

40 DAYS

of

LOVE IN ACTION

A Lenten Journey for St. Thomas Episcopal Church



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Introduction to this Lenten Devotional

Each year on Ash Wednesday, we are invited to the observance of a holy Lent. Lent is a season set aside for self-examination and repentance; for prayer, fasting and self-denial; and for reading and meditating on Scripture. It is a season in which we recall God's gracious gift of forgiveness, and the opportunities it provides us to renew our commitment to love and service. Our Lenten devotional booklet is designed to support you in your life of prayer and study. It features meditations written by saints of God at St. Thomas and elsewhere, and we hope that in it you will find inspiration and challenge as you proceed through the season of Lent.

Repentance – the aim of Lent -- is surrender. We repent when we confront those things in our lives that separate us from God, and we admit to ourselves that we can no longer allow them to dominate our lives. When we repent, we become convinced that we simply cannot go on living our lives as we have been – we realize we must change or we shall lose our very selves.

Sometimes we are called to give up those things that alienate us from God including anger and grudges that separate us from others. Others may repent in claiming the power to be themselves: coming out of the closet or the shadows in which they have hidden away the very essence of who they are so they can be the person God has created them to be.

Whatever the shape of your Lenten journey, I pray that the words of Scripture and these reflections upon them will open your heart to God's transforming grace. May you find encouragement and love and be strengthened to share it with others in God's name. May God's peace be with you in this holy season.

- Pastor Jane Maynard

Activate your Lenten Journey: Look for the Action Icons!



Whenever you see the **BE KIND** icon, you will be invited to consider how we might show kindness to ourself and others this season. It will often contain prompts for reflecting on your Lenten journey through prayer, poetry, art, or an act of love for neighbors or loved ones.



The **DO GOOD** icon is an invitation to put your **love into action!** This icon will be accompanied by ideas on how you can serve your community in some tangible way, either by making a donation, volunteering at a food bank, and more!



Lastly, when you see the **GIVE FREELY** icon you will be prompted to make a financial contribution to organizations doing powerful work in our community. This icon will often be accompanied by a QR code. Whenever you see that, open your smart phone's camera app and give it a scan to be directed to the organization's giving page.

Shout out, do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.
“Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day,
and oppress all your workers.
Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.
Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the Lord?
Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Isaiah 58:1-5

Wednesday, March 2 | **Ash Wednesday**

Joel 2:13b-14 | *Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.*

Return. Return. What does it mean to “return?” Of course the most obvious answer is you can only return to something, or someone, if you have left them in the first place. And of course, that is exactly it here, in the passage above. The entire narrative history of the human walk with God is a story of tremendous ups and downs, being on the path, and straying from it, leaving, and returning. Of course, the amazing grace in all of this, is that God ALWAYS takes us back. Always. In a sense, or perhaps I should simply declare, in all seriousness returning to God incarnated in our lives would look like us, living in this world, and emulating with every step this Way God gives to us, gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, assuming the best, learning not blaming. Just look around. Do you see much of this reality in our world today?

Turning, Returning, is not just an individual thing. We, the Church, are just as off track. We are not exempt from this flaw. We too are called to look at ourselves honestly, and then turn, return to God and to God’s Way. If you are so inclined, you might get out your Bible and read Joel. If you do you will see that the words right before this verse above are there,

“Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.”

In other words, there is no prize for only changing the outside, the appearances, the show. The prize comes, the freedom, the peace of mind, when your entire self cracks open, when your heart is broken open. Only then have you truly “returned.” People always ask me, “what should I do in Lent?” I’ll offer one quick idea: Return.

- The Rt. Rev. Gregory H. Rickel, VIII Bishop of Olympia, 2021

Thursday, March 3

Jeremiah 23:1-8 | *The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’*

The season of Lent always occurs during the busiest time of the year for me. The state legislature is in session and I happen to work for the chair of the House Appropriations Committee. The phrase, “and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land” really stood out. The legislature is filled with a lot of conscientious, hard-working people who try very hard to make the right set of decisions that will solve intractable problems.

