



Lenten Devotions

**CHURCH STREET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
2023**

Dear Church Street Family,

The Lenten Devotional booklet truly is a gift of love. You love to read them, and church members and clergy love to write them.

For decades, Church Street members have offered meaningful reflections, passages of scripture, favorite seasonal stories, and prayers that have offered glimpses of our fellow Church Streeters' journeys of faith which have in turn enriched our faith. This year is no different, except in addition to written reflections and sweetly crafted art from the youngest in our faith family, you will find meaningful hymns and musical pieces selected by members of the Parish Adult Choir within these pages!

For the past several years, **Barry Christmas** has served as chairperson of Congregational Care Committee and has taken on the responsibility of receiving the devotions, editing, and putting them in a meaningful order. This is truly a labor of love as he has read each one and chosen the day it needs to be shared. He has also sent gentle reminders about deadlines and number of words, and has included helpful suggestions of themes and verses for those of us who need the extra help!

We dedicate this year's devotional booklet to Barry in thanksgiving for his gift of love!

May we each have a blessed Lent!
Rev. Catherine Nance, Senior Pastor

Missions Lenten Countdown

The **Missions Lenten Countdown** is designed to be a family-friendly practice in giving. Included in the Lenten devotionals are 10 common items needed by our Sharing Shops and Beacon of Hope Food Co-Op, to be collected throughout Lent. Each day includes an item and a short prayer to say with your family for those who will receive the item. This is a wonderful way to discuss service as a family and giving to our neighbors who are less fortunate. As you conclude your mission giving practice, **please plan to bring your items to the Welcome Center on Palm Sunday, April 2.** Email Rev. Palmer Cantler at pcantler@churchstreetumc.org for more information.

ITEMS TO COLLECT:

- Oil
- Dish Soap
- Cereal (hot or cold)
- Granola & Snack Bars
- Crackers & Canned Pasta
- Toilet Paper
- Coffee, Tea, Non-Dairy Creamer
- Shampoo & Body Wash
- Juice Boxes
- Cleaning Supplies

Please return all items on Palm Sunday, April 2, to the Welcome Center!

FRONT COVER PAINTING BY BENJAMIN STALCUP.
BACK COVER PAINTING BY EVELYN HEATHERLY.

2023 Lenten Programs and Events

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22 ~ ASH WEDNESDAY

Imposition of Ashes

6:30-7:45 a.m. - Drive-thru in Magnolia Parking Lot

12 Noon - Daytime Service in the Nave

6:00 p.m. - Evening Service in the Nave

WEDNESDAYS, MARCH 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 ~ NOON LENTEN SERVICES WITH LUNCHEON AT THESE LOCATIONS:

3/1: First Baptist Knoxville

3/8: Church Street UMC with Crossings Knoxville

3/15: Immaculate Conception Church

3/22: St. John's Episcopal Cathedral

3/29: First Presbyterian Church

SATURDAY, APRIL 8 ~ CHILDREN'S EASTER EGG HUNT

10 a.m. at Whitlow Park in Sequoyah Hills

For children through fifth grade

Information about Lenten studies may be found by visiting
www.churchstreetumc.org/education

Holy Week Services

SUNDAY, APRIL 2 ~ PALM SUNDAY

8:30 & 11 a.m.: Parish Youth and Children's Choirs, Nave

Return Lenten Missions Countdown Items to the Welcome Center

THURSDAY, APRIL 6 ~ MAUNDY THURSDAY

7 p.m. in the Nave and online

FRIDAY, APRIL 7 ~ GOOD FRIDAY

12 p.m. in the Nave and 7 p.m. online

SUNDAY, APRIL 9 ~ EASTER SUNDAY

Worship Services

7 a.m. Sunrise Service: Courtyard

8:30 & 11 a.m.: Parish Adult Choir and the Tennessee Brass, Nave

11 a.m.: Rejoice! Online at www.youtube.com/churchstreetumc

Mission Giving February 22: Liquid or Spray Vegetable Oil

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday when oil is mixed with palm ashes to make the sign of the cross on our foreheads. Today as we begin our Lenten practice of giving, may we remember the feel of that oil.

Prayer: Reconciling God, we begin this Lenten journey and seek to serve our neighbor. Let us never forget the message of Jesus to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. Bless the families that will receive these gifts that they may grow strong and know that they are lifted in prayer. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22
ASH WEDNESDAY - MORNING DEVOTION

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days

Read: Matthew 4:1-3

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days 269

1. Lord, who through - out these for - ty days for
2. As thou with Sa - tan didst con - tend, and
3. As thou didst hun - ger bear, and thirst, so
4. And through these days of pen - i - tence, and
5. A - bide with us, that so, this life of

us didst fast and pray, teach us with thee to
didst the vic - tory win, O give us strength in
teach us, gra - cious Lord, to die to self, and
through thy pas - sion - tide, yea, ev - er - more in
suf - fer - ing o - ver past, an Eas - ter of un -

mourn our sins and close by thee to stay.
thee to fight, in thee to con - quer sin.
chief - ly live by thy most ho - ly word.
life and death, Je - sus, with us a - bide.
end - ing joy we may at - tain at last.

Ash Wednesday is a time to begin reflection on life. It is almost like a new year. What would you like to get rid of this season of Lent? Guilt? Sorrow? Regrets? A burden? This wonderful service is a time of reflection to think about things and release them. It truly is an important time for all who are followers of Christ to begin their Easter journey.

Ash Wednesday is one of my favorite services. A mark on the forehead seals you to the fact that you have reflected and chosen a path to release the things that so easily consume us and take us away from being a Light to the world. Begin your Easter journey in reflection and with confidence that there can be change in your world.

Prayer Be with us through this season, Lord, and all our earthly days, that when the final Easter dawns, we join in heaven's praise. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22
ASH WEDNESDAY - EVENING DEVOTION

Depending on the Divine

Read: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; and
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Lent has always been a time for me to reflect upon my great need for God. I admit this has largely been a philosophical or emotional exercise. Don't get me wrong, the "need" I have felt has been real, but it has always seemed like a need that not everyone had to know about. I like that. I like being able to honestly tell folks, "I need and depend upon God," without having to tell them how exactly. I am more private than I often let on; I share all sorts of things, all types of facts about my life. But it is hard for me to share my needs or fears.

In recent months I have had obvious and public needs. I have been unable to drive and have had other limitations due to a vision condition that, at least as I write this, persists. Our lectionary readings for Ash Wednesday all contain this theme of need for God. Much of the emphasis is on need for repentance and renewal, but we can understand the call to be an invitation to recognize our dependence upon God. As we begin this Lenten season, may we all honestly evaluate our needs and open ourselves to how God is seeking to care for us.

Prayer Lord, may you renew us this Lent that we may always know our need for you and trust in your grace. Amen.

REV. TIM BEST, SENIOR ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Mission Giving February 26: Dish Soap

While SNAP benefits (more commonly known as food stamps) can be used to purchase food, they do not cover cleaning supplies. After paying monthly bills, there may not be enough money to purchase dish soap when you live on a fixed income.

