

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

REACH OUT TO SERVE OTHERS IN CHRISTIAN LOVE

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The Carrier

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
PEACE LUTHERAN
OCTOBER 2025

PASTOR'S CORNER...

+ “The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7) +

When I was growing up in the church, sometime in the fall, every year, we would hear something on the subject of stewardship. It might be spoken, it might be written, it might be seen, it might even be sung. There might even be a special meal or meeting to discuss the subject. Temple talks, pledge cards, and a dedication Sunday were scheduled and used. Through it all, the message was clear: all that we have, and all that we are, is a gift from God, and being grateful for and generous with those gifts is what stewardship is all about. All that we are, and all that we have, are gifted to us from a loving God who first gives to us. He gives us his Son Jesus to be our Savior from the sin and separation that we bring upon ourselves. We give of ourselves because God first gives to us. Our heavenly Father loves us so deeply, and we respond with faithful generosity.

I am reminded of the royal legend that tells of Charlemagne who, before he died, asked to be entombed sitting upright on his throne, his crown placed upon his head and his scepter in his hand. His royal cape was to be draped around his shoulders, and an open book was to be placed in his lap. Several hundred years later, Emperor Frederick Barbarossa wanted to preserve the bones of Charlemagne, his model in the Christian faith. He sent a team to open the tomb and place the bones in a golden reliquary, while he proclaimed Charlemagne's canonization. The legendary report of this

Prayerfully I Walk...

*Time alone in an
autumn wood, I stroll on
a mosaic carpet of moist
multicolored leaves --
rust brown, yellow,
crimson. I ponder the deep
red patches, scattered every
step of my way. Silently
they speak of our Savior's
redemptive, sacrificial
blood -- blessing each pace
on the path of life.*

~ Charlotte Adelsperger

team is that the body was just as Charlemagne had ordered, but several things had happened over the centuries. The crown was tilted and the mantle was moth-eaten; the body was disfigured, but on the skeletal thighs was the book that Charlemagne had requested: the Holy Bible. The book was open, and one bony finger pointed to these words: "What gain, then, is it for a man to win the whole world and lose his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

One Sunday at worship, a little boy places his shoe, all properly tied up, into the offering plate, with the words: "I learned to tithe my shoe!" Even with such humorous misunderstanding, the boy has learned the right lesson: all that we have belongs to the Lord, and is on loan to us for a season. Learnings like these can be called spiritual practices: specific activities that we do to deepen our relationships with the Divine and with the world around us. As a spiritual practice stewardship is, of course, our monetary giving to the work of the church, but it is also the ways in which we share our time and our talents with others, as well as how we care for our own body, mind, and spirit. The practice of stewardship involves the way we speak of our faith in Jesus. As stewards of the Good News, we speak confidently, yet boldly, of what God has done for the whole world, and for us, through Jesus. Our participation in worship and study, and in the Sacraments, proclaims Jesus' death and resurrection until he comes again.

The practice of stewardship also involves the way we spend our time, energy, and money in our daily lives as we serve faithfully in our various vocations: family, citizen, career, parishioner, student, teacher, friend, neighbor, colleague. We serve God in our day-to-day lives within the church, as well as outside the four walls of our building, out there in our neighborhoods and communities.

God takes care of us and provides for our every need, even those we may not be aware of. Long before Zacchaeus could not see Jesus, the tree was already planted to meet his need. (Luke 19:1-10) In what kinds of similar ways has God been at work in your life, providing your "daily bread", for which we regularly pray? (Matthew 6:11) If we can think of nothing else to pray, in any kind of situation that we may find ourselves in, we can always thank God for the gift of his Son. One Sunday School teacher tells of leading a class of young students in singing, "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart." (Where?) "Down in my heart to stay!" Hearing that last phrase, one 5-year-old little girl looks up with a puzzled look on her face and asks, "On Tuesday?" "No," the teacher laughs, "Not Tuesday – TO STAY!" "But you said Tuesday!" the child replies. That remark leads the class into a discussion about having joy in our hearts on Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday, and every day of the week. A boy remarks, "Yeh, 24/7!"

