

Big Rock Congregational Church Atlanta Michigan

A Community of Grace

CHIPS

Off the Big Rock



January 2025

God's Sheepdogs: Goodness & Mercy

By Max Lucado

Our moods may shift, but God's doesn't. Our minds may change, but God's doesn't. Our devotion may falter, but God's never does. Even if we are faithless, he is faithful, for he cannot betray himself (2 Tim. 2:13). He is a sure God. And because he is a sure God, we can state confidently, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

And what follows the word surely? "Goodness and mercy." If the Lord is the shepherd who leads the flock, goodness and mercy are the two sheepdogs that guard the rear of the flock. Goodness and mercy. Not goodness alone, for we are sinners in need of mercy. Not mercy alone, for we are fragile, in need of goodness. We need them both. As one man wrote, "Goodness to supply every want. Mercy to forgive every sin. Goodness to provide. Mercy to pardon."

Goodness and mercy -- the celestial escort of God's flock. If that duo doesn't reinforce your faith, try this phrase: "all the days of my life."

What a huge statement. Look at the size of it! Goodness and mercy follow the child of God each and every day! Think of the days that lie ahead. What do you see? Days at home with only toddlers? God will be at your side. Days in a dead-end job? He will walk you through. Days of loneliness? He will take your hand. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me -- not some, not most, not nearly all -- but all the days of my life.

And what will he do during those days? (Here is my favorite word.) He will "follow" you.

What a surprising way to describe God! We're accustomed to a God who remains in one place. A God who sits enthroned in the heavens and rules and ordains. David, however, envisions a mobile and active God. Dare we do the same? Dare we envision a God who follows us? Who pursues us? Who chases us? Who tracks us down and wins us over? Who follows us with "goodness and mercy" all the days of our lives?

Isn't this the kind of God described in the Bible? A God who follows us? You have to go no farther than the third chapter of the first book before you find God in the role of a seeker. Adam and Eve are hiding in the bushes, partly to cover their bodies, partly to cover their sin. But does God wait for them to come to him? No, the words ring in the garden: "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). With that question God began a quest for the heart of humanity that continues up to and through the moment you read these words.

Pastor of BRCC:

Dr. Keith Jones

Moderator:

Nancy Mantz

Deacons:

David Bradley
Gail Fehr

Trustees:

Judy Hoffman
Lynn Scharer

We exist to worship God, to share His love that all might be saved and to become more like Jesus Christ our Lord.

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 43:18-19

Missions News



Caleb-Sandy Cumper

Merry Christmas from our family to yours!

We've had a great week celebrating with our Kings Garden family. They say there's nothing like Christmas in the Philippines, and it's true. Although we dearly miss our family and friends, God has given us great joy this season and a wonderful Filipino family to celebrate with. Thank you for your faithful support in finances and prayers; we appreciate each of you and are thankful to be serving in this beautiful country.

Y-Malawi

It's hard to believe! We're just days away from bidding farewell to 2024. This year has been an incredible journey marked by joy, sorrow, triumphs, and setbacks. Yet, through it all, we've witnessed the hand of God lifting us up. In Malawi, a wave of transformation is underway, with people's hearts increasingly open.

In addition to our core ministries, the new Y-Malawi farm is a promising avenue for sustainability, growth and transformation. Beyond empowering communities to practice sustainable agriculture, the new farm will feed the hungry and provide resources to share the good news of Jesus to even more people.

Making disciples is our first objective. Even in farming! The farm has structures that will be used for Bible studies and other community ministry. People will be learning and growing in their knowledge of God every day. As with all of our initiatives, Bible studies will be open to everyone in the community to promote not only faith in Jesus but also sharing good agricultural practices. It's the "Teach a Man to Fish" principle applied to farming.