Prayer: Sanctifying God, your mercy washes us of our sins and refreshes us anew. May this dish soap serve to bless a family. Cleanse our hearts and spirits this Lent as we aim to live more fully into your love for all people. In Jesus' name; amen.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26
FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT - MORNING DEVOTION

When Jesus Came to Jordan

Read: Matthew 3:13-17, 4:1-11; Mark 1:9-13; Luke 21-23, 4:1-13; John
1:29-34

*“When Jesus came to Jordan, to be baptized by John
He did not come for pardon, but as the Sinless One.
He came to share repentance, with all who mourn their sins,
to speak the vital sentence with which good news begins.”*

I don't remember exactly how old I was when I first encountered this hymn, but I was an adult, because I was standing in the balcony of Church Street, the one on the lectern side where I still sit to this day. The memory is very clear, because the last line of the above verse lit a spark in my head. Suddenly I wasn't just trying to follow the tune, I paid attention to the words, and the next verse:

*“He came to share temptation, our utmost woe and loss,
for us and our salvation to die upon the cross.
So when the dove descended on him the Son of Man,
the hidden years had ended, the age of grace began.”*

Now the spark was a flame—Jesus begins the age of grace, his ministry, after his baptism by John. The descending dove is recorded in all four of the gospels, testifying to the vision and the voice of God. Luke tells us that Jesus was about 30 years old when this happened. In the previous chapter of Luke's gospel, Jesus is only twelve and has just frightened the life out of Mary and Joseph by disappearing in Jerusalem in three days before being found in the temple. He was taken back to Nazareth by his parents and settled down to being an obedient son. The years between twelve and thirty are a mystery to us; many scholars and writers have speculated about what Jesus was doing during that time but no one really knows. Remembering what those years were like in my own life, I wonder about Jesus, facing all the challenges of adolescence and becoming an adult. He had to have handled it better than I did—the words “he grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” are enough to tell me that. Those hidden years were spent learning, gaining self-knowledge and understanding, until he felt called to go to Jordan, to begin his ministry and his journey to the cross.

The story of Jesus and his temptation in the desert shows clearly that Jesus knows who he is, has turned his life toward God, and is determined to follow God's plan from now on. This is our decision too, and every year

during Lent we are asked to renew it: to turn our lives toward our Lord, and pray for his strength and purpose to guide us on our journey. The last verse is a good prayer for Lent, or any time we want to open our hearts to God.

Prayer

*“Come Holy Spirit, aid us to keep the vows we make;
this very day invade us and every bondage break.
Come give our lives direction, the gift we covet most:
to share the Resurrection that leads to Pentecost.”*

Laura Still
Art by Brendan Hennessey



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26
FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT - EVENING DEVOTION

Who has Moved?

Read: Psalm 27:8-9

“You have said, ‘Seek My face.’ My heart says to You, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek.’ Hide not Your face from me. Turn not Your servant away in anger, O You who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!”

There is a decades-old joke where a couple is riding in their car together, and the wife says to her husband who is driving, “Sweetheart, do you remember how romantic we used to be when we first got married? We snuggled so close together in the car every time we drove anywhere.” The husband replied, “Yes dear, I remember, but I’m not the one who moved.”

During the season of Lent we focus on Christ’s suffering and death, and the reason His sacrifice was so needed. What better way to do that than an examination of our own relationship with God. Do you ever feel that God has abandoned you? Do you feel that you and our Creator are no longer close?

Sometimes we leave our prayer time until the last minute, lying in bed as we voice our concerns and thanks to God before sleep overtakes us. Sometimes we stop praying and feel like we’re just talking to ourselves. We begin doubting that God is listening to us at all!

The Psalmist speaks about our relationship with God in Psalm 27: 8-9, where he writes, “You have said, ‘Seek My face.’ My heart says to You, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek.’ Hide not Your face from me. Turn not Your servant away in anger, O You who have been my help. Cast me not off; forsake me not, O God of my salvation!”

In reality, God has not abandoned us. He is right where He always is, loving us and desiring a close relationship with us. So often it is us who have pulled away, even trying to hide our sins from God.

For our salvation, God did turn away from Jesus as He was dying on the cross. Jesus suffered this abandonment so that we would never have to be forsaken by God. We can turn to the empty tomb and know that we have the assurance that God is always there for us!

Prayer Forgive me, ever present and loving Lord, for the times I have pulled away from you. Help me to seek a close and dependent life with You and know that you will always be there with your unfailing love. Amen.

DAVID LINEBERGER

SUNDAY, MARCH 5
SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT - MORNING DEVOTION

Fasting from What to What?

Read: Matthew 6:17-18

Fasting is normally not a real popular word. When I was growing up I heard that others fasted from meat on Fridays. As I grew and began reading and studying the scriptures, I learned that fasting was more than just a “Friday thing.” The practice of fasting is scriptural and in both Old and New Testaments. Jesus fasted; he gave instructions for fasting; and even the early church practiced fasting. Fasting is part of our Christian DNA.

Most people think about fasting during the season of Lent. We think about something that we can easily give up like chocolate and say we are fasting. The more I learn the more I realize that fasting is more than depriving ourselves of food and drink. Fasting is an act of humbling yourself before God and relying more fully on God’s strength and guidance. Fasting can involve abstaining from physical nourishment, but it can also involve abstaining from things and behaviors that seem to control our lives. If we give up or fast from nourishment, things or behaviors, then what are we to take up in its place?

Lent is a good time to practice fasting, but don’t stop there. Fasting is not just a Lent thing; it’s a year-long spiritual discipline. Fast from a meal each week and give that money to a food charity. Stop using social media for a certain time period and actually write or call a homebound person. Get away from the iPad or TV for a couple of hours or half a day and volunteer at a local nonprofit. Fasting is denying ourselves so we can take up what God would have us do.

Prayer God, give me strength and guidance to deny myself this Lent and beyond for the sake of others. Amen.

REV. RICK ISBELL

Mission Giving March 5: Cereal (hot or cold)

Cereal is one of the pantry staples we grab at a moment’s notice. Sometimes we take for granted the convenience of finding what we need in our own homes. Today, let us reflect together on the blessings that God provides each of us.

Prayer: Nurturing God, you are the source of all good things. Grant us a deeper understanding of the needs of our neighbors through this practice of giving. In the name of Jesus, the bread of life, we pray. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 5
SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT - EVENING DEVOTION

Fasting from Fear

Read: Psalm 27:13-14

“I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”

In a recent study performed by Penn State*, 91.4% of worry predictions among the cohort of participants with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) did not come true.

While many of us don't have GAD, how much of our worry is unwarranted? How does excessive worry take away from our faith in God? David had faith. In the face of his enemies, he was always confident that the Lord would be victorious. Did he worry? Absolutely. In Psalm 3, David displays his fear for the many of his foes. However, he had faith God would deliver him. He waited for the Lord and was victorious. He could have run and hid when he was afraid, but he had faith. How was his faith so strong?

Why are we fearful? Are we not promised a bright future by God? Like David, we can anticipate victory in the land of the living. God sent his son Jesus who promised to return and take us home to be with him. “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ,” John 1:17. Hebrews 10:23 says, “Let us hold fast the confession of hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

Can I strengthen my faith by fasting from fear? This Lenten season, when I find myself full of worry of things that *might* happen, I will replace the word fear with faith. I will have active faith that the Lord will deliver me. Active faith is a conscious effort to retrain my brain from focusing on fear to focusing on faith. The fear is likely not to occur, but if it does, God will walk with me and make me victorious.

Prayer Most Heavenly Father, replace our fear with faith. Hear our confessions of hope, for we know you will keep your promises. Though our walk in the land of the living is filled with anxiety, grief and illness, we hold strong to your promise of an eternal walk with you. Guide us with grace and truth in this land of living so our faith can be strengthened and overcome our fears. Amen.