What a lesson this is for each of us! We all have the joy of the Lord in our hearts, every day of the week and every hour of the day! As people who have received all things as gifts from God, as well as the ability and desire to develop these gifts, we share with others a portion of what we have been given. The spiritual practice of stewardship is informed by Scripture, at worship and in study, regular and unintentional, done in relationship with God and in conversation with our community of faith, and is proportional to our resources. We faithfully manage our resources for the benefit of our own lives, and we generously give away a portion for the benefit of others, and for the proclamation of the Gospel. As this month we come once again to the remembrance of the Reformation, I invite you to take a look at your own practices of stewardship. God does not intend for us to impoverish ourselves. How are you taking good care of yourself and your loved ones? How are you deepening your relationship with God? How are you spending your time and talents, as well as your treasure, to further the Good News of Jesus? And how can you continue to be a good example to those who look up to you?

In this Season of Autumn, rich blessings to you!

Pastor Bartos +

+ "And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, 'He scatters abroad; he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever'." (2 Corinthians 9:8-9) +

FUN PAGE

CANDY CORN FUN FACTS & LAUGHS

It's a love-it or hate-it kind of Candy.

Jelly Belly, the same company that makes your beloved jelly beans, has been making candy corn longer than any other running company today. The company, then named Goelitz Confectionery Company, began making the candy around 1898 in its Ohio factory, and the company claims that candy corn was such a success it "carried the company through two World Wars and the Depression."

Brach's, the number one candy corn seller today, makes candy corn that is NOT vegetarian.

People used to associate candy corn with chickens. Candy corn used to be called "chicken feed"; the tagline from the 1800's ad states it's "Something worth crowing over."

It has more potential to cause tooth decay than chocolate-based Halloween candy because it's essentially "all sugar."

Candy corn also used to be considered a summertime candy, it was placed next to favorites like peanuts, jelly beans & orange slices.

Candy corn flavored bagels exist. The Bagel Store, with two locations in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, sells a seasonal "Candy Corn Bagel" every year. It's best topped with a "marshmallow chocolate chip spread".

Candy corn flavored martinis also exist.

And candy corn babies exist. That's right. People seem to like to dress up their children as candy corn for Halloween.

Comedian Lewis Black has dedicated an entire sketch to disliking candy corn, saying it's "the only candy in the history of America that's never been advertised because companies keep recycling all the old candy corn we never eat year after year, the only candy corn that was ever made was made in 1911.

That may explain why you absolutely cannot escape it, no matter the season. There's "Reindeer Corn" for Christmas, "Cupid Corn" for Valentine's Day, & "Bunny Corn" for Easter.

There is really only way one to eat Candy Corn...1. eat one. 2. remember candy corn is gross & 3. leave the rest!



What parasites do candy corns get? Gummy Worms!

What do you get if you cross a werewolf & a candy corn? A corn dog!

Why was the candy corn self-conscious? It had a jelly belly!



FALL FOLIAGE

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

F	Y	S	D	E	E	W	L
C	C	O	L	D	S	E	A
O	S	L	J	E	G	U	N
L	P	A	E	N	T	S	D
O	O	R	A	U	E	E	S
R	T	H	M	A	V	V	C
S	C	N	S	M	R	I	A
E	L	O	A	O	E	R	P
V	N	P	F	R	S	D	E
A	S	H	S	U	B	L	I
E	G	N	A	R	O	I	A
L	G	E	K	L	A	W	V

The words appear UP, DOWN, BACKWARDS, and DIAGONALLY. Find and circle each word.



- AUTUMN
- BUSH
- CHANGE
- COLD
- COLORS
- DRIVES
- ENJOY
- LANDSCAPE
- LEAVES
- MAPS
- OBSERVE
- ORANGE
- SEASON
- SPOT
- TREES
- VIBRANT
- WALK
- WEEDS

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

GREETERS	8:30 AM	10:30 AM
OCT. 5, 2025	LINDA KRIESER	LENNY VAN DRIEL
OCT. 12, 2025	LINDA KRIESER	KURT SCHWIEDERGOLL
OCT. 19, 2025	LINDA KRIESER	FAYLA NICKENS
OCT. 26, 2025	LINDA KRIESER	MARY VAN DRIEL
LECTORS	8:30 AM	10:30 AM
OCT. 5, 2025	ED KRIESER	MARY VAN DRIEL
OCT. 12, 2025	ANNETTA MARIC	DEAN SPAULDING
OCT. 19, 2025	CINDY NEVINS	REID DALTON
OCT. 26, 2025	ED KRIESER	LENNY VAN DRIEL

Let's Celebrate!

