

THE WINDOW

On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world.

October 2020

THANKS by Andy Hamer, Pastor

As I sit here and write at my makeshift desk, I'm smiling. The 'desk' is a card table wedged between the bed and the wall in a spare room. When I'm not meeting with folks on patios and in the prayer garden, this basement bedroom is my office. Regardless of this, I'm smiling today. In my chest I feel that strange inward lifting of gratitude as I reflect on the ways that God has sustained our congregation in these strange times.

Even the last few weeks have seen some especially high moments for us. We had our first unified worship services in six months; whether worshipping at home or in-person, we were together at 10 a.m. on Sundays. Beyond that, we celebrated the Confirmation of several of our youth, and welcomed our new temporary Associate Pastor Carolyn Grice. We also had our first conversation about racial equality, and we had our first outdoor social gathering – the Picnic and Praise in the Park event. None of this was normal; all of these moments were adapted by our current situation, but they were gifts nonetheless.

I celebrate these imperfect moments partly out of discipline. I believe that the spiritual practice of expressing gratitude to God can profoundly change us. Consider the effects of giving heartfelt thanks to one of your friends. All that and more comes into play when we say, "thank you" to our greatest Friend. Perhaps this is why the Spirit inspired so many biblical writers to encourage God's people toward gratitude. It's tough to pick out just one example, but Paul's letter to the Philippian church is a good place to start.

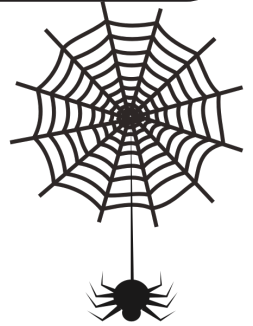
Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and

your minds in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:4-7 (keep reading for more!)

Known as the "Epistle of joy," we see in this passage that gratitude drives joy. Listing God's blessings also reminds us that God remains powerful, full of grace, and able to help. Thankfulness helps us depend on God; it prepares us for peace.

We don't need to pretend that everything is perfect in order to find the healing experience of gratitude. I did not sit down at my 'desk' this morning to write a message telling you all to, "buck up." This is not a time to "put a brave face on things." What we need in difficult times are bridges and tunnels into our faith. Gratitude is a potent pathway. I'm inviting you to attempt to cultivate a regular discipline of giving gratitude to God. The hope is that sowing thankfulness, even in difficult times, will grow into a deeper connection with our God and flower into grace, joy, and peace.

Returning thanks to God can make us people that are more grounded in the reality of God's love. Such a people embody a readiness to share grace with others. This generativity is a powerful force in the church and beyond – especially when we find ourselves living and working in broken situations with broken people, just like us. I don't imagine that my faith in Jesus will make me happy all the time, but I have known people whose faith changes the way they hold themselves in everyday life. I want to live like them. I want to follow their generous example, even while I sit here at this card table in my basement.



WHAT IS STEPHEN MINISTRY?

by Cathy Voshell, Deacon of Stephen Ministry



Stephen Ministers are members of our congregation who receive fifty hours of special training to listen, care, encourage, and provide emotional and spiritual support to people in our congregation and community who are facing a crisis or going through tough times.

Stephen Ministers are known as the *after people*. Stephen Ministers are there: *after* the phone call you hoped you'd never get; *after* the divorce papers are served and the bottom falls out of your life; *after* the funeral, when everyone has left and the emotions you've held at bay come crashing in on you; *after* the doctor says, "I'm sorry, but there's nothing more we can do."; *after* the nursing home director shakes your hand and says, "Welcome to your new home."; *after* the last child honks the horn, waves, and drives away, and the house suddenly feels empty; *after* the gavel goes down, the handcuffs go on, and your loved one is led away; *after* the baby arrives, demanding more of you than you ever dreamed possible; *after* you find a pink slip with your final paycheck; *after* your family and friends have heard your story one too many times, but you still need to talk it out; *after* a pandemic strikes and you feel overwhelmed. Stephen Ministers are the *after people*. They are ready to come along side you, or your friends, neighbors, coworkers, or relatives, and provide comfort and support for as long *after* as needed.