This farm will serve as a profitable investment, but it will also provide food security, feeding the hungry and vulnerable. Many people in Malawi struggle to access food throughout the year. A portion of the farm is dedicated to growing maize, a staple food in Malawi. Our second objective is to **Help the Most Vulnerable**. This is just one more practical way to achieve that objective.

Our third objective is to **Give People Hope**. In addition to maize, the farm is growing profitable cash crops including ginger, turmeric, peanuts, tomatoes, peppers, and cucumber. Goats are also being raised. The farm will not only reduce dependence on donors from the West, it will produce jobs in communities where the unemployment rate is greater than 80%. That's holistic ministry giving people hope and a future!

Practicing the ministry of presence means seeing people, listening to them, sharing with them, doing life with them, and loving them. Jesus gave us so many examples of how to do this. The farm gives us one more way to live out our fourth objective of **Deepening Faith** as we trust God day to day for all that we need.

The farm is not the only thing growing. This month a Bible study launched in another new area! We didn't have plans to expand again, but people are pleading to know Jesus and the Bible. How can we say no to these requests in communities where so many do not know Him? It is an amazing thing to watch God at work.

The Tradition of Eating Pork and Sauerkraut on New's Years Day



New Year's is packed with traditions, and when it comes to food, few are as iconic—or as lucky—as pork and sauerkraut. This dynamic duo has been a staple on New Year's tables for generations, but have you ever wondered why people eat pork and sauerkraut on New Year's?

Where did this delicious New Year's food tradition come from, and what makes it the perfect way to kick off the year? We went straight to the experts—culinary historian Linda Pelaccio and Drew Anderson, founder of Cleveland Kitchen—to dig into the flavorful history behind this festive pairing.

The New Year's tradition, and the now-classic food pairing, can trace its origins back to Germany. Germans and other pig-raising cultures have been eating these dishes for centuries, with immigrants bringing the tradition to the United States in the 17th and 18th centuries. People of Czech, Hungarian and Polish ancestry enjoy the food pairing as well. That's why eating pork and sauerkraut on New Year's is concentrated in areas with higher populations of these cultures, like the Midwest and the Pennsylvania Dutch country. There's no grand deeper meaning for eating these two foods together, other than the fact that “rich, fatty and salty pork is the soulmate of tart and lean kraut,” as Serious Eats puts it. But as for the specific foods and their connection to New Year's, there's a lot more to it!

Why pork on New Year's Day?

Eating pork on New Year's Day isn't only common because it's delicious—it is also thought to be good luck. Having good luck is popular, so it's no wonder people eat pork and sauerkraut on New Year's. The first reason for this goes back to the pig itself: In order to find food, a pig roots moving forward, according to Pelaccio. “It's good to always go forward into the next year—you don't want to go backward,” she tells Reader's Digest. “For instance, we would not eat lobster for luck in the new year because lobsters walk backward.”

In addition, Pelaccio says that pork is considered good luck because it is so rich in fat, and the fat signifies prosperity. Some people eat pork on the first day of the year in the hopes it will bring a lucky and prosperous year.

Last, round foods are also thought to be good luck, Pelaccio explains because the shape signifies coins and good fortune. Many traditional ways of preparing pork—including an Italian dish called cotechino, which is ground pork stuffed into a casing—are cut into round pieces when served.

Why sauerkraut on New Year's?

Even though sauerkraut is served in strands, the cabbage it originates from is round, which, as Pelaccio mentioned, is a shape thought to bring good luck. So of course people want to ring in 2025 with food seen as positive. It's also green, a color associated with financial prosperity. “Symbolically, as many shreds of cabbage from the kraut is the amount of wealth you'll have in the new year,” says Anderson.

There are also logistical reasons we eat sauerkraut this time of year. According to Anderson, October and November are peak harvest times for cabbage in Germany and Eastern Europe, where sauerkraut is especially popular. At that point, the cabbage is chopped and put in barrels to begin the fermentation process.