BIRTHDAYS

October 4th – Marlys Aubol
October 11th – Bev Myhre
October 12th – Marvin Fredrick
October 29th - Jim Jinkerson
October 31st – KyLynn Patten

ANNIVERSARIES

October 10th – Lenny & Mary Van Driel – 55 years
October 26th – Jake & Hannah Bettlach – 12 years

*Wishing you all much happiness and
many blessings on your special day!*

**Scarecrows, corn rows,
pumpkins on the vine.
Leaves curl, wind swirls,
Fall is right on time!**

COMM. ASSISTANTS

Oct. 5th - 8:30 - Stan B
10:30 - Mary & Lenny

Oct. 19th - 8:30 - Stan B.
10:30 - Greg & Anna

ALTAR CARE

Mary Van Driel

Thank you all for your
time & effort to help make
every Sunday the best!

If anyone would like to
volunteer in 2026, please
contact me in the office &
we can work you in!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!

**Volunteer! Start where you are,
use what you have, do what you can!**

POSITION 1: GREETERS/USHERS

DESCRIPTION: A person(s) who greets people
entering a church service with a friendly smile,
hands out bulletins, & helps with the offering
during services.

POSITION 2: LECTORS

DESCRIPTION: A reader(s), especially someone
who reads lessons in a church service. (1 reading
at early worship; 2 readings at late worship)

POSITION 3: COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

DESCRIPTION: A person(s) who helps the
Pastor with the sacraments during communion.
(Bi-monthly)

POSITION 4: POWERPOINT OPERATOR

DESCRIPTION: A person(s) who runs the power
point program during service.

MOST POSITIONS ARE A ONCE A MONTH
OBLIGATION, EXCEPT COMMUNION ASSITANTS
(BI-MONTHLY); IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO BE HERE
ON YOUR ASSIGNED DAY, YOU CAN SWITCH
WITH ANOTHER VOLUNTEER.

**VOLUNTEERS ARE NOT PAID – NOT BECAUSE
THEY ARE WORTHLESS, BUT BECAUSE THEY
ARE PRICELESS!**

LINDA'S PEN...

Dear Congregation –

Since the water damage in Pastor's office &
Council room, I have been made aware of deep
discord. As the president, I take **full** responsibility for
the decisions made & lack of communication. It pains
me that so many people are upset with one another &
do not participate, but yet want to be in the decisions
that have to be made on the spur of the moment.

If you have any criticism come to me. We are
the Lord's children & call ourselves Christians. We are
one in the body of Christ. This is the Lord's house. We
need to remember that & treat it & each other, as such.

Everyone is invited to the council meetings to
express concerns. If you do not want to come or can't
make the meeting, please talk to a council member you
feel comfortable with. They do not have to mention
names, but they will bring your concerns to the table.

Our little church is Ed's & my family in Missouri.
We love everyone in this church. Let's keep our
members, our Pastor & our church in our daily prayers.

In Christian Love,

Linda

STEWARDSHIP CORNER...

Peace is a congregation that cares about supporting
the community and our neighbors in need. One way that we
do this is through various ministry projects throughout the
year, such as our assistance to families at Thanksgiving and
Christmas times. We support local organizations that are
doing important work, like Christian Action Ministries (CAM)
and our Hollister schools. As a part of God's work, each fall
we fill shoeboxes through the work of Franklin Graham's
"Samaritan's Purse," which disperses important personal
items to those in need around the world. These items we
receive throughout the year, and dedicate them on the first
Sunday of each month through our grocery cart in the
narthex. And, of course, we encourage your regular financial
support of our ELCA ministries, like the Domestic Disaster
Response, which helps to provide assistance across our land
during emergency situations like floods and storms. Lutheran
World Relief and the World Hunger Appeal do the same thing
on a worldwide basis. We are grateful for your continuing
support of these important ministries of our church, as well as
of our ongoing work together as a congregation here at
Peace. In Jesus' name, thank you!



OCC CORNER

We are coming to the final push for donations to
OCC this year. We are in need of some items as listed
below:

Notepads, pens, band-aids, clothes pins, safety
pins, flip flops (all sizes); Yoyos. (Dollar stores have
them reasonably priced); small baby dolls; dental floss;
large scissors (Dollar Tree); large erasers (not pencil
tops); toy cars, ie, Matchbox or similar; hair scrunchies;
bracelets of any kinds & something we recently
learned: "There is always room for Chapstick!"