SARAH ELLIOTT

*LaFreniere LS, Newman MG. Exposing Worry's Deceit: Percentage of Untrue Worries in Generalized Anxiety Disorder Treatment. *Behav Ther.* 2020 May;51(3):413-423. doi: 10.1016/j.beth.2019.07.003. Epub 2019 Jul 17. PMID: 32402257; PMCID: PMC7233480.

SUNDAY, MARCH 12
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT - MORNING DEVOTION

We Have Work to Do

Read: Luke 24:13

“Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.”

Our church history hearkens to the Civil War division in America – a division not yet healed. I have vivid memories of the Jim Crow era and my job as a nurse’s aide at the newly built UT Hospital with segregated spaces. I recoil at the memory of raw, racist hatred spewed by a white male patient at the black nurse who was training me. How she could bear it is unfathomable! I later worked on the third floor - designated for black patients, one of whom was teenage David, the same age as me. Too soon, I mourned his death, and I wonder what his life would have been had he survived his heart illness. What if? The future held injustices for us both; however, mine would not be because of my skin color; some of his would have been.

Reflecting on racial division, the late Rev. Samuel T. Lloyd, III, imagined anew the Emmaus road.

*“Those disciples knew plenty about injustice, hatred and loss ... I imagine not just two disciples, but two types ... some black, some white ... seeking a new Easter where people of both races could share each other’s lives and honor and respect each other. What would it mean if we really embraced the fact that Christ crucified and risen has broken down the dividing walls between black and white, rich and poor ... Easter happens when tombs are opened, old divisions heal, when people learn to forgive and to understand each other, when a society becomes more just and hopeful.”**

Prayer God of Creation and Easter: We are created in your image and your Spirit. Convict and forgive our human ways that see color over spirit. We know we have work to do. Help us see how and give us courage to build a just and hopeful world. Amen.

SUZANNE MATHENY

** Lloyd, Samuel T., III. Sermons from the National Cathedral: Soundings for the Journey, pg. 167*

Mission Giving March 12: Granola and Snack Bars)

Granola and snack bars are great grab-and-go snacks, especially for kids. When students are home from school, these snacks keep them nourished and energized to play and learn.

Prayer: Loving God, you call us to greater humility when you ask us to serve our neighbor. Bless those who will be receiving these snacks and use it to strengthen them. Remind us of the humility your son embodied in taking on our cross. In the name of the true servant leader, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 12
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT - EVENING DEVOTION

Symbols

Read: John 13:34-35

"... Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples ..."

From small to large, symbols are everywhere in Church Street's spaces. Even the very architecture and design of the building, nave, windows and other spaces are symbols reflecting devotion to God. We not only see symbols, though. We also can hear them through chimes and music and words spoken. We smell and taste them in communion. We feel them in sacred moments ... water as part of baptism, laying of hands in Confirmation, and exchanges of rings in marriage, to name a few.

And there is the cross. Such a simple design, yet such a profound, multifaceted, multidimensional symbol of Christian faith. Emanating from it are our foundational beliefs. It is a symbol to which we bow or kneel, which many wear or carry, and about which we sing, such as, "Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim ... Come, Christians, follow this triumphant sign."

All such symbols are important. But even more than these is each of us. I believe that each of us is called to be a living symbol, to be an expression and representation of God-centered living; to serve one another in the name of Christ; and to love one another as God loves us unconditionally.

Church Street's "Welcome Statement" aptly captures and symbolizes the character of our collective congregation:

"We believe every person is of sacred worth and created in God's image. We welcome and celebrate the gifts God has given to all persons without regard to race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious affiliation. We respect diversity of opinion and expressions of Christian faith. We believe God loves everyone unconditionally! As God loves us, so let us love and serve in the name of Christ."

Let each of us, too, as an individual living symbol, strive daily to reflect this.

Prayer Because all of us are symbols of something, God, inspire us to choose to be symbols of your love and grace today and every day. Amen.

Mission Giving March 16: Crackers and Canned Pasta

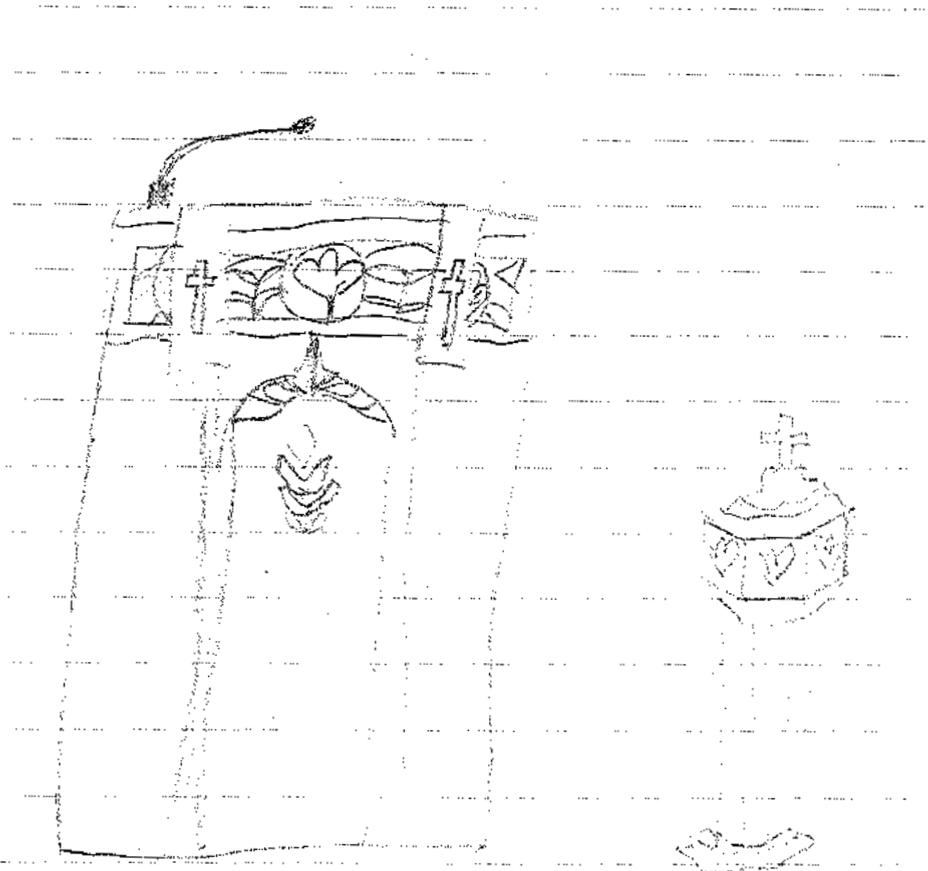
Crackers and Canned Pasta, like Ravioli and SpaghettiOs, are easy pantry staples for families on the go. Tonight, reflect on what you have learned through this practice of giving over dinner. How has praying over these items helped you connect with those who will receive them?

Prayer: Uniting God, we gather together each week in worship to recognize that we are a Christian family. Use these cans of pasta and boxes of crackers to gather a family to fellowship and eat together. May it bind them closer and renew relationships. It's in the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Mission Giving March 19: Toilet Paper

We have all experienced in recent years how vital toilet paper is to our comfort and care and what happens when the supply is scarce. It is a staple always in high demand among our Sharing Shop clients.

Prayer: Strengthening God, we give thanks for the Holy Spirit as the source of our confidence. Even through simple things, like toilet paper, we find refreshment in a sense of cleanliness. Let this item bring comfort to the person who needs it. Amen.



