.

1 Maybe you heard a sermon or a message in this place
2 and you didn't do what you had vowed to God that day that you
3 would do. Maybe you could lay your stone on these tiles.

4 Or maybe it was a baptism that you saw and you
5 remembered that God has a covenant with you in baptism, you
6 want to mark that as a milestone and remember that, you could
7 put your rock in the water in the fount.

8 Or maybe it was a song that the musicians did. You
9 said God I'm going to do that forever and you have not done
10 that. You could lay your stone there.

11 Maybe you buried a loved one in this place. Maybe
12 you buried and had to say good-bye to a child or a parent in
13 this place.

14 You could lay your stone at the foot of the cross
15 and mark that and if you want to say a little prayer as you
16 lay your stone down, you could, or you can just simply lay it
17 there and walk back to your seat.

18 I invite you to come now and lay your stone, lay
19 them down, and then Mark will lead us in prayer.

20 PASTOR MARK FRY: Another possibility is maybe you
21 have some stuff you might want to leave here, it might be
22 appropriate to put it in the doorway.

23 If you are like me, it's like walking sometimes with
24 a bag of rocks on your shoulders.

25 Let us pray. Lord, I remember in that movie

1 "Schindler's List" the solemn procession of those people who
2 come and mark the death of Mr. Schindler with a simple
3 gesture of putting that little stone on his tombstone.

4 Lord, I thank you that I've seen some of those camps
5 where that has happened, and those rocks are such a powerful
6 visual symbol of respect, of gratitude, and of moving on.

7 So, Lord, I thank you for everybody's movement
8 today. We bring a myriad of emotions to this day. Gratitude
9 and some melancholy.

10 It's a new time of year. Our football team has
11 lost, and that's not just a little thing -- it is in the
12 whole scope of things -- but you know that we take things
13 personally.

14 So, Lord, I thank you for the movement, and I thank
15 you that this can be a new day, a day that is the beginning
16 now of a new chapter, of a new milestone that you are
17 preparing for us. In confidence we trust that.

18 We thank you for your music that plays in our lives,
19 sometimes sadly, sometimes with incredible joy.

20 And we ask, Lord, that we might be part of that song
21 in new and even fuller ways.

22 We pray all of this in the name of Jesus, who is our
23 rock. Amen.

24

25