All of the care that you or a friend, neighbor, coworker, or relative receive is confidential, free, and very helpful. To learn more about receiving care please contact a Stephen Leader: **Gloria Zinn, 402-393-2843; Bill Spiecker, 402-677-4437; or Cathy Voshell, 402-301-9434.**

STEWARDSHIP 2020 by Matt Huck,

Elder of Stewardship

If you have been following current events, 2020 is a different kind of year. So what does stewardship look like in 2020? Most of us cringe when the word stewardship is brought up. We jump right to "it's time for the money talk." We hear that stewardship is our time, talent and treasure. But it seems we focus on the treasure.

As I write this article, I am thinking of the sermon from Andy on Sunday, September 20th. In the sermon Andy was talking about social justice. One of the points Andy taught on social justice was that we are to live in a right relationship with God, with our neighbor, family, and the world. As I listened to the sermon, it struck me that this is what we do here at West Hills. We have members of the church that are in relationship with people in different parts of Omaha, the United States and the world.

In 2020 the Stewardship Team would like to focus on the time and talent part of stewardship. Sure, we will be having the stewardship pledge campaign, and this will still be held in October and November. Our pledges will still be used to determine the West Hills budget. The format of the pledges will be changing as well as how the pledges are to be returned. This year the Stewardship Team would like to expand stewardship into how we spend our time and talents. We have created a postcard for our members to share how they spent time and talents. The "Greetings from Stewardship" postcards are to enable members to share about their relationships with people in our city, our country and the world. The Stewardship Team will use the postcards to celebrate, pray and share with the West Hills family how our members are using their time and talents.



2020 is a challenging year. But let us embrace the 2020 Stewardship campaign working towards how we can hit all three parts of stewardship.

October At A Glance

At West Hills our mission statement...On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others and the world, provides us with the framework for how we live our lives. Even though life is different now, and we're connecting in new and different ways, here are notable dates this month in the life of our church.

Sundays in October - Live streaming and in-person worship service @ 10 a.m. For those who won't be joining in-person, you can go to the website to connect! whcomaha.org/live

October 8, 15, 22, 29 - The Racial Justice and Reconciliation Team is hosting cinematic stories and conversations Thursdays @ 7 p.m. How it will work: You will watch the movie at your convenience prior to the meeting. Next, we'll meet on Zoom, the date shown below from 7-8 pm, to discuss and share thoughts from the movie.

Movies to be discussed: Oct. 8: Akeelah and the Bee, Oct. 15: Selma, Oct. 22: The Great Debaters, Oct. 29: Just Mercy

October 11 - Pumpkin Decorating Contest - Have fun decorating a pumpkin any way you want - carving, painting, simple, elaborate, solo or teamwork - all entries and creativity are welcome! The more the merrier!

Please bring your decorated pumpkin to the west entrance of West Hills Church on Sunday, Oct. 11.

3:00-3:45 - set up pumpkins on display tables anytime in this timeframe

3:45-4:00 - judging

4:00-5:00 - pumpkins on display during the 406 Spotlight

5:00 - Winners announced and pumpkins can be taken home

October 11 - 406 Spotlight - That's right, the second 406 Spotlight. In case you missed the first one it's an outside event with our youth leading us through scripture and song. Roll up to the west parking lot at 4:00 p.m. and tune your radio to 107.9 as they share an encouraging message.

October 18 - Stewardship Sunday - Please prayerfully consider how you will give your time, talents, and treasures to West Hills in 2021. For those worshipping in-person, there will be boxes at the rear of the sanctuary to drop your pledge cards in. For those that are worshipping with us online, there will be boxes outside on the north circle drive available during Sunday worship and Monday to Friday from 10 am - 2 pm, October 18 - November 6, or you can mail them to the church.

October 23 - BBQ, Bonfire & Blues - Join us for fellowship, food, and fun at this socially distanced outdoor event in the east parking lot. From 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m., a BBQ food truck will be on-site. There will be live music, bubbles for the kids, and firepits. Please bring your own folding chairs and blankets.

November 1 - ** Daylight Saving ends ** - Remember to turn your clock back 1 hour.

RACIAL JUSTICE & RECONCILIATION TASK FORCE



Akeelah and the Bee

The Great Debaters

Selma

Just Mercy

The Racial Justice and Reconciliation Task Force is hosting cinematic stories and conversations Thursday nights throughout October. We hope you'll consider joining us. Register on the website under "Groups" or by calling the church office at 402-391-8788.

How it will work: You can watch the movie at your convenience prior to the meeting. As you watch the movie, keep an eye out for biblical themes of justice and reconciliation found in the film. Next, we'll meet on Zoom on the dates listed below from 7-8 pm, to discuss and share thoughts about the movie.

