

# LENTEN 2025 DEVOTIONAL



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## **Fifth Week of Lent**

24-29

Monday, March 31: Revelation 2:4-5 - *Lynn George*

Tuesday, April 1: Titus 3:4-5 - *Barb Drain*

Wednesday, April 2: 2 Corinthians 12: 9-10 - *Lynae Young*

Thursday, April 3: Romans 8:12-14 - *Carolyn Follansbee*

Friday, April 4: Lamentations 3:22-33 - *Gabrielle Kimmel*

## **Sixth Week of Lent**

30-35

Monday, April 7: Nehemiah 8:10 - *Ann McNally*

Tuesday, April 8: 1 John 1:5-7 - *Paul Follansbee*

Wednesday, April 9: Matthew 6:14-21 - *Ernie Kimmel*

Thursday, April 10: Psalm 103: 8-12- *Steve Brown*

Friday, April 11: Galatians 5:22-23- *Judy Eberhardt*

## **Holy Week**

36-39

Monday, April 14: John 15:4-5 - *Carolyn Follansbee*

Tuesday, April 15: Luke 9:23-24- *Eric Dorville*

Wednesday, April 16: 1 Peter 1:3-5 - *Jon Frost*

Maundy Thursday, April 17: Matthew 26:36-39 - *Eric Dorville*

Good Friday, April 18: Luke 23:33-44 - *Jon Frost*

Easter Sunday, April 20: 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 - *Leah Hrachovec*



## The Meaning of Lent

As we enter the sacred season of Lent, we embark on a journey of reflection, repentance, and renewal. These forty days invite us to draw closer to God, to examine our hearts, and to prepare ourselves for the joy of resurrection. Just as Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness, we, too, take this time to seek his presence, surrender our burdens, and embrace his grace.

This devotional is designed to guide you through daily Scripture, prayer, and reflection, helping you to deepen your faith and walk more closely with Christ. Each devotion is written by a church leader, elder, or church member. May their reflection and insights bring you closer to the heart of God. Whether you are fasting, praying, or serving in new ways, may this season be one of spiritual transformation. Let us walk together, anticipating the hope and victory of Easter morning.



# HOLY WEEK SERVICES

- 7:30 pm Thursday, April 17 Maundy Thursday Service\*
- 12:00 pm Friday, April 18 Good Friday Service\*
- 5:00 pm Saturday, April 19 Easter Vigil Service\*

# EASTER SUNDAY SERVICES

**Sunday, April 20**

- 6:00 am Sunrise Service
- 8:15 am Traditional Service with Chancel Choir, Brass & Bells
- 9:30 am Traditional Service with Chancel Choir, Brass & Bells\*+
- 11:00 am Contemporary Service with Worship Collective\*+

*\*Live stream this service at [westminsterpc.org/livestream](http://westminsterpc.org/livestream)  
+ Nursery care provided at this service.*

# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5

## Ash Wednesday

*Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;  
rend your hearts and not your clothing.*

*Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.*

*-Joel 2:12-13*

When we gather to share in the Lord's Supper, we often join in a Great Prayer of Thanksgiving that begins responsively, between the pastor and the gathered community:

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

This responsive prayer at the Table is inspired, at least in part, by God's Word through the prophet Joel. Here, we have a gracious invitation to bring our whole hearts, as they are, when we worship the Lord. Sometimes we come to God with grateful, joyful hearts. Other days, the hearts we bring are hungry (fasting), weeping, mourning, breaking. This invitation to return to the Lord, whatever our "heart condition," is freeing good news, especially as we are reminded by the prophet Joel that the One to whom we return is "gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing."

What an incredible invitation, to lift our hearts to God, praying and believing that they will be made new, beating in time with God's own heart. So, bring "all your heart" to God in this season of Lent, that you may experience that divine love that brings life to each of our hearts and into the body of Christ once again.

**PRAYER:** Gracious and merciful God, thank you for caring about my heart and its condition. Whatever makes my heart heavy, torn, or burdened today, help me lift it all to you. Wash my heart in your steadfast love, that it may beat with the steady rhythms of your grace. In Christ's name. Amen.

**WRITER:** Pastor Leah Hrachovec

# THURSDAY, MARCH 6

## Your Reward is God

*And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

*-Matthew 6:16-18*

In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter six, Jesus gives plenty of advice to his followers about how they are to worship in public. In this passage, Jesus explains that fasting should not be done to impress others who see you make a sacrifice by fasting. By allowing others to see this, the reward is knowing your neighbors and friends may see you as devout or religious. Jesus is reminding them the reward they should be seeking is the deepening of their relationship with God. The reference to washing and using oil is to prepare ourselves as clean and anointed by God. Your reward is him. He hears your prayers and sees your sacrifice.

**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me and using your word to teach me the way to the Father. I often seek the approval of others and know that this is a short and unsatisfying reward. When I fast, help me to be reminded that you are walking beside me, encouraging me, comforting me and directing me to a deeper relationship with our Father in Heaven. Amen.

**WRITER:** Jennie Moffitt, Administrative Assistant

# FRIDAY, MARCH 7

## God in the Everyday Moments

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

- Matthew 4:1-4

Whether in our hurried moments or long days, it can be hard to see God's will carried out in our everyday lives. Do we have confidence that we are on the right path? Is there a right path? Are we doing what God would have us do. Do we seek God's will, and then deal with meeting our body's needs afterwards? Like the bread Jesus must have really wanted to eat in this text?