DRAWING BY JOSEPH JORDAN

SUNDAY, MARCH 19
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT - MORNING DEVOTION

Come Unto Him All Ye that Labor

Read: Matthew 11:28-30

I tend to judge music by one highly-scientific criterion: does it give me chill bumps? Right at the top of my list is the duo near the end of Part 1 of Handel's Messiah. "Come unto him all ye that labor, and he will give you rest." I recommend finding a recording on YouTube or your favorite music streaming service. Sit comfortably in a quiet room and allow the music to pour over you. The melody is very calming and the verses reassuring, both of which are greatly needed in our world.

The image shows a page of musical notation for the beginning of Part One of Handel's Messiah. The title is "PART ONE SINFONY [OVERTURE]". The tempo is marked "Grave" and the dynamics are "[f]". The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a piano introduction with a bass line that has a "Ped." (pedal) marking. The first system includes trills and trills. The second system includes trills and trills. The third system includes trills and trills. The fourth system is marked "Allegro moderato" and "[f]". The fifth system includes trills and trills. The sixth system includes trills and trills. The seventh system includes trills and trills. The eighth system includes trills and trills. The ninth system includes trills and trills. The tenth system includes trills and trills. The eleventh system includes trills and trills. The twelfth system includes trills and trills. The thirteenth system includes trills and trills. The fourteenth system includes trills and trills. 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Prayer Dear Lord, we thank you for the message of tranquility that this music provides. May it guide us through our busy lives with great comfort.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT - EVENING DEVOTION

Reminders

Read: Hebrews 2:18

“Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.”

During Lent, we are asked to reflect on Jesus’ suffering. Our resolutions are intended to point us to our need for a savior and how Jesus shared in our temptations and suffering. Often, our world can feel overwhelming. There is hardship and loss that is difficult to comprehend. We struggle to reconcile our suffering with the belief in a good Lord, who is full of mercy and love for his people. Although we ultimately believe in a good plan, we are unsure of where feelings of grief work into this.

However, during Lent we are offered a space to reflect on the suffering of Jesus, to be reminded that there is space for our suffering as Jesus stands beside us. We remember that there is perfect understanding in Jesus as he endured suffering and temptation for our sake. Most of all we are reminded that this ends in hope and glory. At the end of Lent we are met with the news of Easter. We are reminded that even though the darkness in our world cannot be denied, there is a light and a hope that have already overcome it.

Prayer Heavenly Father, we give you thanks for this time of reflection. We pray that as we walk through this season of Lent we will be reminded that you are a kind companion that stands with us through all. Most of all, we pray that we will be reminded of the hope and glory that are to come. Amen.

SOPHIA THOMPSON

Mission Giving March 21: Coffee, Tea and Non-Dairy Creamer

For many of us, coffee is as integral to our morning routine as brushing our teeth. How might you also cultivate a habit of mindfulness and devotion during your morning routine?

Prayer: Almighty God, you are the source of life and joy in each of us. Help us to see ways to grow deeper in relationship with you as we seek to love our neighbor. May this coffee and creamer bring sustaining energy to those who receive it. Amen.

SUNDAY, MARCH 26
FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT - MORNING DEVOTION

Opening My Ears

Read: Hosea 12:6 NIV

*“But you must return to your God;
maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.”*

Read: Micah 7:7 NIV

*“But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior;
my God will hear me.”*

Prayer is a challenging daily practice in my life. I turn to it when I need something, but I don't often just listen in prayer for what God has to say to me. Instead, I try to determine my own path and pray just to make sure He's on board with the direction I've already planned on heading.

These forty days are a chance to refocus away from the world and grow spiritually. It's a time to make our hearts and minds ready for God. Sacrificing something we enjoy becomes an opportunity to fill that missing piece with Him. Because talking it out in prayer is how I try to manage things, instead I'm giving my words to God. I'm spending this Lenten season in prayer. I'm planning to give my time to the Lord. I'm not looking for answers to my prayers. Instead, I want to remind myself that I'm not meant to conquer this world alone. I'm using this Lent to listen to Him and let His words and intention guide me. My house will be quieter this season, but my ears and heart will be open for all He has to tell me.

Sacrifice and spiritual growth can come in many forms and this Lenten season, I hope we all find our way closer to God and are reminded of our need for him minute by minute in our lives. It's never easy to change our habits, to reset. We are blessed because we have this reminder to work on it every year knowing that our God will hear us.

Prayer Lord, I pray for every person sacrificing comforts, serving you, and giving a bit of themselves this season in order to refocus our faith and grow closer to You. Hear their hearts and minds this season and let them hear you in return. Thank You for the promise you give us that our sins are forgiven and there is life after death. It sustains us on the hardest days. Guide us in Your will always. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

LAINE THOMAS

SUNDAY, MARCH 26
FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT - EVENING DEVOTION

The Miracle of Waiting

Read: James 5:7-8 RSV

“Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and the late rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

I may be the world’s most impatient person. I drive everyone in my family crazy with my inability to wait. I am the person who, when a group of people is getting into a car, grabs the handle and starts pulling before the driver even gets their keys out. “It’s not unlocked yet,” my sister says, with a look that reminds me she’s said it dozens of times.

At my brother’s house, when he puts a coffee pod in the Keurig, I immediately start pushing the “medium cup” button repeatedly. “Stop it! You have to wait for it to heat up!” my brother literally yells.

As Lent approaches, all the talk of waiting makes me anxious. Waiting as a spiritual discipline seems nearly impossible to me. But it is precisely the ability to wait that opens our hearts and minds to the miracle of Easter.

Scientists say that when our minds are at rest, maybe taking a shower or going for a walk, our brains can make connections that they can’t make when they are perpetually working. We’ve all had the “ah ha” moment when an answer comes to us when we aren’t thinking. In other words, when we are waiting, not doing.

To me, that’s the message of Lent. Waiting with stillness allows us space to breathe. Relaxing our brains gives our hearts and minds the ability to listen and reflect, to calm. Within that silence, we prepare to experience the miracles before us. As we wait, God comes to us.

This Lent, I will try to give up impatience and wait for things to come. I’ll try to embrace silence and stillness and learn to wait. It won’t be easy (I’ll probably pull at the car door on Easter morning), but I’ll begin. And maybe I will be able to welcome the miracle of Easter more than ever before.

Prayer Lord, grant us the ability to wait, to calm our minds and hearts and know the peace of stillness. Help us to rest in silence so we can experience the awe of your resurrection. Amen.

DONA BUNCH

Mission Giving March 26: Shampoo and Body Wash

Shampoo is a toiletry we forget is necessary. Some clients at Sharing Shop have a home where they can shower, while others must bathe at the YMCA or a public facility.

Prayer: Holy God, we give thanks for access to basic needs, like food, shelter, and water. In the midst of our daily lives, may we be grateful for all the gifts we have. Let our gratitude turn to service for our neighbors in need. In Jesus' name, amen.

Mission Giving March 28: Juice Boxes

Juice boxes are a sweet treat that supply necessary nutrients, like vitamin C. The families who are members of Food Co-op rely on snacks like juice boxes to provide a sweet after-school treat for their kids.

Prayer: Sustaining God, you provide for us through community and bring us ever closer each time we call your name. Lent reminds us that even Jesus was tempted, but you sustained your son. Let this fruit be sustenance for those who receive it and strengthen them through the day. In Jesus' name, amen.

Mission Giving March 30: Cleaning Supplies of All Kinds

Cleaning is a theme with the toiletries regularly needed for Sharing Shop. Clients are able to receive necessary cleaning supplies and use their monthly income on other expenses, like rent and utilities.