People leave their families behind to labor 12-14 hour days for a minimum of 105 days. How do we make sure our children get educated, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, build and maintain our infrastructure and ensure access to health care services? These decisions do not occur in a vacuum. Public input is essential to make sure those who govern “deal wisely” with justice and fairness to all.

- Marilyn Pederson, 2013

Friday, March 4

Isaiah 42:1-9 | *I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.*

“I have taken you by the hand and kept you.” I want to tattoo that odd-shaped little word on my arm: kept. I want to claim it for myself. Preserved like a bottle of wine, maintained like a house on the coast, guided like a child at a crosswalk, carried like a pebble in a pocket, stashed safely away like a treasure. Kept. A beautiful thought.

Beautiful, but difficult to accept. I find myself crippled at my own hand. I have built walls of guilt and shame so high between myself and God’s love that I feel I’ll never be able to accept it. I am scared and confused. I despair that I will never feel anything but scared and confused. I am in rough shape, and hardly seem worth keeping, worth even the slightest glance from God. It would be nice to think that someday I will be a light to the nations. That someday I will open the eyes that are blind, rescue prisoners from darkness, feel secure in my calling to righteousness. On rare days this feels like a reasonable hope for the future, but mostly I roll my eyes at the futility of the whole operation.

But here comes Lent again, and like it or not, I’m going to make another pass at it. This year I would like it to wash over me. I would like to understand deeply that Jesus came to save me from myself, from my blindness, from my prison of doubt. That he did this because I am unable to go it alone. So I will try and walk this Lenten journey. I will try to surrender, and recognize that God is holding my hand. I will try and allow myself to be kept. It is, after all, an excellent place to be. Safe in God’s pocket, precious in his sight, subject to his divine maintenance. I need to let God do the work, in-stead of trying in vain to do it for him. And maybe, instead of listening, finally I will hear. Maybe my eye will be opened. Maybe I will be brought out from my darkness.

- Tim Blok, 2013



How do you want to be opened this Lent? In what ways are you being called to surrender? To return? What might you take up this Lent? On the space provided on the next page, **compose a personal prayer for Lent**. It doesn’t have to be fancy! Let it be something you can revisit from time to time as you walk through this season.

More note pages are at the back of this book, where you can continue to reflect throughout Lent.



Soul,
if by chance you forget where I am,
do not rush around here or there.

If you want to find me,
seek me inside yourself.

Soul,
you are my room.
you are my house, you are my dwelling.
If, through your distracted ways,
I ever find the door tightly closed,
do not seek me outside yourself.

To find me,
it will be enough simply to call me,
and I will come quickly.
Seek me inside yourself.

-

By Saint Teresa of Avila, from *The Interior Castle*; Mirabai Starr, translator

My prayer for Lent...



SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT

Think Global, Act Local

Mission & Vision

This first Sunday of Lent we give thanks for the people of Tonga who have survived one of the worst underwater volcanic eruptions, and subsequent tsunami, in recent years. The Kingdom of Tonga is a Polynesian country consisting of 169 islands, of which 36 are inhabited. As of 2021, Tonga had a population of 104,494, Tonga is about 1,800 km (1,100 mi) from New Zealand's North Island. There is currently a shortage of water, food, clothing, and medical supplies, compounded by very challenging communication and delivery conditions. The needs of Tonga were recently brought to our attention by a dear friend of St. Thomas, Tina Ford (Hafoka) who has family still living in Tonga. After our worship service today, we will be assembling "care bags" to be sent to the Tongan people, as well as "Neighbors in Need" bags for those struggling in our local region. If you have clothing, food (rice, flour, or canned goods) that you would like to donate please contact Tina Ford directly (425-623-3789).

Today's loose plate offerings will be given to Episcopal Relief and Development who have a long-standing commitment to relief efforts internationally, of which Tonga is a direct recipient.