“Usually around New Year's [Day], fresh produce is scant, so these fermentation barrels are tapped and the good stuff begins to flow,” Anderson says. “The underlying health benefits of eating kraut also contribute to this tradition, as historically, fermented foods were a big source of vitamin C and nutrients when fresh produce wasn't available.” In other words, people want to start the new year with a healthy meal. This makes eating pork and sauerkraut on New Year's, especially when throwing a New Year's party, even more appealing.

About the experts

Linda Pelaccio is a culinary historian and host of *A Taste of the Past*, a podcast about the history of food throughout different cultures.

Drew Anderson is the co-founder of Cleveland Kitchen, a line of fermented foods, from world-class krauts and kimchi to pickles and salad dressings.

Car Care Corner



More Fuel Saving Tips

Most people are concerned about gas mileage, but it wouldn't seem so to me by the way I see them drive! Today we will go over some tips and tricks that are common among "hyper-milers." I wouldn't recommend all the hyper-miler tricks because they can be really annoying to other drivers, and in extreme cases, make their cars look really goofy (ever seen a car with a "boat tail?"). But there are a few things they do that we can all use for better fuel economy.

What's the rush? Leave a little earlier so you don't feel pressured to pass the guy going the speed limit. An engine humming along at 55 MPH can be shockingly efficient. Every time you moosh that pedal hard enough for a downshift, you're dumping a lot of unnecessary fuel into those cylinders. Besides being dangerous and inefficient, speeding and passing people really doesn't save much time. On a twenty-minute drive, going 10 mph over the speed limit will save you a few minutes max. Is that really worth the wear and tear, the wasted fuel, and the risk of a costly ticket (and even costlier insurance hike)?

If you're using cruise control and coming up to a hill, you might notice that your engine will rev high to keep up your speed as you ascend. Even without touching the pedal, it's the same effect as speeding. The key is constant throttle, avoid mashing the gas pedal and you won't burn as much fuel. Don't use cruise control in hilly areas, use your foot for more efficient driving. I'll give an example of a hyper-mile technique.

Say you're on a flat stretch, and your foot is on the pedal maintaining 55 MPH when you see a hill coming up. Apply enough pressure to get to 60 at the base of the hill and then keep your foot in that position. You'll lose speed going up the hill, but in so doing you may be more than doubling your mileage for that stretch. At the crest of the hill, let off the gas and resume speed by coasting down the other side. These types of speed variation maximize efficiency, but I'm sure you can understand why these methods aren't ideal in heavier traffic.

Otherwise, just avoid jack-rabbit starts from intersections and let yourself coast some distance before stops. Using the pedals less will boost MPGs more (and make your brakes last longer). Tailgaters gonna tailgate, so for the particularly aggressive ones, I watch for an opening in oncoming traffic and then signal to the right while pulling onto the shoulder. They almost always pass immediately. Don't let anyone try to tell you that you can't drive safely and efficiently!

CE&D Update

Adult Sunday School: Come join us on **Sunday mornings at 9:15**. This month we will be finishing the study *The Marvel and Miracle of Advent* by Christine Caine & Lisa Harper and moving on to Heresies in Christianity.



Small Groups: Small Group will be continuing their study with a book by Carol Ruvolo, "God With Us". We meet on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month at 5:30.

Library: We are in need of people to help us unbox books and get them on the shelves.

Children's Sunday School: Michelle will continue with Youth Sunday School at 9:15 and is beginning the study of the Attributes of God for Toddlers. Marilyn and Melanie will lead Children's Church during the month of January. Children's Church will be using the curriculum from TrueWay Kids and the New Testament.

SonShine Kid's Club will resume their regular meetings on January 7th. If you know of any children that would like to join us please see Marilyn or Gail. We will be studying the life of David and a youth and king.

Prayer Breakfast will continue to meet at 9:00 in the fellowship hall on Wednesdays. Join us after for prayer. If you could make breakfast on Wednesday, please sign up on the sheet in the kitchen.