Prayer: Forgiving God, in our Lenten journey, we feel that Easter may never come. The days grow longer and we can enjoy the sunlight, but we must wrestle with the crucifixion before we can celebrate Easter morn. Grant patience, both to us and to the family receiving these cleaning supplies. Help us to realize that your light shines even in the dark. Amen.

*Bring all mission items to the Welcome Center on
Palm Sunday, April 2!*

SATURDAY, APRIL 1 - MORNING DEVOTION

Keeping Watch

Read: Micah 7:7

Several years ago, I traveled through the Bible with a chronological yearly reading plan. Our Bibles are printed canonically – essentially meaning the books of scripture are grouped together by themes. So, when you read a chronological plan, you move back and forth between different books. The first part of Genesis then jumps to Job, stories of David in 2 Samuel coordinate with stories in Chronicles and the Psalms, and so on. I expected to learn about the overall timeline of scripture, approaching this as an educational experience. But I was surprised and deeply moved by the way this trip through scripture drastically changed my perspective on God’s love, mercy and grace.

Over and over in the Old Testament, we see God’s prophets (His messengers) given the task of sharing news with His people (the Israelites). But more often than not, these prophets experience rejection and frustration. Their words are not received or are intentionally rebelled against. How exhausting their jobs must have been! But nearly all the time, they remain steadfast. (Jonah is another story for another time.) And while this is the pattern of the prophets time and time again, I am always a little surprised when they respond to hardship with trust and praise.

The prophet Micah’s message is one of accusation and warning but paired with hope and restoration. He reminds Israel of their faithlessness and calls them back to God. In the final chapter of the book, he opens with a poem of lament. One translation titles it “Israel’s Misery.” But in the final statement of that poem, something changes. It says, “But me! I will keep watch for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.” And the book closes with more poems about Israel’s restoration and God’s compassion.

Lent is often a time when I’m keenly aware of suffering and misery. This year, especially as we approach Holy Week, I want to adopt the posture of Micah. When I am frustrated by the crowd yelling, “Crucify;” when the struggles of daily life leave me tired, weak and worn; when I, like the disciples, wrestle with doubt and disbelief, I want to say, “But me! I will keep watch for the Lord.”

Prayer Lord, You are steadfast when we are not. Your love remains when we fail. You offer grace and mercy that we could never earn or deserve. Help us turn our hearts toward you. Remind us to keep watch for your steady presence. We will wait for you. And we know you hear our prayers. Amen.

SATURDAY, APRIL 1 - EVENING DEVOTION

Don't Get in a Hurry

Read: Matthew 26:17-28:10

The season of Lent anticipates and causes us to look forward to Easter. Ah ... EASTER! Flowers everywhere. Huge church attendance. People dressed in their Sunday best and smiles on everyone's faces.

But we cannot get to Easter before experiencing the events of Holy Week. Indeed, there would be no Resurrection without Jesus suffering unto death beforehand. The Last Supper. Praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Being arrested. Being whipped. Carrying the cross to Golgatha. Nails being driven into his hands and feet. Jesus' last words of comfort, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And finally, relief: "It is finished". All this and so much more occur in Holy Week - before Easter!

We are called to experience the pain and suffering of Jesus during Holy Week, in order to be able to celebrate the Resurrection.

The name of those days before Easter, "Holy Week," speaks volumes. Because the week is so meaningful, it is called "Holy," a week set apart as the most special of the Christian calendar.

Prayer Gracious God, enable us to experience all of Easter, including the most meaningful events of Holy Week, before we experience the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

JOHN ELDRIDGE

SUNDAY, APRIL 2 - MORNING DEVOTION
PALM SUNDAY

The Road Ahead

Read: John 12:13

“So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord — the King of Israel!’”

The etymology of my name pairs well with the occasion of Palm Sunday. The earliest mention of Palmer is as a surname in the 12th century. Palmers were pilgrims who had returned from the Holy Land. These pilgrims were referred to as palmers, because they carried a palm branch or frond as a symbol of the journey they had just taken.

As Christians who know the full story of Holy Week, we know that Jesus brings the peace hoped for on Palm Sunday. We know the events that are to follow this triumphant entry into Jerusalem. We declare that Christ is king and his reign does bring peace. Yet, it is not the peace you might expect when you see the crowd waving palm branches. Jesus delivers peace, but not through military action and overthrowing the Roman army. The price of peace was not paid on the battlefield with soldiers, weapons and armies. The price of peace was paid by God’s only, begotten son taking on the sins of the world and dying on a cross. Jesus pays the ultimate price of peace to fulfill his kingship.

The joyful, triumphant entry of the disciples and crowd is not the end of the story. This processional does not immediately jump to the tomb where we celebrate the joy of Easter morning. Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem leads first through the events of Holy Week. Our journey as palmers, as religious pilgrims bearing palm branches, follows through each of these events as we wrestle to be disciples.

Prayer God of Peace, as we seek to be palmers, may the palms we wave be outward signs of the discipleship journeys we walk. Strengthen us throughout Holy Week to walk through each of these last days in your son’s life, so that we may more fully understand the sacrifice he made for us. Amen.

REV. PALMER CANTLER, ASSOCIATE PASTOR

SUNDAY, APRIL 2 - EVENING DEVOTION
PALM SUNDAY

Steadfast Love

Read: Psalm 118

It is always a little strange to read Psalm 118 on Palm Sunday. The sections we read are upbeat and filled with promise. At the start of the most solemn week of our faith, we start with a parade. Children wave palms, and we shout “Hosanna!” The music is often more upbeat on Palm Sunday than other Sundays in Lent. How strange that we begin a week filled with lots of somber moments with celebration and reading a Psalm that calls us to rejoice and give thanks.

The ending is revealed in the beginning. The somber and painful middle is clearly deeply significant and important. The suffering and pain is framed and interpreted by the promises of God and the knowledge that though Jesus is headed to the cross, he won't stay there. As we journey through this week, attending services like Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, or stations of the cross, we can remember the faithfulness of God that was promised on Sunday. The deep longing of the end of the week can reshape and enrich our understanding of what it means to cry out, “Let his steadfast love endure forever.”



Prayer Gracious Lord, indeed we pray that your steadfast love will endure forever. Draw our hearts close to yours during this Holy Week that our lives may more faithfully reflect your mercy and grace each day. Amen.

REV. TIM BEST, SENIOR ASSOCIATE PASTOR
ILLUSTRATION BY FLORRIE BRIMER

MONDAY, APRIL 3
HOLY WEEK - MORNING DEVOTION

Day by Day

Read: Colossians 1:13-14

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.”

Often, we don't prioritize the opportunities for reflection built into our holiday traditions. One of the aspects of Holy Week that makes it so special is that we look back at a momentous span of days from two thousand years ago, and then we live them out, day by day. Through worship and commemoration, we mark the hours and confront the cost of salvation.

We start with joy. We remember that God fulfills his promises. We pause in the heavy mystery of His words at the Last Supper. Sitting together in the dark, we grieve as a community and look toward the coming sacrifice with somber gratitude. We are confronted with humanity's weakness and the strength of God's love. We end with joy again, and a new covenant.

It's tempting to rush past the despair and look up again only at Easter, but I would encourage you to sit a while in the dark. We shouldn't rob ourselves of the relief that comes in the recognition of our needs and that God embraces us as we are. After reflection, we can celebrate with greater appreciation the remarkable gift of grace.

Prayer Heavenly Father, thank you for meeting our needs beyond our greatest expectations. You are our comfort in the darkness, and our joy.