Get Involved



Episcopal Relief & Development works with church partners and other local organizations to facilitate healthier, more fulfilling lives in communities that are struggling with hunger, poverty, disaster and disease. They also work around the world and in the US responding to and rebuilding after disasters.

You are invited to support the work of Episcopal Relief and Development to support struggling regions like Tonga and elsewhere. (Scan to donate).





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image © Reuters

Monday, March 7

Mark 8:34 | *If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me*

This verse jolts me back to junior high and a T-shirt popular among my friends at youth group: On the front, an image of Jesus' crucifixion with "No pain, no gain" written at the foot of the cross; on the back, a picture of knees, raw and bloody, with the words, "Pray Hard."

I was taught that the Christian life was a spiritual workout, to exercise muscles of self-denial until they hurt—one more push-up, one more curl, one more sacrifice, one more day of prayer and fasting. Because "no pain, no gain." We threw our sense of self into "the Refiner's fire" as songwriter Brian Doerksen instructed us, and followed lifestyle guidance on gospel purity from seminars by Bill Gothard and Joshua Harris. They taught us that the Christian life was an obsession with individualistic piety—a spirituality that befits a culture focused on pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. If only we would learn to celebrate discipline, as Richard Foster insisted, then we'd be on the right path to spiritual growth.

When Jesus invites his disciples to take up the cross, he's pointing at the torturous mechanism of Rome's power to silence subversives, not to evangelical pietism. Jesus wants his followers to know what they're committing to: a political movement of revolutionary community that will make them enemies of the establishment.

But the pain of sacrifice isn't the point, nor is crucifixion. Jesus doesn't call for self-denial as a good in and of itself. The point, Jesus says, is to bear witness to the gospel of life even if such a decision will lead to execution at the hands of oppressors. "Those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel," Jesus says, "will save it" (Mark 8:35).

- Isaac S. Villegas

Excerpt from *The Rabbit who Visits my Garden: The Trinitarian Life of God*.

Published in Sojourners.com, February 2021.

Tuesday, March 8

Philippians 2:5-11 | *Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God ... but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.*

My study beckons me with its chronic clutter and disarray. As I stand at the threshold and look around, I see a room that reflects passions in Christian theology and ministry, pastoral counseling, health promotion. It's also the room in our home where everything gets thrown,

whenever we are straightening up for guests. The room is easy to ignore; it sits at an angle that is not evident as you enter our home. Its door bears a sign that reads, "If my room was clean, I'd be somebody else." In short, it's a mess!

Within these walls, I have come to understand this chaos as a sign of a life lived fully, ardently poured out in loving Christian service. Yet, as I prepare for Lent and God's invitation to draw nearer, I hear this room whisper, "Empty me! Simplify! Create a right space within, so that you are receptive to the path of the Spirit and what God desires." How can I listen attentively and heed God if my mind is so cluttered with other things? How can I empty myself of what enslaves me ("the tyranny of the urgent") in order to live more humbly as God intends?

Only when we can create inner space in the midst of our demanding lives, can we be responsive to God's call to each of us, individually and corporately. Christ actively modeled humility, servanthood, and compassion for all humanity, to help us understand God's desires for us in the world. This is the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. This becomes our Lenten journey: to clear the path towards an uncluttered appreciation of Christ's obedient sacrifice for us on the cross and to carefully listen for God's direction. Amen.

- Aileen Loranger, 2013

Wednesday, March 9

Isaiah 42:1-9 | *"I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness. I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon..."*

I am a slave of the news cycle. I get my first hit in the morning on the radio, consume a newspaper before breakfast, get pinged with email alerts of breaking news throughout the day on my computer, iPad, and so-called smartphone, and then allow myself to be yelled at by TV pundits in the sacred hours before bedtime. You have noticed there has been a surplus of news lately. My rate of premature aging has sped up considerably.