Discussion schedule:

October 8: Akeelah and the Bee

October 15: Selma

October 22: The Great Debaters

October 29: Just Mercy

The Racial Justice & Reconciliation Task Force has more ways for you to join the discussion in the coming months. Stay tuned to Thursday Thoughts for more information to be available soon. The Racial Justice & Reconciliation Task Force consists of Kathy Padilla, Steve Burgess, Bob Drake, Theresa Hamer and William Scheopner.

SPIRITUAL CORRESPONDENCE

by Jana Prescott

Worship: You don't quit on those you love. You should always keep them in your prayers. Actually, what would you think about keeping every nook and cranny of this whole world in prayer?? The people scattered all over this planet, from to Europe to Africa to the Middle East to the the little tiny place where we live in the midst of this continent, to any land where there are people. They all could use prayers: ours, and anyone's, anywhere. Actually, anyone could just be joining in on a prayer group meeting anywhere on this planet. That sounds pretty nifty to me, and I'm pretty sure I got this wonderful plan from God. Now I must say that I won't remember to keep the whole world in my prayers constantly, but I do have bits and pieces of people, places, and events that I can always pray for. Just remember, as it says in the book "Everyday Psalms" by Peter Santucci, *"Worshipping eyes see a God-filled world, restoring our hope, restoring our hearts, restoring our lives, looping us back into worship again."*



SEPTEMBER Session notes

- Session approved allowing funerals and weddings in the church building following the same principles and safety measures used for in-person worship
- Accepted the students in the 2019-2020 confirmation class to active membership.
- Approved baptizing Zoe Dozier.
- Approved allowing weddings for non-members to take place at West Hills Church subject to the same approvals required of every wedding in the Book of Order, i.e., approval by Session and a West Hills pastor.
- Approved postponing the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee listening sessions until after the first of the year.
- Tabled the motion to allow groups of 20 or less to meet using the indoor facilities of West Hills Church pending additional information regarding safety measures.
- Dissolved the Temporary Associate Pastor Search Task Force as their responsibility is complete.

THREE REASONS TO BE AT WEST HILLS ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

1 WORSHIP

Join us for worship service at 10 a.m., either by live stream or in-person.

2 PUMPKIN DECORATING CONTEST

Have fun decorating a pumpkin any way you want – carving, painting, simple, elaborate, solo or teamwork – all entries and creativity are welcome! The more the merrier!

Please bring your decorated pumpkin to the west entrance of West Hills Church on Sunday, Oct. 11.

3:00-3:45	set up pumpkins on display tables anytime in this timeframe
3:45-4:00	judging
4:00-5:00	pumpkins on display during the 406 Spotlight
5:00	Winners announced and pumpkins can be taken home



If you'd like to enter a pumpkin but aren't able to be present, we'd still love for you to participate in the creative fun! Please email jessica@whcomaha.org to make arrangements.

If your entry has a theme, you are welcome to decorate your section of the table. Each entry is allowed up to two feet of table space. These additional decorations are permitted but optional – simple and elaborate pumpkins are ALL wonderful, and there will be prizes that reward a variety of styles.

Prizes on the line: Bragging rights and a sweet treat

Please email jessica@whcomaha.org with any questions or if you need help acquiring a pumpkin.

3 THE 406 SPOTLIGHT!

At 4:00 p.m. the 406 Spotlight begins. It will be a time of worship, prayer, scripture reading, and interactive Bible stories led entirely by our Youth Ministry! The last 406 Spotlight focused on the "I AM" statements of Jesus. This time the focus is on our eternal home, with our heavenly father. The youth are very excited to use their gifts and talents to shine a spotlight on Jesus!



CAREGIVING AT WEST HILLS by Gloria Zinn

There are a number of churches who have been offering caregiving activities since the coronavirus isolated so many of their members. Many of these churches organized groups to call members to check on their status, inquire whether there was anything needed from the church to help them through this crisis, as well as sending out a letter of encouragement and care. West Hills has been very fortunate for many years, not just during the pandemic, to offer ongoing caregiving attention to many of our members from two Caregiving teams.

Our Caregiving Ambassadors provide regular contact with members who are not connected with a group or those members who are not participating in a ministry area in order to keep members informed about events at West Hills Church. It is this active group of men and women who also lead the annual Chili and Caroling event in December.