KRYSTAL CRANFIELD

MONDAY, APRIL 3
HOLY WEEK - EVENING DEVOTION

Keep Trying

Read: Galatians 6:9

"Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working."

- Pablo Picasso

Since college, I've kept this quote as my laptop wallpaper. I've scribbled it on notes when struggling to meet a deadline, muttered it under my breath after I've worn down my eraser. The words belong to an artist who, prodigious work notwithstanding, should be no one's role model. It's a useful adage though, so I remember it.

This quote is better:

"Let's not become discouraged in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not become weary."

- Galatians 6:9

I have never been especially talented, or at the top of my class. If they awarded blue ribbons yesterday for Most Compassionate or Least Selfish, I would have walked away empty-handed and regretful, but I keep trying. We have to do good things to lead us to the next good thing. An impactful spiritual walk begins with the acknowledgment of our fundamental shortcomings and the incredible gift of forgiveness; these are first steps we will tread many times over. The disciples lived this way, trusting that the path Jesus set before them was not purely for their own eternal benefit, but for the good of their communities and the generations that would follow.

Prayer Lord of all good things, thank you for this season of preparation and hope. Help us find rest when we grow weary, and sustain us for your work ahead. There is so much good to accomplish; we'll keep trying. Amen.

KRYSTAL CRANFIELD

TUESDAY, APRIL 4
HOLY WEEK - MORNING DEVOTION

Who He Is

Read: Psalm 139:9

*"If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand will hold me."*

Albert Schweitzer, physician, theologian and musician, worked in a mission hospital in Africa from 1913 until the end of his life in 1965. He touched the lives of many. In his writing entitled: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, he wrote: "He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside. He came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me!' And sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience 'Who He Is.'"

Several years ago, I visited the Holy Land with a Church Street group. We walked the "Way of the Cross" stopping at the spots where Jesus stopped as He was carrying his cross. The steps were steep in places, and it was as though we were walking with Jesus carrying our own cares and burdens that were holding us down and making the way more difficult. I am reminded of an old hymn: "Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No there is a cross for everyone and there is a cross for me." Jesus died on that cross that he was carrying and set us free to serve Him and others. But first, we must let go of all the things that keep us from walking with Jesus - fears, anxieties, anger, hate, jealousy. Bring them to the cross and leave them and then walk away with renewed faith and hope.

So what task is Jesus setting you to follow after you leave your burdens and cares at the cross? Is He calling you to serve others? Is He asking you to teach a Sunday School class or serve on a committee? Is he asking you to run for public office? As Schweitzer said in his search for Jesus, Jesus will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts and the sufferings. Are you willing?

Jesus said: "I will never leave you or forsake you." Do we believe that? So what is our next step in our quest to learn WHO HE IS?

Prayer Jesus, walk with me in my trials, in my troubles, in my sorrows and in my joys. Amen.

VERNA MCLAIN

TUESDAY, APRIL 4
HOLY WEEK - EVENING DEVOTION

*Are We Each Called to be Simon of
Cyrene?*

Read: Luke 23:26

“And as they led Him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.”

There is little we know of Simon of Cyrene. But his mention in the Bible and his role was not insignificant. God’s inclusion of Simon must have some import.

Imagine the scene. Not even a week earlier, crowds had lined the road cheering “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” (Mark 11:9). Now, crowds are taunting the Lord as He bears the weight of His cross ... our cross. People are jostling each other to scoff, spit and jeer. Abandoned by all who cared for him. Physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted and abused, it is likely that Jesus cannot even reach the summit of Golgotha under the weight of our burdens.

Enter a man: Simon of Cyrene. He may be called into service against his will. However, he steps into the unenviable role to serve. We cannot lose sight of the fact that Immanuel, the Creator, the One Who carries our burdens is now accepting help from a man. And this man is placed there by God the Father out of compassion for his Son. And we know this journey up the mount involves shameful, public humiliation. Simon is not merely a spectator; he is also an active participant in the Lord’s travails. Without Simon’s courage, compassion, and support, Christ will not reach the summit ... will never experience the crucifixion ... will never complete the prophecy.

We all may be called to bear a cross when we are not ready. We all may be called to show courage, compassion and support when circumstances are hostile or, at the minimum, not in our best interests. But when the Father calls, we must respond with humility and service.

Prayer Jesus, help us to see in the suffering and shortcomings of our lives and share in Your Cross. Strengthen and console us in the knowledge that we bear all things in union with You. Amen.

BLAKE VALENTINE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5
HOLY WEEK - MORNING DEVOTION

The Act of Giving

Read: Luke 21:1-4

On Sunday, January 15, during the singing of the first hymn at the 11 am service, she slipped quietly into the nave and sat down in the south transept. She was a woman of the community wearing a worn coat, a cap over her head, and carrying several large shopping bags in her hands. I don't know her name, nor did I think much of her attendance that morning. The nave was a warm and welcoming place on a cold winter morning. But this one woman exemplified the act of unselfish and humble giving in a most powerful way.



During the time in worship when the congregation shares its tithes and offerings, she showed what Jesus was talking about in the first few verses of Luke 21. While the offering plates were being passed and people were putting in their checks and cash, and as the choir shared the offertory anthem, this lady rose from her pew on the side transept and shared an amazing “sermon” on what Jesus had taught. She slowly and quietly came near the baptismal font and carefully placed two small wrapped bouquets of flowers on the table beside the baptismal font. Then she quietly went back to her pew. She gave what she had this one morning as an offering to God. As we sang the last hymn, she gathered her bags and quietly slipped out the door into the hallway.

I will probably never see her again, but what she did during worship on January 15 will remain with me forever. She showed me that all gifts given in the humble and sacrificial way she gave are sometimes more powerful than all the checks and \$20 bills put in the offering plate. “He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty ...” (Luke 21: 3-4 NRSV)

Prayer Oh dear God, help me to give so others might know of your love and grace. During this Lenten season, show me how and where I might give like this lady did. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5
HOLY WEEK - EVENING DEVOTION

No Greater Love

Read: John 15:13; John 13:34-35; Matthew 7:1-2 (NIV)

When I contemplate the degree of suffering and torture my Savior endured on the cross so that I might be cleansed of all sin and redeemed unto God, I fall to my knees in awe of His boundless love and mercy. The depth of His love for us challenges our human capacity to comprehend. He has taught us by example how to love one another unconditionally and has given us a New Commandment: We must love one another as He loves us. Notice, He did not say this as a suggestion, but as a directive; and He didn't list any exceptions to this command. He loves everyone; and out of that love, He suffered and died for every human being, no exclusions. God created each of us with the capacity to love one another, with the same love He has for us, but we fail miserably. If only we would surrender our hearts to God and allow the Holy Spirit to work through us to pour out His love on everyone we meet, can you imagine what a different community we could be?

During this season of repentance and renewal, won't you look up at the cross and consider taking all of your prejudices and judgmental thoughts and leaving these burdens at Jesus' feet? As the Apostle Paul instructs us in Romans 12:2, instead of "conforming to this world," let's "renew our minds and be transformed" to loving all of God's creation, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, political affiliation, social status, or crimes committed. In God's eyes we are all the same: guilty of sin, with no right to judge one another. Let's allow God to work a miracle in our hearts and in our lives, and leave the judging to Him. We may never experience the full potential of God's love working through us, to bring others to Him, until we open our hearts and minds to His Great Love.