And it's all for nothing. Isaiah called this, quite some time ago. God is with us, even if the known world seems to be upending in front of us. Not only is God with us, God knows how this story will end and has already told us. I can let go of this compulsive need to know the latest developments, this pitiful attempt to feel somewhat more in control in an era of seismic change, because the end of the story has already occurred. "I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness. I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon..."

Even though we don't know all the ways any story may develop, or if it will take months or years

or decades to become more clear, surely we can have confidence in how it will ultimately end.

The Rev Dr Martin Luther King, Jr said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” I will try to remember that this Lenten season, amid the clamor of voices. Perhaps I might even turn off my incoming alert bell on my devices. Do I really need Twitter if I have Isaiah? See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

- Kim Malcolm, 2011



Is there a form of technology that is ruling you like a master rather than serving you like a tool? Take some time today to **intentionally unplug**. Set for yourself a reasonable challenge, **anywhere from 1 to 24 hours**. Be mindful of what emerges. What do you notice? In what ways do you fill the vacant space?

Thursday, March 10

If you would enter
into the wilderness,
do not begin
without a blessing.

Do not leave
without hearing
who you are:
Beloved,
named by the One
who has traveled this path
before you.

Do not go
without letting it echo
in your ears,
and if you find
it is hard
to let it into your heart,
do not despair.
That is what
this journey is for.

I cannot promise
this blessing will free you
from danger,
from fear,
from hunger
or thirst,
from the scorching
of sun
or the fall
of the night.

But I can tell you
that on this path
there will be help.

I can tell you
that on this way
there will be rest.

I can tell you
that you will know
the strange graces

that come to our aid
only on a road
such as this,
that fly to meet us
bearing comfort
and strength,
that come alongside us
for no other cause
than to lean themselves
toward our ear
and with their
curious insistence
whisper our name:

Beloved.
Beloved.
Beloved.

-

Beloved Is Where We Begin
By Jan Richardson

Friday, March 11

Psalm 86:11 | *Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; knit my heart to you that I may fear your Name.*

During Lent many of us will give up something precious to us, like sweets, alcohol, or coffee in order to become closer to God. By removing something that is close to our heart, we are left with a hole to fill. In Psalm 86 we are instructed to “knit our heart to” the Lord so that we may fear his name. This seems like a fairly simple task, we’ve all felt a little empty inside when we are missing a loved one or a comfort that we like to enjoy. What God is saying to us is that whenever we feel a little empty inside as long as our hearts are knit together with God’s own, we will never feel empty or alone because we are never truly alone. This Lenten season I encourage you not to just give something away but to let someone in as well. In times of hardship, we all know that it is nice to have a shoulder to lean on and someone to support us but I would also encourage you not to turn to God only when you need his help but also to share in your good times. Because if our hearts are truly knit tightly together there will never be a time in your life without God. So this Lenten season I encourage you to let some God into your life.

- Thomas Eggenberger, 2015

Saturday, March 12



Most gracious and all wise God, before whose face the generations rise and fall; Thou in whom we live, and move, and have our being. We thank thee [for] all of thy good and gracious gifts, for life and for health; for food and for raiment; for the beauties of nature and human nature. We come before thee painfully aware of our inadequacies and shortcomings. We realize that we stand surrounded with the mountains of love and we deliberately dwell in the valley of hate. We stand amid the forces of truth and deliberately lie. We are forever offered the high road and choose to travel the low road. For these sins O God forgive. Break the spell of that which blinds our minds. Purify our hearts that we may see thee. O God in these turbulent days when fear and doubt are mounting high give us broad visions, penetrating eyes, and power of endurance. Help us to work with renewed vigor for a warless world, for a better distribution of wealth and for a brother/sisterhood that transcends race or color. In the name and spirit of Jesus we pray. Amen.

- Never To Leave Us Alone: The Prayer Life of Martin Luther King, Jr
By Lewis Baldwin



SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT

Bellevue LifeSpring

Mission

Our mission is to foster stability and self-sufficiency for Bellevue's children and their families through programs that provide food, clothing, education, and emergency assistance.