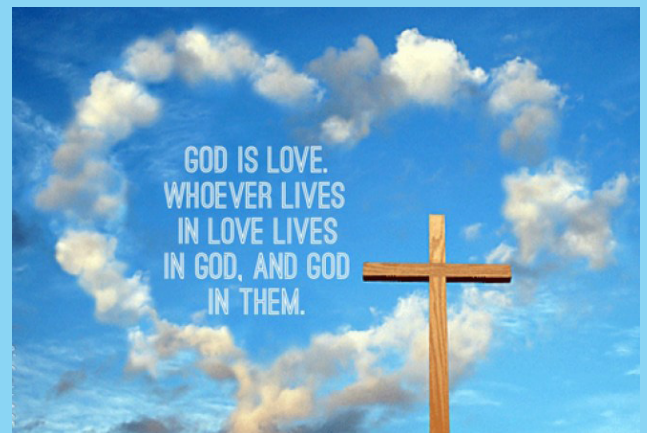
These Caregiving Ambassadors make regular contacts with their care receivers. The number of contacts and the method in which they are made depends upon the relationship between the Caregiving Ambassador and their care receiver. A general recommendation is six contacts per year. With the permission of the care receiver, the Caregiving Ambassador will also pass along any needs or concerns to the church staff. If you have an interest in becoming a Caregiving Ambassador, feel free to contact the church office and one of the Deacons who organize and regulate this important Caregiving Ministry at West Hills: Karen Lofgren-Anderson, Connie Huck, or Cheryl Havekost will get back to you. Also, you can contact the church office if you would like to receive a Caregiving Ambassador.

Another important caregiving team at West Hills is the Homebound Partner program. Similar to the Caregiving Ambassadors, the Homebound Partner program is made up of volunteer caregivers and receivers. As some of our members at West Hills have moved into assisted living or long-term care facilities, as well as those who are living at home, either alone or with a partner, and sometimes with limitations in their activities at church, it became important

for the church to provide ongoing weekly contact with these very special members.

Each volunteer homebound caregiver contacts their care receiver every week or two and discusses anything and everything! Before covid, many caregivers would visit their care receivers in person, at their home or wherever they are living, sometimes going out to lunch, if possible. One homebound caregiver recently commented on her relationship with her homebound care receiver: "As I have gotten to know {blank} better, through our telephone calls and sometimes a personal visit, I know I receive much more than I give! She is always so happy to hear from me, and has so much to share about her life, both past and present. I have really enjoyed this opportunity to grow in Christ's love with this wise older woman." Every month or two each Caregiver sends the Deacon of Stephen Ministry a report on their care receiver, noting anything that would be relevant for the church staff to be aware of such as health and/or changes in residence. This sharing of information is always first approved by the care receiver.

If you have an interest in volunteering as a homebound partner, or know someone who would benefit from becoming a care receiver, please contact the church office. Our Caregiving Ministry at West Hills is our opportunity to touch lives for Christ and to touch the life of Christ. It is a partnership in showing and receiving God's love.



BOOK SUGGESTIONS

Thou Shalt Not Be A Jerk

We are called to love one another, including those who don't look like us, feel like us, think like us... **or vote like us.**



If Christians are called to be the salt of the earth, how do we engage in today's political conversation? In these days of deep division and scarce civility, should there be a distinct difference (counter-cultural) in the way we engage others

related to politics? And wouldn't it be much easier to be Christ-like in our politics, if we didn't have this crazy thing called social media!?

Earlier this year, Eugene Cho released a new book, **Thou Shalt Not Be A Jerk: A Christian's Guide to Engaging Politics**. As you might guess from the title, Cho provides us with ten commandments or principles that can serve as guideposts when navigating the challenging landscape of politics.

Here is a sampling of some of the principles Cho presents:

- Thou Shalt Not Go to Bed with Political Parties
- Thou Shalt Listen and Build Bridges
- Thou Shalt Be About the Kingdom of God
- Thou Shalt Live Out Your Convictions
- Thou Shalt Not Be A Jerk

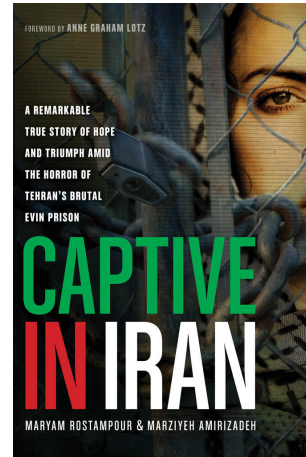
One of the good things about this book is you don't have to read the chapters in order. You can start with the ones that grab your attention. Will you agree with all the content in this book? Probably not. Will you be challenged by some sections of this book? Probably so.