Prayer Dear Lord Jesus, I consider the tortures you endured on the cross and am reminded, there is no greater love than your love for me! Help me to overcome my prejudices and learn to love all of your creation, just as you love me regardless of all my faults. Thank you Lord for teaching me, by your example, the true meaning of unconditional love. Amen.

BARRY CHRISTMAS

THURSDAY, APRIL 6
MAUNDY THURSDAY - MORNING DEVOTION

Towel and Basin People

Read: John 13:3-5, 12-17

On Maundy Thursday evening one year in the church I served before coming to Church Street, we had a foot washing as part of the service. The clergy conducting the service invited members of the congregation to come down to the front pews, take off their shoes and the clergy members would wash their feet in basins provided. It was a very anxious time for clergy and congregation. Would anyone come down? What reactions would the clergy receive? It was as awkward for the congregation as it was for the disciples around the table that first night. After some anxious moments, about a dozen or more members came down and got their feet washed by the clergy.

When I left that church to come to Church Street, the staff gave me a hand-crafted pitcher and basin which I placed on the window sill behind my desk for all 27 years at Church Street. It was a physical reminder of the Order of Deacon in which I was ordained and what all Christians are called to do.

You and I are called to be towel and basin people. We are called to serve and not to be served. It's easy to do the things which are easy and for which we receive praise and publicity. It's harder to discipline ourselves "to get on our knees" and do the unpleasant tasks of Christian discipleship and servanthood. Jesus set an example for us by washing tired and dirty feet. Jesus calls us to do the same in one way or another.

Prayer O God, help me to follow the example of Jesus to serve others. Show me where and whom you want me to serve. May your Holy Spirit guide and strengthen me as I go with my towel and basin. Amen.

REV. RICK ISBELL
Reprinted from the 2022 Lenten devotional.

THURSDAY, APRIL 6
MAUNDY THURSDAY - EVENING DEVOTION

Calling Me Home

Read: Joshua 24:15

“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

I was 10 years old when my family moved from Saint Louis to Northbrook Illinois, a suburb about 25 miles north of Chicago. At the time it was a village of about 9000 people. We lived on Ferndale, a two block long street nestled next to the Sommes Woods Forest Preserve. Many children of different ages, different nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds lived on our street. The one thing we had in common in the neighborhood was when Mrs. Johnson rang her bell, play time was over. We all came out of the woods, or off the ball fields, or out of the street and went home when the bell rang.

My mother had her own signal. It was her whistle. She would place her two pinkies in her mouth and blow. It did not matter whether her hands were dirty from working in the garden or they were covered in silk gloves with little pearl buttons. The sound was the same. It was not shrill and it was not real loud. It was a pure tone that went up half a step at the end. It was mom's whistle and it always got my and my three brothers' attention immediately. It said, "Come to me now".

When I was in the Army at Ft Dix, New Jersey, I was in the Philadelphia Airport with about 10,000 other soldiers trying to get home for Christmas. Unbeknown to me my mother had flown to Teaneck, New Jersey to visit my brother and see her first granddaughter. She was in the airport also and spotted me out of all the other soldiers. She whistled. I immediately came to attention and started searching. I knew that sound. It could only be my mother's whistle.

Years later I was in a hotel parking lot in Atlanta. My parents were in another hotel across a busy six-lane highway when my mother saw me. She whistled. My dad told her that I could not hear her. But I immediately turned around and waved. Dad asked, "How do you do that?" She said, "That's my boy. He knows my whistle".

We inevitably got teased by our friends for our rapid response to the whistle. They said we were trained like Pavlov's dogs. We did not care. We knew whose call that was and we knew whose we were. That call belonged to someone who loved and cared for us. Who only wanted the best for us. In this Easter season we need to re-examine whose we are and who is calling us. The someone calling us, loves us and cares for us. And wants the very

best for us. As John reminds us, “He goeth before them, and his sheep follow him: For they know his voice.” Are we answering his call like we know his voice?

Prayer Dear Good Shepherd, Silence in us any voices but your own so that we may hear your voice and go where you would lead us. Amen.

DAN KELLEY

FRIDAY, APRIL 7
GOOD FRIDAY - MORNING DEVOTION

Seeing the Love in His Glance

Read: Psalm 22:1, Mark 15:34, Matthew 27:46
“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Read: John 14:20

“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

Sister Monica Joan, elderly nun/midwife, is a favorite character on the BBC series, *Call the Midwife*. She suffers from dementia and feels purposeless. Yet, she has moments of lucidity and wisdom, with surprising clarity of memory or piercing observations. Yet, a day comes when she has a crisis of faith, despite her decades of prayer and service. She is distraught, questioning God, feeling lost.*

Biblical stories attest that God’s people, even God’s son, were subjected to doubts or feeling forsaken. Is it possible that any person of finite mind has not felt this tension? Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross, coined the term “dark night” of the soul. And, recently, we have learned that Mother Teresa, in the midst of having done so much good, struggled with her doubts. What are we to think? We are human. We are not exempt. The irony is that wrestling with this tension may deepen our faith.

Sister Monica Joan also dreams of a white stag that becomes her symbol of knowing God’s presence - the Divine blessing she needs. In later scenes, she does see that white stag and exclaims, “I knew him at once for the love in his glance.”** In those dark nights, when we yearn to know God’s presence, it may seem elusive; and we are left to exercise faith that Christ is, as he said, in us. We may also need to learn new ways of seeing so that at once, we know him for the love in his glances.***

Prayer Love Divine, pure unbounded love that You are, open our eyes that we may see anew your presence in us and catch new glances of love You send our way, in whatever form they may come. Amen.

SUZANNE MATHENY

* Call the Midwife, BBC drama, Season 10, Episode 1.

**Call the Midwife, BBC drama, Season 9, 2019 Holiday Special.

***Lloyd, Samuel T., III. Sermons from the National Cathedral: Soundings for the Journey, pg.43-47.

FRIDAY, APRIL 7
GOOD FRIDAY - EVENING DEVOTION

O Sacred Head Now Wounded

Read: John 19:2

286 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

1. O sa - cred Head, now wound - ed, with grief and shame weighed down,
2. What thou, my Lord, hast suf - fered was all for sin - ners' gain;
3. What lan - guage shall I bor - row to thank thee, dear - est friend,

now scorn - ful - ly sur - round - ed with thorns, thine on - ly crown:
mine, mine was the trans - gres - sion, but thine the dead - ly pain.
for this thy dy - ing sor - row, thy pit - y with - out end?

how pale thou art with an - guish, with sore a - buse and scorn!
Lo, here I fall, my Sav - ior! 'Tis I de - serve thy place;
O make me thine for - ev - er; and should I faint - ing be,

How does that vis - age lan - guish which once was bright as morn!
look on me with thy fa - vor, vouch - safe to me thy grace.
Lord, let me nev - er, nev - er out - live my love to thee.

Imagine a hymn so powerful that it has been a favorite and beloved Passion Hymn for 900 years! That is the story behind *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*. Written by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), it was based on John 19:2. I fell in love with J. S. Bach's harmonization in college when my first theory assignment was to copy it from the Episcopal hymnal. Later we sang it and studied the flow of each line and how it emphasized Christ's death and anguish through dissonance and moving parts. This hymn makes me feel as if I am at the feet of the cross.