We had no idea we could send Chapstick! It is,
allowed, but NO medicated such as Blistex. Just regular
Chapstick or lip balm. No lip gloss however.

Thanks to you all for your support of this
mission.

The OCC team

DON'T FORGET!

Save your Harter House Receipts & Best Choice
Labels. There is a basket in the fellowship hall to put
them in, or you can put them in your offering envelopes
& StefAnie will take care of them from there.

BETHEL CLASSES

For those adults who are students in our current
Bethel Series classes, sessions have resumed once
again, after the delays and cancellations. We anticipate
a good conclusion to our Old Testament studies, as well
as a meaningful look at the New Testament. We ask
you to continue your prayers for these students: Dean
Spaulding, Reid Dalton, Carla Land, and Ilene Marquis.
Thank you for your support as we continue to grow in
our faith relationship with Jesus, our Christ.

CROCKTOBER RECIPES

♦ BREAKFAST CASSEROLE:

INGREDIENTS: 1 30-oz. package of frozen, shredded hash browns; 1 ½ lb. chorizo sausage (fresh mexican sausage); 12 eggs; 1 C half n half; ½ C sour cream; 1 ½ tsp. kosher salt; 1 tsp. black pepper: ½ C chopped red onion; 1 red bell pepper, chopped; 1 jalapeño pepper, chopped; 2 C shredded Mexican four cheese blend; butter or nonstick spray; salsa or pico de gallo; & sliced avocado.

DIRECTIONS: Let the hash browns sit at room temperature for 30 minutes to partially thaw. Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add the sausage & break up into small pieces with a wooden spoon. Cook the meat until no pink pieces remain, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel lined plate to drain & cool slightly. In a large bowl, whisk to combine the eggs, half n half, sour cream, salt & pepper. Fold in the red onion, red bell pepper, jalapeño, shredded cheese & cooked chorizo. With your hands, or by tapping the bag on the counter, break apart any clumps remaining in the hash brown bag. Fold into the egg mixture until fully combined. (This mixture can be covered & refrigerated for up to 12 hours before cooking.) Spray the insert of a 6 qt slow cooker with nonstick spray. Transfer the egg mixture to the insert & spread into an even layer. Cover & cook for 8 to 9 hours on low heat. Hold on warm for up to 1 hour. Serve scoops topped with salsa or pico del gallo & sliced avocado, if you like.

♦ BEER CHEESE DIP

INGREDIENTS: ¼ C unsalted butter; ½ C finely chopped yellow onion; ¼ C all-purpose flour; 1 (12-oz.) can IPA beer; ¼ C half n half; 6 oz. shredded fontina cheese; 6 oz. shredded sharp yellow cheddar cheese; 1 tsp. dijon mustard; ½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce; chopped chives &/or black pepper, for garnish; & pretzels, to serve.

DIRECTIONS: In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Add the onion & cook, stirring, until softened, 4 to 6 minutes. Gradually whisk in the flour & cook, whisking constantly, until lightly browned, about 1 minute. Gradually whisk in the beer & half n half. Cook, whisking constantly, until the sauce is thickened & just begins to bubble, 5 to 7 minutes. Reduce the heat to low & gradually add the cheeses, whisking constantly, until melted & combined. Remove from the heat. Whisk in the Dijon mustard & the Worcestershire sauce. Garnish with chives & black pepper, if you like. Serve with pretzels; re-warm gently as needed.

♦ QUESO DIP

INGREDIENTS: 12 oz. white American cheese; 4 oz. pepper jack cheese, shredded; 2/3 C half-N-half; 1 clove garlic, chopped; 1 jalapeño, chopped; ½ tsp. ground black pepper; 4 oz. green chiles, drained; diced tomatoes, chopped cilantro, & sliced fresh jalapeño, to top.

DIRECTIONS: In the base of a slow cooker, stir to combine both cheeses, the half-N-half, garlic, jalapeño, & black pepper. Cover & cook on high for 50 minutes, stirring once halfway through. Stir in the green chiles. Transfer to a serving bowl or reduce the temperature of the slow cooker to warm & keep covered until ready to serve. Top with diced tomatoes, cilantro, & sliced jalapeño. Serve immediately.

♦ COCKTAIL MEATBALLS

INGREDIENTS: 1 lb. ground beef; 1 lb. ground pork; 1 C breadcrumbs; ½ C grated onion (about 1 small onion); ½ C fresh parsley. finely chopped; 2 large eggs; 1 tsp. kosher salt; & ¼ tsp. black pepper. **FOR THE SAUCE:** 1 12 oz bottle chili sauce; ½ C apricot preserves; 1 Tbsp. soy sauce; & 1 Tbsp. sriracha.