This publication is an excellent resource to read and discuss with another person or in a small-group setting, ideally with others that have different political views than your own.

As Christians we are called to be salt and light, especially in today's polarized political landscape. Resources like this book could nudge us towards creating space for healthy and healing conversations.

suggested by Kevin Gibson

Captive In Iran



Would you go anywhere to follow Jesus and share your Christian beliefs? This commitment seemed easy enough to two young women living in Tehran who had found Jesus Christ; however their life was soon to change when they were both arrested for distributing Bibles in a Muslim world. It was not against the law to become Christian in Iran, however

Islamic laws forbade anyone sharing their Christian beliefs with others.

The two women, Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh shared their story in their 2013 book, **Captive in Iran**, describing the 259 days they spent in the most notorious and dangerous prison in Tehran, Evin. This is a prison where inmates are routinely tortured and executed, no matter what the crime or sex of the prisoner. However, as their story unfolds you can't help but think how God was working with the women to bring His word to a vast number of inmates who had never heard of Him. Their imprisonment brought a shining light into one of the world's darkest places, and provided hope to those who had nothing, sharing love to so many in despair. The two women may have been locked away, but they were not silent about their Christian beliefs. They were given many opportunities to be set free if they would deny their Christian beliefs, but they never did.

We have one copy of this fascinating true story in our church library, but you can also purchase your own copy from Amazon. You will find this book hard to put down from beginning to end.

suggested by Gloria Zinn

PICNIC, PRAISE & POPSIDES in the park

We were very fortunate to have a warm fall evening for Picnic, Praise & Popsicles in the Park on September 25. Not only were we blessed with great weather and music, but we were blessed by those that made it out to socially distance and fellowship with one another. Thanks to Al Anderson, Steve Dostal and Kathy Leach for entertaining us among the trees in the park. Here are a few photos from the event at Zorinsky Park.



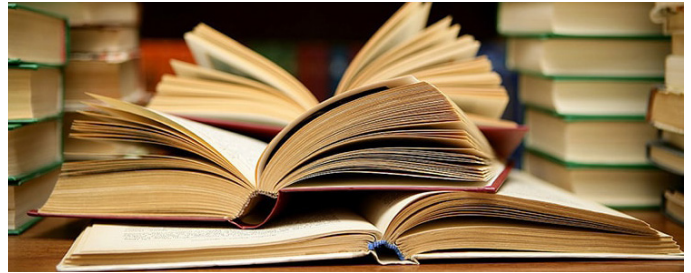
BIBLE QUIZ

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE BIBLE?

1. After Jesus was resurrected how many days did he appear to his followers? A. 35 B. 40 C. 50 D. 100
2. Who bought a field called Akeldama (Field of Blood)? A. David B. Saul C. Judas D. Peter
3. What is another name for Pentecost?
A. Feast of Unleavened Bread B. Feast of Weeks C. Feast of the Holy Spirit D. Feast of Tabernacles
4. Who was chosen by the 11 disciples to take Judas Iscariot's place? A. Barnabas B. Jude C. Matthias D. Ananias
5. On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled the disciples, who among them addressed the crowd? A. Paul B. John C. Luke D. Peter
6. Which disciple had an encounter with an Ethiopian eunuch and led him to Christ? A. Phillip B. Andrew C. Peter D. Matthew
7. Who brought a dead woman named Tabitha back to life? A. Jesus B. Paul C. Peter D. John
8. What was Paul's occupation? A. Lawyer B. Priest C. Tent maker D. Shepherd
9. Who baptized Paul? A. Jesus B. Ananias C. John the Baptist D. Peter
10. Who, or where, is Gamaliel? A. A Pharisee doctor of Jewish law B. An island off the coast of Crete C. Paul's teacher D. One of the Jewish high priests
11. Who saved Paul's life in Jerusalem when a group of Jews planned to kill him? A. Paul's adopted son Timothy B. Paul's servant C. Paul's nephew D. Paul's uncle
12. Who wrote the Book of Acts? A. Paul B. Luke C. Peter D. John

(answers on the back page)

FOOTNOTES FROM THE LIBRARY



Did You Know...