History

In 1911, a group of women living in Hunts Point formed the Overlake Service League in support of neighbors in need. Now known as Bellevue LifeSpring, the organization continues its tradition of providing children's basic needs, allowing them to focus on their education and break the cycle of poverty.

When Overlake Service League began, the population in the Bellevue area was just over 150. In the early days, the organization delivered food baskets, goats for milk and seeds, and farm equipment to plant and harvest food. During the Great Depression and following years, Overlake Service League helped those out of work to find jobs. They delivered 50,000 half-pints of milk to school children and began a Well-Baby Clinic that provided immunizations and routine exams prior to the existence of a hospital on the Eastside.

In 1939, the first Overlake Service League Thrift Shop was opened on Main Street. In 1947, the Thrift Shop moved to Kemper Development property and, in 1981, made the final move to Bellevue Square Mall. In summer 2017, the thrift shop joined Bellevue LifeSpring administrative offices on the third floor of Bellevue Square and was named Thrift Culture for Bellevue LifeSpring's culture of giving.

Overlake Service League had been supporting families in the Bellevue area for nearly 42 years by the time Bellevue was finally incorporated as a city in 1953. The League's membership had grown to include 500 individuals in neighborhoods around the new city. By the end of the decade, it was serving more than 200 individuals per year. As Bellevue grew, so did the need. By 1985, the League was serving over 2,000 individuals per year.

In 2011, Overlake Service League celebrated 100 years of serving the Bellevue community with a Centennial Gala and changed the name of the organization to Bellevue LifeSpring to better reflect its commitment to serving families within the Bellevue School District.



Whether by participating in food drives, attending a benefit, joining a membership circles, or more, there are plenty of ways to become involved with Bellevue LifeSpring. Visit bellevuelifespring.org to learn more.



Support the work that Bellevue LifeSpring is doing to foster stability for Bellevue's children by making a donation online.



Monday, March 14

Matthew 22:34-46 | Love God; Love your neighbor. These words seem so simple as the “greatest commandments.” I don’t even understand why Matthew describes this question as “the test” (Matthew 22:36). For the faithful, it would seem these priorities ought to be paramount. One would not need to know all the law or read all the prophets for these words to resonate as important. But the question comes as a test to Jesus, perhaps to trap him, since he had silenced previous inquisitors (see verse 34).

If we were grilled with questions to expose what we think are the most important commandments, would we be convicted of choosing these priorities? Once, a man screamed at me that he thought I wanted everyone to be saved. Read that again. That is exactly what he screamed: “You act like you want everyone to be saved.” He was exasperated because I had said that, no matter how angry I am at the way the world works (and I am), and no matter how disappointing humans can be (and they can be), I continue to want people to know the power of God’s love, and I continue to want to be a conduit of that love for them. Or as my friend Dwayne Royster says, “I want to love the hell out of people.”

I believe that when we turn our hearts toward God and learn to love God completely—a lifelong pursuit—it makes it possible to love people. Now, while I want to be the person to which I aspire, let me be real and say it’s not easy either to love God or people. God can be so silent; people can be so insufferable. But, if we are going to help God usher in a world made new and full of love, then we must answer the same question put to Jesus, “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” (verse 36) And maybe there will be questions we will never be able to answer, like the one Jesus put to those gathered: “What do you think about the Messiah?” But if we answer the first question with integrity, the rest may not be as important.

By Valerie Bridgeman

Excerpt from *Shoring Up Our Souls: Reflections on the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A*.

Published on Sojourners.com, October 2020.