DIRECTIONS: For the meatballs: Combine the beef, pork, breadcrumbs, onion, parsley, eggs, salt & pepper in a large bowl & mix until combined. Using a tablespoon measure, scoop & roll the meat into about 45 small meatballs. **For the sauce:** Whisk the chili sauce, apricot preserves, soy sauce & sriracha in a 4 to 6 qt slow cooker. Remove ½ C of the sauce & set aside. Nestle the meatballs in the remaining sauce in the slow cooker in 2 layers. Pour the reserved sauce over the top layer of meatballs. Cover & cook on high until the meatballs are cooked through & the sauce is thick, 4 hours, gently stirring the meatballs halfway through to coat with the sauce. Serve from the slow cooker or spoon into a shallow bowl.

♦ MAC & CHEESE

INGREDIENTS: 1 - 16-oz. box elbow macaroni; 2 ½ C whole milk, plus more for serving; 1 - 12-oz. can evaporated milk; ½ C heavy cream; 4 Tbsp. unsalted butter; 1 tsp. kosher salt; ½ tsp. ground black pepper; ¼ tsp. paprika; 1/8 tsp. cayenne; ¼ lb. American cheese, cubed; 1 - 8-oz. bag shredded sharp cheddar cheese; & 1 C shredded smoked gouda cheese.

DIRECTIONS: In a 6 to 8-qt slow-cooker, stir together the macaroni, whole milk, evaporated milk, heavy cream, butter, salt, pepper, paprika, & cayenne. Cover & cook on high for 30 minutes. Stir the mixture, cover, & cook until the noodles are almost tender, about 25 minutes more. (Check the noodles—if they are still too firm, continue to cook in 10 minute increments until they are tender, with a slight bite.) With the slow cooker still on high heat, add the American cheese, gently folding it into the macaroni with a rubber spatula until almost melted. Working in three batches, gently fold in the cheddar & gouda, making sure the cheese is fully melted before adding the next batch. Serve immediately, or set the slow cooker to warm for up to 2 hours. (When holding the mac & cheese on warm for serving, gently stir occasionally & fold in 2 Tbsp of warm milk, as needed, to loosen the sauce.)

♦ GREEN BEANS

INGREDIENTS: 8 slices thick-cut bacon, sliced ½ in thick; 1 medium yellow onion, chopped; 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped; ¼ C chicken broth; 1 - 15-oz. can diced tomatoes; 1 - 8-oz. can tomato sauce; 2 ½ tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste; 1 ½ tsp. paprika 1 tsp. dried oregano; 1 tsp. ground black pepper; ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes; 2 lb. fresh green beans, trimmed; & 1 ½ Tbsp. red wine vinegar.

DIRECTIONS: In a medium skillet over medium-high heat, cook the bacon until crispy, 7 to 9 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate, reserving the drippings in the skillet. Add the onion to the skillet & reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring frequently, until the onion is softened & lightly golden, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic & cook until fragrant, 30 seconds. Add the broth & scrape up any browned bits. Add the mixture to a 6-qt slow cooker. To the slow cooker, add the tomatoes, tomato sauce, salt, paprika, oregano, black pepper, red pepper flakes, & half of the bacon, stirring well to combine. Stir in the green beans. Cover & cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 3 hours. Stir the vinegar into the green beans & taste for salt. Cover & cook for 1 hour until the beans are tender. Hold on warm for up to 4 hours. Serve with remaining crispy bacon.

♦ STUFFING

INGREDIENTS: ¼ C butter; 3 pieces celery, chopped; 1 yellow onion, chopped; ½ tsp. kosher salt; ¼ tsp. ground black pepper; 1 - 8-oz. package sliced mushrooms; 2 cloves garlic, chopped; 1 - 10.75-oz. can cream of mushroom soup; 1 - 14.5-oz. can chicken broth; 1 egg; 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley, plus more for serving; 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh rosemary; 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh sage; & 1 - 12-oz. bag dried bread cubes.