Family Movie Night will be replaced in January with games after the Pork and Sauerkraut dinner.

Next Meeting of CE&D will be on **January 16th** at 4:30.

Choir News



Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Tell of all His wonders. Psalm 105:2

Thank you to the choir for their dedication in learning and presenting the Christmas Cantata *The Lamb of Bethlehem* on December 15th. We are meeting this month to prepare music for the January Singspiration on January 26th. Please consider joining us to make a joyful noise unto the Lord. We soon will begin work on Easter music.

Women's Fellowship News



Women's Fellowship will be meeting on the second Wednesday of the month for this month only. We will be discussing if we would like to have dues at the meetings rather than fundraising dinners or other events. We will also be planning some work sessions to help clean up areas in the church that need our special touch. Be in prayer about this discussion and decision.



Birthdays and Anniversaries



Tanya 1/10

Jerry & Cathy K. 1/09

Marilyn J. 1/11

Jean S. 1/14

Isaiah D. 1/28

Rivka D. 1/28

Upcoming Event

Jan. 1st: New Year's Pulled Pork and Sauerkraut Dinner

Jan. 12th: Un-decorating Party 4:00 pm

Jan. 26th: Singspiration at Big Rock 6:00 pm

Prayers, Praises & Blessings - January 2025

Daily:

Pastor Keith, Marilyn, and family
Big Rock Leaders will serve humbly as godly examples to all.
Big Rock Congregation
The Ministries of Big Rock
SonShine Kid's Club
Missions of Big Rock
Our School District, staff & students
Local, State, Country & World Leaders
CCCC Conference (National & Local)
Persecuted Church
First Responders in the community
Maupo H. & Aleina B. (World Relief Y-Malawi women)
Sari (Compassion Child)
For God's unconditional Love

Military:

Curtis B.
Michael C.
Cabria C.
Rachael L.
Beto V.
Megan R.

Missionaries:

Jeremy, Joy & family
Robert, Terry & family
Kurt, Lisa & family
Harriet S.
Susan S.
Caleb C. and family

Homebound:

Theila H.
Jean S.
Bruce A.
Gaye K.

Prayers for Healing:

David G.	David B.
Jan F.	Michelle G.
Jim G.	Joshua K.
Paul K.	Pat & Joanna S.
Asher	Naomi & Dick R.
Ricky J.	Allen P
Jerry K.	Donna T.
Robin R.	Jerry Z
Sarah R.	Pat F.
Jessica D. Mother-in-law	Cindy
Isaiah	Rivka

Prayers:

Jessica & Prabhu D. & Family
Jim Z.
Nancy M. and Family
Amy J. and family
Dixie, Tony and Cecilia
Shelly (Michelle) G
Preschool teacher for Lewiston
Lance's faith
Beckie and family

Praises & Blessings:

For the many servants that God has provided
in this congregation
For our Prayer Warriors
The health of the congregation
The free gift of Salvation
The many blessings God has showered on
Big Rock in the past year

January 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30	30	31	1 New Year's Day Pork and Sauerkraut Dinner Noon	2 Governing Board Meeting 4:00	3	4
5 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30 Communion Sunday	6	7 SonShine Kid's Club 2:50-4:30	8 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Women's Fellowship Meeting 10:30 Small Group 5:30	9 Choir 5:30	10	11
12 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30 Undecorating Party 4:00	13	14 SonShine Kid's Club 2:50-4:30	15 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Missions Meeting 10:30	16 OE&D Meeting 4:30 Choir 5:30	17	18
19 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30 3rd Sunday Potluck	20 ML King Day	21 SonShine Kid's Club 2:50-4:30	22 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Shepherd's Meeting 10:30 Small Group 5:30	23 Choir 5:30	24	25
26 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30 Singspiration 6:00	27	28 SonShine Kid's Club 2:50-4:30	29 Prayer Breakfast 9:00	30	31	1