West Hills has four libraries in our building?

- 1) **The Soul Café** (main library)
- 2) **The Resource Room** (in the hallway, half way to the chapel)
- 3) **The Reference Room** (downstairs next to the fellowship hall)
- 4) **The Children's Library** (downstairs outside the Jam Room)

The **Soul Café** is the most visible and popular. But, let me talk a bit about the **Resource Room**. I imagine most people don't even know of its existence. If you are looking for study resources, either for your group or for individual study, this is the place to go. As you walk in the room, to your left are wall shelves. These books are suggestions of study books that you might want to study, but there is only one copy of each. On the right side of the room are shelves that contain books that may be checked out. Some are in categories, like men's studies, church ministries, small groups and marriage studies, etc. There are others that are arranged by authors in alphabetic order. There are also video study kits with DVDs leader's guides and participant's guides. Some small groups have donated multiple copies of books that they have studied, enjoyed and want to share with others. These are all available for borrowing, just put your name on the card with the date and leave in the box. So stop by and check it out!

SCIENCE & THE BIBLE

RECIPES OF THE MONTH

The Bible and Radio Waves



God asked Job a very strange question in 1500 B. C. He asked "Can you send lightnings, that they may go, and say to you, "Here we are"? (Job 38:35). This appears to be a scientifically ludicrous statement, that light can be sent, and then manifest itself in speech. But did you know that all electromagnetic radiation – from radio waves to x-rays – travels at the speed of light? This is why you can have instantaneous wireless communication with someone on the other side of the earth. The fact that light could be sent and then manifest itself in speech wasn't discovered by science until 1864 (3,300 years later), when British scientist James Clerk Maxwell suggested that electricity and light waves were two forms of the same thing.

Comfort, R 2001 *Scientific Facts in the Bible: 100 Reasons To Believe The Bible Is Supernatural In Origin*, Bridge-Logos Publishers

To contact Session,
send an email to:

clerkofsession@whcomaha.org

As the temperature drops outside, the need for comfort food rises. Here are a couple recipes you may wish to try to warm your soul!

Creamy White Chili

Ingredients:

1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1 medium onion, chopped
1-1/2 teaspoons garlic powder
1 tablespoon canola oil
2 cans (15-1/2 ounces each) great northern beans, rinsed and drained
1 can (14-1/2 ounces) chicken broth
2 cans (4 ounces each) chopped green chiles
1 teaspoon each of salt, ground cumin, oregano
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 cup sour cream or cream cheese
1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
Tortilla chips, optional
Shredded cheddar cheese, optional
Sliced seeded jalapeno pepper, optional

In a large saucepan, saute the chicken, onion and garlic powder in oil until chicken is no longer pink. Add the beans, broth, chiles and seasonings. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes.

Remove from the heat; stir in sour cream or cream cheese and cream. If desired, top with tortilla chips, cheese and jalapenos.



Artichoke and Spinach Casserole

Ingredients:

2 jars artichoke hearts (cut up) with a little juice
3 packages frozen spinach, cooked and slightly drained

Layer in an 8 x 10 casserole dish

Whip:

3 – 3 oz pkgs. Cream cheese
6 tablespoons butter

Pour on vegetables

Sprinkle 2/3 cup fresh Parmesan cheese on top
Bake 350 degrees for 40 minutes.



HAPPY



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



OCTOBER

1-Kaitlyn Barnes
Arlo Grafton
Kenneth Kopperud
2-Diana Dingman
Sunny Lundgren
Trish Mathia
Dale Obermiller
3-Bob Jirak
6-Bill Spiecker
7-Fred Picavet
10-Kaylee Wilson

12-Ginny Lakin
David Loewens
13-Peggy Kelley
14-Helen Jacobsen
18-Mariel Oftelie
Ben Sedivy
20-Tom Backer
Jeff Northouse
21-Bill Heise
Aaron Schaffer
24-Anita Evans
26-Joyce Bunjer

Marilyn Grafton
27-Charlie Wenck
28-Jen Northouse
30-Tracey Mason
31-Gaylen Vermilyea

NOVEMBER

1-Rod Hansen
2-Judy Schnabel
5-Mardel Bridgman
Claire Neil
7-Dorothea Brady

Carolyn Reeves
Bruce Workman
8-Kerry Ault
Scott Julich
*(the remaining
November birthdays
will be listed in the
November newsletter)*