DIRECTIONS: In a large skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the celery, onion, salt, & pepper & cook for 4 minutes. Add the mushrooms & garlic & cook for another 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove the vegetables from the heat. Meanwhile, in the base of a 6 qt slow cooker, whisk to combine the soup, broth, egg, parsley, rosemary, & sage. Add the bread & fold together until the cubes are well coated. Gently fold in the vegetable mixture. Cover & cook on high heat for 30 minutes. Then reduce the heat to low for 2 more hours. (Do not open or stir while cooking.) The top of the stuffing should be steaming & the temperature in the center should be around 160°F when finished cooking. Transfer to a serving bowl, or hold on warm heat in the slow cooker, covered, for up to 1 hour.

♦ CHICKEN & DUMPLINGS

INGREDIENTS: 4 garlic cloves, minced; 3 stalks celery, thinly sliced; 2 medium carrots, thinly sliced; 1 large yellow onion, sliced; 2 (10.5-oz.) cans cream of chicken soup; 2 (10.5-oz.) cans cream of mushroom soup; 2 C chicken broth; 1 ½ lb. boneless skinless chicken thighs; 1 C frozen peas; 1 (6-oz.) can buttermilk biscuits; 1 C white cheddar cheese (about 4 oz.); 2 Tbsp. minced fresh chives; & chopped parsley, for serving.

DIRECTIONS: Sprinkle the garlic, celery, carrots, & onion into the bottom of a 6- to 8-quart slow cooker. Add the chicken soup, mushroom soup, & broth, & whisk together. Add the chicken, cover, & cook for 2 hours on high. After 2 hours, remove the chicken to a cutting board. When cool enough to handle, shred the meat with a fork. Return the shredded chicken to the slow cooker, & add the peas. Lay the biscuits out on a clean work surface. Sprinkle with the cheddar & chives, lightly pressing the cheese & chives into the biscuits to adhere. Cut each biscuit into fourths & place them on the surface of the soup. Cover & cook until the biscuits are cooked through, 20 to 30 minutes. Serve the soup topped with parsley.

♦ CROCK-POT CANDY

INGREDIENTS: 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, diced; 16 oz. almond bark; 12 oz. bag semi-sweet chocolate chips; 10 oz. dark chocolate chips; 10 oz. peanut butter chips; 3 C salted, roasted peanuts; 1 ½ C lightly crushed, ridged potato chips; 1 ½ C crushed pretzel twists or skinny sticks; 1 C red & green coated candies, such as M&Ms, optional; & ¼ C sprinkles (optional).

DIRECTIONS: Place the butter in the base of a slow cooker. Chop the almond bark into pieces about the size of the chocolate chips. Add the almond bark, semi-sweet, dark, & peanut butter chips to the slow cooker. Cover with a lid & cook on high for 30 minutes. Remove the lid & stir to combine. Reduce the heat to low & cook for another 10 to 20 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes, until all of the chips are melted. Reduce the slow cooker temperature to hold warm. Gently stir in the peanuts, potato chips, & pretzels. Line 3 sheet trays with parchment paper. Using a spoon, drop mounded scoops (about 1 ½ Tbsp each) onto the sheet trays, about 1 in apart (the candies will spread & settle a little once dropped). Gently press 3 to 5 coated candies into the top of each piece of candy & sprinkle with sprinkles, if desired. Let rest at room temperature until firm, 30 to 45 minutes. Store in a single layer, between sheets of parchment paper, in the refrigerator, for up to 1 week.

♦ CROCK POT HOT CHOCOLATE

INGREDIENTS: ½ C granulated sugar; 1/3 C unsweetened cocoa powder; 6 C whole milk; 2 C heavy cream; 2 - 4-oz. semisweet chocolate bars, chopped; 2 tsp. vanilla extract; 1 tsp. instant espresso or coffee; 15 marshmallows, plus more for garnish; 8 oz. Irish cream liqueur (such as Bailey's), optional; & shaved chocolate, for garnish.

DIRECTIONS: Whisk together the sugar & cocoa powder in a 6 qt slow cooker. Gradually add the milk, whisking constantly to incorporate. Whisk in the heavy cream, chopped chocolate, vanilla extract, & instant espresso. Cover & cook on low heat, whisking occasionally, until the chocolate is melted & the mixture is hot & well combined, about 2 hours. Add the marshmallows & cook until the marshmallows begin to melt into the hot chocolate, about 2 minutes. Stir in the Irish cream liqueur, if using. Set the slow cooker to warm. Ladle the hot chocolate into serving mugs, & top with more marshmallows & shaved chocolate, if you like.