Being a Christian is not just about watching and listening to life, and saying we believe in Jesus. It is learning about our faith throughout our lives. Listening for his touch in our lives and acting on it. Doing what we think we should do. Putting our lives in the kind of focus we feel he would favor. When we look back, maybe we will see how incredibly often God was working through our lives. May it be so!

**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus, as you said after struggling mightily in the wilderness, one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Give me the diligence to continue learning, and the patience to wait for evidence of your work in my life. Teach me to lean toward you in everything I do. Amen.

**WRITER:** Ruth Simonson is an Elder and sits on our Home Team and Vision Team along with many other ministries.



# MONDAY, MARCH 10

## We Are Family

*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*

*-Isaiah 58: 6-7*

In this passage, God is speaking through Isaiah to the people of Israel, and God is not pleased. Jerusalem has fallen, and the people have increased their fasting, a traditional acknowledgement of weakness and humility, in an attempt to gain God's attention and better their situation. However, their sacrifice has been superficial and insincere. They have given lip service to humility while persisting in exploiting their working poor and living in conflict with one another. God calls them back to their sacred duty to their "flesh and blood"; to feed, clothe and shelter; to raise up with respect and love.

During this Lenten season, when conflict and injustice can seem overwhelming and suffering and fear are rampant, this passage challenges us to remember that in God's eyes we are all family. When we encounter suffering, aggression, mistrust or contempt, do we live as God commands and respond with love, respect, and open hearts? God sets a high standard for us – to put aside our pride with humility and to conquer hate with courageous love.

**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus, you lived among us to demonstrate true humility and love for all in the face of overwhelming injustice, oppression, and contempt. Your sacrifice changed the world. When conflict with my neighbor seems hopeless, remind me who is my family. Grant me the strength to meet contempt with love and to give without reservation, knowing that you gave all and that your love still changes the world today. Amen.

**WRITER:** Tom Russell, Elder and Member of our Worship & Arts and Vision teams.

# TUESDAY, MARCH 11

## Kin-Dom Love

*With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love mercy, (kindness) and to walk humbly with your God?*

- Micah 6:6-8

According to John Collins, Micah 6:8 is "biblical ethics in a nutshell." Micah was a prophet who prophesied during the second half of the eighth century BCE. His message was directed to the capital cities of Jerusalem and Samaria where there were many wealthy people who were neglecting the poor. In verses 6 and 7, Micah has the people ask God resentfully and hyperbolically what do you want from us, how much more can we give? In the words of Bishop Todd Hunter, Micah "was dealing with a people who would offer everything except what alone God asked for, their heart, its love and obedience.... they refused to live by a faith that risks itself in doing justice."

What this passage leads me to do is to look at the life of Jesus who was the ultimate example of humility. Jesus had only two requirements: Love God with all your heart, your soul, your strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus' "Kin-dom" of God is near when we live accordingly. Our theme for Camp Spark this Summer is "Kindness" – "Loving our Neighbor" with the Parable of the Good Samaritan as our theme story. Our hope this summer is to impress on our children the importance of practicing kindness (mercy, in Hebrew is *hesed*) and as we love others in this continual, daily struggle, Christ will be formed in us.

**PRAYER:** Merciful, loving God, you have shown us what is good in the person of Jesus, you have told us what you want from us. You want us to walk with you continually in humility, being attentive to your voice and to those around us. Help us to love, aided by your Holy Spirit who dwells within us and empowers us to walk in reverence with you as Jesus did.

**WRITER:** Kathy Smedley, Resting Elder and Member of Children & Spiritual Growth team

# MONDAY, MARCH 12

## Reconciliation & Righteousness

*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

*-2 Corinthians 5: 20-21*

Reconciliation and righteousness are the words that spoke to me in this passage. To be reconciled; to be in union, harmony and peace. Righteousness, to make right; in Scripture it is most often a parallelism to justice.

In the prior verse (5:18), Paul writes, *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."* Through Christ, incarnate and resurrected, the will of God is revealed. We pray, *"thy kingdom come, thy will be done"*, Jesus prayed *"thy will, not my will"*. The Word reveals God's will; love for the world. His love, a power greater than fear or hate; is a love of compassion, mercy, peace; a turn of the cheek even in the face of state sanctioned execution. In refutation of violent resistance by humbly accepting the cross of crucifixion, Jesus remained faithful to the Will of Love. In grace and mystery, God through Christ, his covenantal love, renews us to unity and peace with himself.

As ministers of reconciliation we are called to be participatory witness to this kingdom of love, unity and peace. We are called to become the *"righteousness of God."* To become "right" we are called to act justly and it is Jesus, the new covenantal promise, who reveals to us, the will of God's prophetic justice for all creation.

**PRAYER:** Holy Creator, we give thanks for your covenantal love and ask for courage and wisdom to participate in witness to your love and justice for the world. May it be so.

**WRITER:** Jane Wendel, Elder and Member of Children & Spiritual Growth and Vision teams

# THURSDAY, MARCH 13

## True Confession

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a generous spirit.*

*-Psalm 51:10-12*

In Psalm 51 we see David come to God asking for repentance from sin as he confesses fully to those sins. David does not make excuses nor cast blame on anyone else for his transgressions, instead, he comes to God with anguish in his heart and with absolute humility. It is through this honest plea for mercy, that God accepts David's plea for forgiveness.

Psalm 51 is the quintessential model of true confession. David comes before God fully appreciating the sins he committed with the honest intention of apologizing and repairing. There is no ulterior motive nor malcontent in his seeking forgiveness.