Prayer God, bring us to the cross this Lent with aching hearts and broken spirits so that when we awake on Easter Sunday, our hearts are healed and our spirits are lifted and ready to follow the risen Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY, APRIL 8
HOLY SATURDAY - MORNING DEVOTION

Beneath the Cross

As a youth, I would walk to my church on Sunday evenings for my MYE, as it was then called. It was safe to walk around our small town, even at night. I always sang in the choir, so music was a part of my daily life. *Beneath the Cross of Jesus* spoke to me, especially parts of the second verse: "Upon that cross of Jesus, mine eyes at times can see, the very dying form of one, who suffered there for me."

I have dedicated myself to serving Christ throughout my life in whatever form I was called on to

serve. I was a short-term missionary for the Methodist Church in Brazil after college and as a social worker in Knoxville for over 50 years; I was serving God in helping children, youth and adults to have better lives. So I still find myself singing or humming this song written back in 1872.

Prayer Beneath your cross, Jesus, I fain would take my stand; the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land. Amen.



VERNA MCLAIN
PAINTING BY CAROLINE STALCUP

1. Be - neath the cross of Je - sus I fain would take my stand,
 2. Up - on that cross of Je - sus mine eye at times can see
 3. I take, O cross, thy shad - ow for my a - bid - ing place;

the shad - ow of a might - y rock with - in a wea - ry land;
 the ver - y dy - ing form of One who suf - fered there for me;
 I ask no oth - er sun - shine than the sun - shine of his face;

a home with - in the wil - der - ness, a rest up - on the way,
 and from my strick - en heart with tears two won - ders I con - fess:
 con - tent to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,

from the burn - ing of the noon - tide heat, and the bur - den of the day.
 the won - ders of re - deem - ing love and my un - wor - thi - ness.
 my sin - ful self my on - ly shame, my glo - ry all the cross.

All hymns reprinted with permission - The United Methodist Hymnal (c) 1989.

SATURDAY, APRIL 8
HOLY SATURDAY - EVENING DEVOTION

We are the Church!

Read: Psalm 115:14-18

Many years ago when I was serving on the committee at the church designated to raise the church budget, about \$1.5M, it became clear that we might not be able to raise the amount needed. There have been many times that this was the case. I cannot remember the exact composition of the committee, but someone said, "It seems that we are always asking folks to give, but when they do, we don't celebrate all that we have received. Let's have a celebration after the campaign comes to a close — whether we make our goal or not!" As you can imagine, a few were skeptical ... a celebration if we do not meet the goal? Ultimately the naysayers were convinced to celebrate, no matter what.

As the dialogue turned to what this celebration would look like, it took the shape of a potluck dinner with a show of talents, from church members of all ages, some of whom normally did not show their talents. There would also be prayers and hymns sung. Names were given of those who played instruments, sang, would be good Masters of Ceremonies, or were good cooks. Of course, I volunteered my family. My husband Tony had been teaching Thomas, our 4-year-old-son, to sing. We thought that if Tony were up on the stage with Thomas, that Thomas would not be afraid to sing to the crowd. Someone from the Children's department had taught Thomas the refrain to "We Are the Church." The refrain goes:

*"I am the church! You are the church. We are the church together!
All who follow Jesus, all around the world! Yes, we're the church together!"*

It was a great evening indeed. About 250 people packed into the Parish Hall, eating and having great fellowship. I heard people entertain the group that I had never met, folks from Murphy Builders, and several other Sunday school classes. The program went off without a hitch and Thomas sang his song, "We Are the Church," and then asked the crowd to sing with him. Thomas was not afraid. I believe the Lord was with him then and now. The Lord is with all of us. We need to celebrate and give witness always. The gifts that God gives us are immeasurable. When I begin making my list of gifts from God, the list goes on and on, and then I realize ... it is ALL from God. I am so grateful for his love and for his son, Jesus.

Prayer May we all give thanks for the mystery and the victory of Jesus' resurrection and celebrate what has been given us through his life and death Amen.

SUNDAY, APRIL 9
EASTER SUNDAY - MORNING DEVOTION

He Arose!

Read: Psalm 130

322 Up from the Grave He Arose

1. Low in the grave he lay, Je - sus my Sav - ior,
2. Vain - ly they watch his bed, Je - sus my Sav - ior;
3. Death can - not keep its prey, Je - sus my Sav - ior;

wait - ing the com - ing day, Je - sus my Lord!
vain - ly they seal the dead, Je - sus my Lord!
he tore the bars a - way, Je - sus my Lord!

I have to say that I cannot think of an Easter season without hymn 322 *Up from the Grave He Arose*. This song has been a staple in my family for funeral and Easter services alike. My dear grandfather introduced this song to me as a child. He tragically passed away when I was 8 years old. I can vividly remember hearing this song and thinking of him with our risen Lord in heaven.

What more do we need as Christians, be we 8 or 108, than this assurance in Christ from the chorus of the hymn: "Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph o'er his foes; he arose a victor from the dark domain, and he lives forever, with his saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!"

Prayer (From Psalm 130): Out of the depths I cry unto thee, O Lord! Lord, hear my cry. Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If thou, Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word do I hope. Amen.

SUNDAY, APRIL 9
EASTER SUNDAY - EVENING DEVOTION

Stay with Us

Read: Luke 24:28-29

“As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them.”

We remember the words from Good Friday, “It is finished.” We might be tempted to say the same thing this Easter evening. With a sigh of exhaustion or satisfaction — maybe both. It is finished. Easter is over. It was glorious!

Some of you gathered early this morning for a sunrise service. Many have been involved in Lenten studies, choir rehearsals, and Lenten collections. Today was a full day of joyful worship and gathering with family and friends. As night comes, we feel tired, but what my mother would call a *good tired*; physically and emotionally spent from all the celebration. It is over.

As we prepare to retire for the evening, I encourage you to say instead, “It is beginning.”

The two men on the road back to Emmaus had no idea who their traveling companion was but encouraged him to remain with them as night was falling.

On this Easter, we do know who our companion is. We do know Jesus is risen. We do not put Easter away. Thanks be to God! Jesus remains with us, abides with us. On the church calendar, we observe Easter for fifty days.

Get a good rest tonight ... Easter is beginning!

Prayer Dear Jesus, thank you for a glorious Sunday morning! May all of the joy of Easter spill over into Monday morning and the next day and the next day. Stay with us. Abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel! Amen.

REV. CATHERINE NANCE, SENIOR PASTOR

IN LOVING MEMORY OF PAUL WATKINS

Church Street's Lenten Banner

Paul Watkins, Chris Sneed and I were asked to design this banner in 2008 ... the actual date is stitched on the back! When Chris and I met with Paul, we discussed various symbols that would represent Lent. Paul, with his connection to Methodism, added so much to the discussion and final design.

Every banner Church Street has symbolizes the season at hand. For Lent, the four angles of the cross have symbols of the celebrations and significance of Lent: Ash Wednesday (two heads with the ash crosses); Palm Sunday (crossed palms); Maundy Thursday (challis and pitcher); and Good Friday (a crown of thorns). At the bottom of the banner are rocks ... but if you look closely, you will see the skull of Golgotha. Paul thought this was very important to include. Of course, the background is purple, and we decided to use a silver cross, different than most of our other banners which have gold crosses. Paul drew all of the symbols to scale. After I finished the banner, he shaded in all of the symbols which created depth and beauty.

Paul's memorial service in 2023 and obituary told of his many talents. And his talent will be on display for many years to come through the banners he designed or helped with at Church Street.

- Betty Craig



LENT
CSUMC
design-
P Watkins
2008 eac



Worship with Church Street each Sunday:

8:30 and 11 a.m. in the Nave | 11 a.m. online at www.YouTube.com/ChurchStreetUMC

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