During Lent, witnessing this moment of contrition from David to God, allows us to reflect on our own capacity to fully repent and seek God's mercy through forgiveness. It allows us to ask ourselves whether when we have made a mistake, do we fully accept responsibility and seek forgiveness for the correct reasons? David's genuine confession and seeking of forgiveness shows us that when we come to God with a pure heart and fully accept our reactions, then we will be enfolded in God's mercy.

**PRAYER:** Lord, as you granted your abundant mercy upon David as he sought your forgiveness, so too grant us your blessed mercies. Allow each of us to come before you with a pure and honest heart and in so doing we thank you for not casting us aside, but rather drawing us closer to you and your salvation and restoring our generous spirit so that we can live in a way that is pleasing to You, oh Lord our God. Amen.

**WRITER:** Lauren Coffey, Resting Elder, sings in our Worship Collective and is a member of our Worship & Arts team.

# FRIDAY, MARCH 14

## Bound Us Together

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

-Romans 12: 1-2

In chapter 12 of his letter to the Romans, Paul pivots from the salvation of people to calling for a powerful response in gratitude for this grace. If you were to continue further into chapter 12, you would encounter Paul's famous writing that though we are many, we are one body with many gifts.

How do we live out our faith by serving one another and building up the body of Christ? This is not exclusively a Sunday worship activity but rather a Monday to Saturday call to embody our faith in day-to-day living. Perhaps German pastor and theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sums it up best in his book *Life Together*, writing, "Because God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ...we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients. We thank God for giving us brethren... We do not complain of what God does not give us; we rather thank God for what he does give us daily. And is not what has been given us enough?"

Let us go forth, thankful for who God made us to be, and sharing of ourselves in joyful service and love!

**PRAYER:** Almighty God, we thank you for our heart, soul, strength, and mind. May we offer in our daily lives, words, actions and decisions that reflect your all-encompassing love for us. And may our unique gifts shared with others be part of your transforming work in this world. Amen.

**WRITER:** Tim Evers, Director of Music Ministries

# MONDAY, MARCH 17

## With Christ's Help...

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

-Hebrews 12: 1 – 2

These two verses carry so much encouragement for me. In the opening phrase, I consider the “great cloud of witnesses” to be all my family and friends who have passed on before me. It is encouraging that they are surrounding me, and urging me to be the best person that I can be with Christ's help, and to pursue vigorously the call and plan God has for my life.

Then in verse 2, I am encouraged to fix my eyes on Jesus, looking to him who set the perfect example of how we should live, and making him the goal and finish line for my race of life. The words about Jesus – “who for the joy set before him” – are astounding. He looked with joy on the task of facing the cross to die to forgive my sins and those of all who know him as the way, the truth and the life.

**PRAYER:** Dear God, thank you for sending your Son Jesus Christ to live among our ancestors, to set the example of how we should live and then to die for our salvation. Please use us to share your Good News to our families, friends and community that we might grow Your Kingdom to Your Glory. In Christ's name, Amen.

**WRITER:** Ed McFalls, our Clerk of Session and Chancel Choir President.

# TUESDAY, MARCH 18

## Good News

*Now after John was put into prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'*

-Mark 1:14-15

How do you react to getting good news? That seems like an easy question to answer; why of course it would be received with joy and perhaps relief. But what if this good news comes with "strings attached?" That changes things as suddenly there are expectations as to how we are to react and to respond.

When we are invited into the kingdom of God, we are expected to repent and to believe in the gospel.

I am a person who is very resistant to change. I enjoy my comfort zone and feel no need for encouragement to step out of it. But that is what God is asking us to do. He triumphantly declares that Good News is at hand, and we are to celebrate its arrival. But not only celebrate it, we are to change our lives and follow him. Indeed, the time is fulfilled. Live your life knowing that God has sent his only Son to be our Savior. I think that is a change I can live with.

**PRAYER:** Thank you, Lord, for the blessings you have given us. Let me accept the Good News and repent from my sins.

**WRITER:** Chris Birkenmaier, Elder and member of our worship and arts committee.

# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

## Within Each of Us

*I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing.*

- John 15:5

As I reflect on this passage I feel as though Jesus is telling us to stay connected to him, we are nothing without him. He lives in each of us and it is up to us to do our part as one of the branches.

If we do not, the branch will die. The vine (Jesus) nourishes the branches as the gardener tends to his garden. The gardener takes care of his garden so it will bear fruit.

Jesus asks us to keep the branches alive by accepting him into our hearts. Once we allow Jesus to fill every part of our being, we can share the love he has given us. We will continue to bear fruit by following the teachings of Christ and being disciples of his word to those around us. It is not about judgment but about growth. The vine will continue to grow and bear fruit as long as we adhere to God's Word and allow our hearts to be filled with his divine grace.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, teach me how to abide in Christ and he in me. Teach me to live my life as you would have me live, in total dependence upon you which is the life of Christ being lived through me, so that I may produce the good fruit in my life that is honoring to you. This I ask in Jesus name, Amen.

**WRITER:** Lauren Smith is a Resting Elder and a member of the outreach and care of creation committees.



# THURSDAY, MARCH 20

## Serving Others

*“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*

*-Matthew 25: 35-40*

Matthew 25:35-40 is a passage in the Bible that focuses on how to treat those who are considered the least, and how that acts as a way to care for Jesus himself. Here are some reflections on this passage:

- **Jesus’ promise:** Jesus promises that when we care for those in his community, we are caring for him.
- **Identifying with the least:** Jesus can identify with those who are oppressed because he has walked in their shoes.
- **Serving the poor and oppressed:** Serving the poor and oppressed is a way to build God’s kingdom.
- **Love for others:** The love of others will have the last word.
- **Putting oneself at others’ service:** The meaning of following Jesus is to put oneself at others’ service.
- **Forgiving others:** Jesus wants us to learn to forgive others in the same generous, merciful way that he forgave us.
- **Turning the other cheek:** When we find ourselves offended by anyone, we should turn the other cheek.
- **Extending tender mercies:** When we find ourselves offended by anyone, we should extend tender mercies.

**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus, please give me courage to recognize not only those who the world shuns and shames, but also those the world oppresses and scorns. Father, give me a heart like Jesus for the people who most depend upon him. In the name of Jesus, my Lord and Savior, I pray. Amen

**WRITER:** David Benton, one of Westminster’s Custodians

# FRIDAY, MARCH 21

## What Would You Leave Behind?

*More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

*-Philippians 3:8-11*

Recently, after hearing a news report about the fires in California, our family began talking about what items we would collect if we had to suddenly flee our home. What would we have to leave behind? If we lost everything, what would we still have? These are questions about value and what really matters in life.

The apostle Paul wrestled with these questions too. He had all the credentials one could hope for in gaining favor with God. However, his encounter with the risen Christ completely changed his perspective, such that knowing Christ and being found in him became what mattered above all else. Everything Paul used to value suddenly lacked meaning when compared to the beauty and mystery of knowing Christ. What he lost from a material perspective couldn't compare to what he gained in Christ.

What would life look like if knowing Christ was the most important thing?

**PRAYER:** Jesus, we attribute value in our lives in all kinds of ways. We try to earn our way into favor with others and with you. Help us to see the incomparable riches of knowing you, of being found in you, and the currency of grace at the heart of life with you. Amen.

**WRITER:** Jon Frost, Associate Pastor of Worship

# MONDAY, MARCH 24

## Turning Towards God

*Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out*

*-Acts 3:19*

In the wake of Jesus' death and resurrection, his followers found their hearts warmed by the indwelling of the Spirit, turning their very lives in directions they had not expected. Peter is one of those people. And just as his life has been disoriented and reoriented by the good news, he now turns to the very people who rejected that good news to offer it to them once again: "Repent, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out"

Repentance infers a turning of one's life in a new direction – turning away from that which harms and toward that which heals. A turning toward life with the Beloved. Peter's words are a proclamation that God in Christ has not turned away from us, but in fact is still turning toward us. Despite our tendency to turn in on ourselves, the Spirit is inviting us – drawing us – toward lives enfolded into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

How might Christ be inviting you to turn toward God? In a high-paced world that sends us all barreling toward efficiency, productivity, and perpetual growth, how might you turn toward Christ's invitation to love your neighbor as yourself and affirm that you are imperfect and loveable just as you are? How might you repent and rest in God? Remember, in Christ the slate has been wiped clean.

**PRAYER:** Holy God, Holy Wisdom, you have turned toward me again and again with the invitation for new life that restores and refreshes. Though my sin leads me down treacherous roads, give me daily reminders that Christ's love will always meet me along the way. Help me today to trust in that Love as the source of my very existence. Amen.

**WRITER:** Chris Clark, Director of Youth and College Ministries

# TUESDAY, MARCH 25

## Search and You Will Find

*Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*-Matthew 7:7-8*

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers these instructive words shortly after teaching what we know as the Lord's Prayer. Jesus is imploring us to engage God in authentic prayer in our private lives. "Search, and you will find" is the instructive call to prayer for us to find a quiet place, still our minds, slow our breath and bring to God the burdens we carry in our hearts. From a 12th century hymnwriter,

"O hope of every contrite heart,  
O joy of all the meek,  
to those who fall, how kind thou art!  
How good to those who seek!"

Ultimately, even as life happens to us, God is the everlasting loving parent who wants good for us. But first, we need to start the conversation and seek.

**PRAYER:** God, transform the way I pray. May I speak those thoughts that weigh on my heart, asking for your grace. And help me to trust that you desire good for me even as I navigate this earthly life day by day. Remind me daily of your amazing love as my heavenly parent who wants so much good for me and yet grant me the patience for you to reveal your graciousness in your time. Amen.

**WRITER:** Tim Evers, Director of Music Ministries

# WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

## A Heart Stopping Moment

*Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.*

-Luke 14:27-33

In this passage, life with Jesus takes an about-face for the disciples, and a reality check for which they may not have been prepared. They'd heard of their unexpected blessings in what we call the beatitudes; they'd witnessed healings and resurrections; and were told numerous stories of forgiveness and how to find God's Kingdom and bring about God's Kingdom for others. They witnessed a miraculous feeding of thousands of people from one boy's lunch basket and a nature-defying calming of a storm. They'd been told stories of God's over-flowing, abundant love and care, despite their propensity for worry and meager offerings. Wasn't life following Jesus just grand?!

Then... he lays down this reality to them in this passage. Can you hear the record-scratch sound effect? It feels like a heart-stopping moment. They cannot be Jesus' disciples without taking up the cross, without giving up everything. After much of the wonder that they'd experienced thus far, this is what following Jesus is going to look like? He gives them a glimpse of the difficult road ahead in the journey of being a Jesus-follower. Today, we are also reminded that amidst the mighty wonders of God that we witness each day, we still, as Jesus-followers, have burdens to bear; things to leave behind; and privileges to set aside.

**PRAYER:** God, my Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, help me to follow Jesus in all of the ways that he leads; help me to give witness to all of the wondrous works of your Spirit; and help me to bear the burdens that come along in the journey – whether my own burdens or whether yoking the burdens of my neighbors. In all ways, help me follow you. Amen.

**WRITER:** Jill Reichert, Director of Children & Family Ministries

# THURSDAY, MARCH 27

## Jesus Loves Me

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

*-Galatians 2:19b-20*

This scripture calls to mind a familiar song from childhood: *Jesus Loves Me*. Yet this beloved song – published in no fewer than 631 hymnals, by one count – could easily have passed into oblivion.

The lyrics first appeared not in a hymnal, a songbook, or even a book of poetry or devotional texts, but in a novel by sisters Anna and Susan Warner (*Say and Seal*, 1860), where it is sung by a Sunday School teacher to comfort a dying child. Two years later, composer William Batchelder Bradbury was so taken with Anna's poetic text that he composed a melody and added a refrain ("Yes, Jesus loves me..."). In this form, the song caught on, spreading across generations and around the world.

Few of us will create something as monumental as the song *Jesus Loves Me*. But a kind word, a helping hand, and a comforting presence can leave lasting impacts on those around us.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Creator, thank you for the beauty of this life that we live. Help us to remember always that we belong to you, and grant us your grace as we strive to live a life of faith, secure in the love of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**WRITER:** Kirsten Santos Rutschman, Associate Director of Music Ministries

# FRIDAY, MARCH 28

## God Propels Us Forward

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

*-Proverbs 3:5-6*

As infants, we are dependent on parents/family/caregivers. During growth and development, exposure to the world around us can create wariness but helps to inform our broader concept of trust. Sometimes, however, trust can be confused with control in that both aim to provide a sense of security and predictability. God says, do not lean on your own understanding.

The poem, *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost, *Atlantic Monthly* spoke to me during formative years as I evaluated the impact of positive and negative influences and how they might align with my conscience. God says, submit to the Lord and he will make your paths straight.

God revealed his Son as an example of his Love, a promise that good will happen even when not yet visible. As a core value, faith impacts our lives, touches our spirit, and propels us forward.

**PRAYER:** Holy God, show us how to see, hear, feel, and believe. Give us the patience and strength to rise above the division and intolerance to a place of straight paths and understanding. Help us to trust as you guide us to be examples of your love. During this season of Lent, remind us to reflect on our lives and once again, open our hearts to God's promises. Amen.

**WRITER:** Sandy Kurek, Westminster's Finance Director

# MONDAY, MARCH 31

## Making Room in Your Heart

*But I have this against you: you have let go of the love you had at first. So remember the high point from which you have fallen. Change your hearts and lives and do the things you did at first. If you don't, I'm coming to you. I will move your lampstand from its place if you don't change your hearts and lives.*

- Revelation 2:4-5

My aunt was single during the first decade of my life. It allowed her to attend all the holidays and milestones in my short life and even whisk me away for girls' weekends. Just me and her. I felt like the center of her world since I never met any of her boyfriends.

But then she moved to Indiana and met Ralph. Before I knew it, they were married. I was so angry that he stole my aunt away, I did not see how delighted he was to have a niece. I had trouble accepting the unconditional love he immediately showed me. You know it's true love when the first time you meet the in-laws, you drive eight hours only to arrive just in time to go to a four-hour ballet recital -- and you haven't even had a chance to really meet the kid dancing on stage for 2 minutes!

It took years for my heart to warm up to Ralph and see the unconditional love he showed me from day one. Love adapts, expands and grows. It's not like a pie that only has a limited amount of slices. Love is infinite and the most powerful force in the world. Like the world around us, it changes us every day.

Let the wall down around your heart, share love with everyone you meet. This might involve apologizing or mending broken hearts. Don't dwell or stew on the love that was. Instead, ask how that love can change to expand and adapt. The world will be changed for the better the more love you add into the world.

**PRAYER:** Lord, help us let go of people, memories and experiences so that new opportunities can grow and flourish. Open our hearts to new possibilities and people that we struggle to let into our circle. Help us adapt to change and embrace the unknown and extend your love to everyone we meet. Amen.

**WRITER:** Lynn George, Director of Communications



# TUESDAY, APRIL 1

## God's Gift of Mercy

*But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

*-Titus 3:4-5*

During Lent, we take time to reflect on our need for salvation and the overwhelming grace of God. These verses from Titus remind us that our salvation is not earned through our own righteousness or good works. Instead, it is a gift given out of God's kindness, love, and mercy.

When Jesus came into the world, he revealed the heart of the Father—full of compassion and grace. His sacrifice on the cross was not a reward for our goodness but an act of mercy toward our brokenness. The washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit transforms us from the inside out, making us new creations in Christ.

Lent is a season of repentance, but it is also a time to embrace the mercy of God. We do not fast, pray, or give as a way to earn his favor, but rather as a response to the love he has already shown us. Let this be a time of turning our hearts fully to him, allowing the Holy Spirit to renew and refresh us. Take time today to reflect on God's mercy in your life. Consider how you can extend that same kindness and grace to someone who needs it.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, thank you for your kindness and mercy. I acknowledge that I cannot earn my salvation, but I receive it as a gift of your grace. As I journey through this Lenten season, cleanse my heart, renew my spirit, and draw me closer to you. May I live each day as a response to your love, reflecting your grace to others. Amen

**WRITER:** Barb Drain, Office Administrator

# WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

## Share Your Weaknesses

*He said to me, "My grace is enough for you, because power is made perfect in weakness." So I'll gladly spend my time bragging about my weaknesses so that Christ's power can rest on me. Therefore, I'm all right with weaknesses, insults, disasters, harassments, and stressful situations for the sake of Christ, because when I'm weak, then I'm strong.*

-2 Corinthians 12: 9-10

How many people do you know who post about their failures on Facebook? Who creates Instagram Reels about their shortcomings? On your resume, do you talk about what skills and experience you DON'T have?

In this chapter, Paul spends a lot of time talking about boasting – but he's telling the Corinthians to boast about their weaknesses not their strengths. Why? Because it is in our times of weakness that God's strength can be seen in all its glory.

In January, the incoming leaders of the church shared their Statements of Faith. It was remarkable that they didn't talk about their qualifications or their perfected faith; they noted how even with their inadequacies or feelings of being a "work in progress," they were now humbly accepting the call to lead knowing they could rely on God to help them step into their respective leadership roles. If we only do what we're capable of on our own, what role are we allowing God to play?

**PRAYER:** Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for your reminder that when we are weak, you are strong. We get the chance to see your strength when we take a leap of faith, step into the purpose you have for us, do your good work, and faithfully trust that your power will be made perfect in our weakness. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

**WRITER:** Lynae Young, Elder and member of the Personnel committee.

# THURSDAY, APRIL 3

## Spiritual Food

*Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*

- Romans 8:12-14

When we live in the flesh, we turn away from God's love, law and wisdom by our thoughts, actions and attitudes. We cling to selfish passions which can only lead us to a life void of hope and confidence in the eternal life covenant we have with our Creator through Jesus.

Then, what does it mean to live by the Spirit? As Christians, we have an obligation to read Scripture and pray with confidence. Scripture is our spiritual food by which we are nourished in our faith. We are called by the Spirit to seek the meaning of Scripture and apply Christ's teachings to our daily life.

With the guidance of the Spirit, we can recognize our sins. Because God sacrificed his Son, we are forgiven the sin we acknowledge in our life and pray for forgiveness in the name of Jesus.

**PRAYER:** Father, forgive me for my sins against you. Fill me with your Spirit so that I will grow in faith and in my relationship with you. I pray this in the name of Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

**WRITER:** Carolyn Follansbee lives near Pittsburgh and worships online and is a member of our Adult Spiritual Growth committee.

# FRIDAY, APRIL 4

## Where Is God?

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

*-Lamentations of Jeremiah 3:22-23*

The Harper Collins Study Bible comments on this scripture that it is not uncommon in the psalms that “hope is restored through remembering”.

Eugene Peterson commentary in *The Message* regarding Lamentations Chapter 3:19-24 goes like this: “*It is a Good Thing to Hope for Help from God... I'll never forget the trouble, the utter lostness, I remember it all – oh how well I remember – the feeling of hitting bottom... But there's one other thing I remember, and remembering, I keep a grip on hope: God's loyal love couldn't have run out, his merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning. How great is your faithfulness.*”

During Lent this year maybe you and I could take time to reflect at the end of each day – to make a mental list of the moments to remember during that day when God showed up in the midst of our comings and goings. When we felt joy and peace and love – AND HOPE. Our goal is to let our hope be restored through remembering.

**PRAYER:** Dear loving God, help us to remember all that you have done for us in our past lives and, remembering these happenings, to have hope for the future. We get bogged down in worries. Help us to remember how many times Jesus told his followers, “Do not worry.” May it be so for me and for you. In Jesus’ precious name, Amen.

**WRITER:** Gabrielle Kimmel is a resting Elder and member of the Adult Spiritual Growth team.

# MONDAY, APRIL 7

## God is with You

*Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*

*-Nehemiah 8:10*

I love how the Bible frequently presents challenges, contradictions and paradoxes. I see that as God's way for calling me to go deeper and meditate on his Word. Like the world and the people in it, the Bible is full of complexities.

For example it's interesting to imagine enjoying choice food and sweet drinks during Lent, a time when we are told to give up something that we love to eat, especially foods that give us the greatest pleasure. Lent is a time for self-denial.

I think this passage is telling me something else as well. Despite my troubles and sorrow and angst, God is always there. He's protecting me. He's loving me. And because he loves and protects me, I derive strength from knowing that.

At the same time and maybe because I'm passionate about hospitality, I hear God and Nehemiah telling me it's OK to share joy with others, even during Lent. Food, drink, conversation, connection. It's good to enjoy and be grateful about my life and the people in it. God wants me to share that joy, whether things are going well for me right now or I'm dealing in troubling times.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, you call me to feel your love and your protection. I will quiet my mind, and meditate so that I can hear you. Thank you for teaching me how to be with other people.

**WRITER:** Ann McNally, Resting Trustee and member of the Adult Spiritual Growth committee.

# TUESDAY, APRIL 8

## He Is Coming

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him.*

-1 John 1:5

When an actor or athlete is awarded an Oscar or is inducted into the Hall of Fame, the person introducing the awardee is never a newbie or unknown. Rather it is someone of worthy stature.

Accordingly, the person selected by God to introduce his son Jesus to the world was John the Baptist. Because at this time – perhaps some would claim this is the case today - the world was descending into darkness (evil: i.e., everything seemed broken, warring, sinful, or diseased) – God sent his Son Jesus to show the path to salvation.

Through his preaching and through the baptisms that John the Baptist performed, some of his followers believed that he was the savior. In this passage and the passages that follow, John emphasizes that a truly greater man is coming. The purpose of this scripture is to introduce the emergence and magnitude of the true Savior.

**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus, God sent you to show me the path to salvation. Open my heart to earnestly travel this journey and guide me to bear witness to others. Amen.

**WRITER:** Paul Follansbee lives near Pittsburgh, worships online, and is a member of our Adult Spiritual Growth committee.

# WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

## Jesus' Lessons

*For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

*-Matthew 6:14-21*

Directly after Jesus teaches us to pray, the text begins to teach us how to Live in Christ's 's kingdom as in heaven. The lesson begins with forgiveness. We humans cannot judge whether another has trespassed God's will but we can forgive them for the impact of their trespass on our lives or on the lives of others in the community.

The second lesson is to not make a big "show" of our religiosity. Our prayers and related acts such as fasting are directed to God. God knows the secrets of our heart and our conversation is with him.

The third point of the passage is to focus on the things God requires in the new life in Christ: to love others as our self, to show kindness, to do justice, and to walk humbly with God and each other.

**PRAYER:** Merciful and forgiving God: Help us be part of your coming kingdom, humbly showing your love on earth as we will in heaven. Help us to forgive others as you forgive us and to love each other (including ourselves) as you love us. We pray this in the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ.

**WRITER:** Ernie Kimmel, member of the Adult Spiritual Growth committee.

# THURSDAY, APRIL 10

## David's Psalm

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.  
He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;  
he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.  
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

*-Psalm 103: 8-12*

David's 103rd Psalm is basically a song of praise to God for His many blessings, as well as for his mercy, forgiveness, and goodness. His picture of God is of One who doesn't accuse, nor treats us as our sins deserve, nor does he keep anger forever. God is a forgiving God, with love and mercy for all, who removes our transgressions as far as "the east is to the west".

I think the main message here is one of the most basic of the Bible's teachings – that God is loving, forgiving, compassionate, and delivers us all from sin. Like many of David's Psalms, it is a song of praise, reflecting on God's boundless blessings, abundant mercy, and loving kindness. David is beseeching all who read this Psalm to remember all God provides, and highlights God's forgiving and compassionate nature, very much like a father toward his children.

Lent is a time of fasting, abstinence, and penitence, to commemorate Christ's fasting and suffering in the wilderness. What better time for all of us to remind ourselves of God's many blessings, and reflect on how God shows his love for us by recognizing and forgiving our own transgressions.

**PRAYER:** Heavenly Father, as David reflected on his many blessings, let us likewise reflect on ours, share with Him our transgressions, and rejoice in the glow of his forgiveness. May we use this period of Lent to further remember what he has given us and use that to reinforce our wondrous relationship with God. In Christ's name, Amen.

**WRITER:** Steve Brown, Resting Trustee and Co-Chair of the Vision team.



# FRIDAY, APRIL 11

## A New Way

*But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

*-Galatians 5:22,23*

These verses are so familiar to many of us. I am grateful for the chance to prayerfully, asking for the Spirit's presence, see these verses with "eyes to see and ears to hear".

For the past couple of months I have been in the role of care-receiver rather than the much more familiar and comfortable role of caregiver. I believe that our God is in charge and through the Spirit's presence helps us learn from new experiences, good or difficult, and offers us those gifts of the spirit against which there is no law.

What I have experienced in a new way, are those fruits coming to me from God through family, church family, friends, and every staff member at the Abramson Cancer Center be they receptionists, volunteers, nurses, medical personnel or doctors. For that I am filled with gratitude. So, during this season of Lent and beyond, let us all strive to share the gifts of the Spirit with gratitude for God's abiding presence with us.

**PRAYER:** Loving God, thank you for these gifts of the Spirit that you promise us. By your grace give us opportunities to share those gifts with those around us. May we also see those gifts in others and be grateful. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**WRITER:** Judy Eberhardt, a resting Deacon and Elder as well as faithful Thrift Shop volunteer.

# MONDAY, APRIL 14

## We Need Roots

*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

-John 15:4-5

The majestic redwood trees thrive by relying on each other through inosculation, whereby their roots intertwine with each other for nurture and stability. These trees have an abiding relationship.

When Jesus proclaimed that he is the vine he was telling his followers that through him we can have the gift of eternal life, a relationship with our Creator and all of creation. Our desire to follow (abide in) Jesus is a decision, a commitment we make on a day-to-day basis through our actions to worship, pray, and nurture our faith.

In accepting Christ as our Savior, we desire to live our life abiding in Him. The fruit of this commitment is the Gift of the Spirit which nurtures our relationship with our Creator and all of creation. What is this fruit? (Galatians 5:22-23) *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control.”* These traits are evidence of our abiding in Christ.

**PRAYER:** Father, thank you for the majestic and the subtle beauty in nature. Help me see you in my daily life and to live in relationship with you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

**WRITER:** Carolyn Follansbee lives in Pittsburgh, worships online, and is a member of our Adult Spiritual Growth committee.

# TUESDAY, APRIL 15

## The Call to Carry the Cross

*Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.'*

*-Luke 9:23-24*

What does true discipleship look like? True discipleship is not about convenience or comfort but about surrender. Taking up our cross daily means setting aside our own desires, ambitions, and even fears to walk in obedience to Christ.

Jesus carried his cross to Calvary out of love for us. In this Lenten season, we are invited to follow his example—not just in word but in action. Denying ourselves is a reordering of our hearts toward God's will.

One way to carry your cross this Lent is by intentionally serving others in ways that require sacrifice. This could be through acts of kindness that stretch you—helping a neighbor in need, forgiving someone who has hurt you, or giving generously to those who cannot repay you. When we serve with a heart of surrender, we reflect Christ's love and embody the essence of the cross. As you journey through Lent, ask yourself: What is one thing I can surrender today to follow Jesus more fully?

**PRAYER:** Lord, reveal to us how you are calling us to carry our cross while showing your love to those around us, Amen.

**WRITER:** Eric Dorville, Transitional Associate Pastor for Spiritual Growth

# WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16

## An Amazing Promise

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

*-1 Peter 1:3-5*

We recently opened savings accounts for our children, into which the bank will contribute ten dollars every year on their birthdays. I know they have no comprehension as to what a savings account is. But my hope is that as they learn about the responsibilities of money, they will be pleasantly surprised by what awaits them when they take the accounts over.

This letter from the apostle Peter begins with an exclamation of praise. That really is all you can do when you try to comprehend what God has done through Christ and his resurrection. The inheritance Peter speaks of is what God has done in Christ, God promises to do for them. They can be confident this promise is kept safe until heaven and earth are fully joined in “the last time.” What an amazing promise for all of us who trust and follow Christ!

**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus Christ, through your resurrection you are preparing an inheritance for us, your people. May the promise of that inheritance give birth in us a living hope, so that we may trust and follow you all of our days. Amen.

**WRITER:** Jon Frost, Associate Pastor of Worship

# THURSDAY, APRIL 17

## Maundy Thursday

*Then Jesus went with them to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and he said, 'Sit here while I go over there to pray.' He took Peter and Zebedee's two sons, James and John and he became anguished and distressed. He told them, 'My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.' He went on a little farther and bowed his face to the ground, praying, 'My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will be done, not mine.*

*-Matthew 26:36-39*

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus experienced profound sorrow and anguish, as he faced the impending suffering of the cross. This passage invites us into the depths of Christ's humanity, where even he asked for the cup of suffering to pass from Him. However, his ultimate surrender to the Father's will—"Not as I will, but as you will"—models for us the heart of true discipleship: surrendering our own desires in favor of God's will, even when it is difficult.

During Lent, this moment in the garden challenges us to reflect on our own struggles with surrender and obedience. When we face challenges or discomfort, do we follow Christ's example and submit our will to God, trusting his purposes are greater than our own? Jesus' prayer reveals the intimate relationship he had with his Father, and it reminds us of the need for prayer, vigilance, and trust in God's will for our lives.

**PRAYER:** Lord, reveal to us how you are calling us to carry our cross while showing your love to those around us. Amen.

**WRITER:** Eric Dorville, Transitional Pastor of Spiritual Growth.

# FRIDAY, APRIL 18

## Rest in Love

*When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews.*

*-Luke 23:33-38*

This is perhaps the most haunting scene in all of Scripture. Like a slow, steady cadence, Jesus has been on a collision course with the authorities and the cross has loomed in the background ever since the gospel narratives began moving closer and closer to Jerusalem. Our best response to this scene may simply be to sit in silence before it. Feel the weight of the moment and allow the contrast between Jesus and those around him to stir your heart.

Rather than curse his enemies, Jesus loves them and has compassion on them. Though their words and their sign were meant to mock Jesus, they were ultimately, though unknowingly, true. Jesus is the King. But, he is a King unlike any other. He faced the worst that the world could do and willingly accepted it because of his great love. Whatever you are facing, rest in that love today.

**PRAYER:** Jesus, our Savior, even as you were dying on the cross, you had compassion on the ones responsible for the violence being done to you. Even as they mocked you, your impulse was to forgive them. We are in awe of such love. Give us the strength to forgive our enemies, we pray. Amen.

**WRITER:** Jon Frost, Associate Pastor of Worship

# SUNDAY, APRIL 20

## Easter Sunday

*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.*

-1 Corinthians 15:20-22

I wrote the first entry for this Lenten devotional booklet, focusing on the words of the prophet Joel. Early in his writings, Joel relays a gracious invitation from the Lord to bring our whole hearts before God.

A fascinating phenomenon in the human condition is known as physiological synchrony. It's a much-studied reality that people's bodies start to align with each other during interactions. For example, when two people are having a deep conversation or working together closely, their heart rates, breathing patterns, and even brain activity can become similar. It's like their bodies are mirroring each other, creating a connection on many levels, seen and unseen.

As we draw near to Christ, the same thing happens. We follow him, and by God's grace and design, we begin to mirror his grace, mercy, love, and compassionate action. On this Easter day, we are bold to proclaim that in God's steadfast love and power to make all things new, we, too, share in Christ's resurrection. "All will be made alive in Christ." This is incredible good news for us in the here and now. We can experience life that really is life. We are made one with the risen Christ and one another. We live and move and have our being in Christ (Acts 17:28), individually and as Christ's body – alive – in the world.

*Christ is risen! Alleluia!* May this Easter proclamation give life to our steps, our words, our living.

**PRAYER:** Make me alive in Christ this joyous Easter day, O God. May I feel his living presence, grace, and wisdom pulsing through my body, enlivening my mind, guiding my strength, awakening my spirit. Thank you for giving me life, always and forever, in Christ the Risen Lord of all. Amen.

**WRITER:** Pastor Leah Hrachovec



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