Tuesday, March 15

Mark 6:7-8 | *He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and give them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts.*

As a high school sophomore reading *Catcher in the Rye* I am quite familiar with Holden Caulfield’s not-so-fond opinion of Jesus’ disciples. According to Holden they always let Jesus down. It’s a somewhat sobering thought considering that the disciples are probably the people in the Bible most similar to you and me—Average Joes trying to follow Jesus. So it’s nice, I guess,

to have this piece of scripture. Jesus trusts his disciple with “authority over the unclean spirits.” No matter how many times his followers disappoint him or let him down Jesus still trusts them. He expects the best even if he normally doesn’t get it. In fact he seems to expect the best of all of humanity. By leaving without food or money the disciples rely on the generosity of those they encounter on their travels. Jesus expects just as much from me, and no matter how many times I mess it up, I will always get another chance, because ultimately we will all get sent out to serve our neighbors. God gives us second chances, God is patient because we are Jesus’ disciples (let downs and all) and we are blessed with the responsibility of authority, the responsibility to house and feed God’s children, and the responsibility to help build the Kingdom of God, just as the twelve were. But we are not alone with these enormous tasks. The twelve were sent out in twos, and similarly we are gifted an amazing congregation at St. Thomas that can help each other figure out what it means to be a disciple of Christ. I sure don’t know what I’m doing half the time, but I have Youth Group, Sunday morning formation, the St. Thomas congregation and God to be with me the entire time, and as I grow up I will learn what it means to be sent out as a disciple.

- Lindsay Farr, 2016

Wednesday, March 16

Psalm 92:1 | *It is a good thing to give thanks for the Lord, and to sing praises to your Name...*

Ah yes, it is good, and it brings to mind the greatest and first commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” How can we do this? Whether we say it, or sing it, or think it, the most sacred vehicle we can employ is prayer. Here are some reflections on prayer in thanksgiving to God that I have experienced over the years.

Awareness and concentration lead us to recognize that God has created everything – big things, little things, people, rocks, etc., ad infinitum. A scientist friend once said to me: “Isn’t it possible that rocks might have their own order?” (think Stone-henge). At the other end of the spectrum I saw a spider on my desk, running very fast, and so small I could barely see it. Then there is nano technology in biological applications. I stand in awe of Creation, knowing that I must give thanks for everything as often as I can – “...at the work of your hands I sing for joy.”

Prayer for me takes different forms. Formal prayer (thanksgiving, confession, intercession, petition) is a wonderful way to begin your day, centering you for the tasks ahead. Five minutes or more is a good measure. Jesus tells us to go away to a quiet place to pray – necessary before the family day begins to unfold. Otherwise, St. Paul tells us to “pray unceasingly.” This means developing the habit of giving thanks 24/7. Internalizing a prayer of your own making, and repeating it as often as you can, is not only praise but will develop a sense of peace and calm in you – certainly of use in facing the exigencies of the world today. In troubled times, know that

the Lord is our rock, our Holy Mountain. A marvelous epiphany is when you finally “become a prayer.” Other praise mantras are beautiful ways to give thanks. For example: “Thank you for your love, in spite of my many faults”; “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, thank you”; “Bless the Lord my soul and bless God’s Holy Name.” Repeat these as frequently as possible toward becoming a prayer. A caution: no matter your form of prayer, do not feel guilty or remiss if your thoughts stray while talking to God; after all, we are not perfect. Instead, remember a main tenet of contemplative prayer: recognize the interruption, and gently return to the center of your prayer. In time of doubt remember the words of Thomas Merton: “...the fact that we think we are following your will does not mean that we are actually doing so. But we believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And we hope we have that desire in all we are doing.”

Finally, I submit a few personal practices which, for Shirley and me, have become other ways to be at one with God. Every home has mundane tasks which must be performed, like them or not, such as emptying the dishwasher, taking out the trash, etc. We regularly thank each other for doing these things. It may seem boring but it is a way to say “I love you, you are God’s creation, thank you God.” We also say grace before meals, and say together the Lord’s Prayer before going to sleep at night. “Be joyful and give thanks to the Lord.”

- Dwight Russell, 2017

Thursday, March 17

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

By Thomas Merton, from *Thoughts on Solitude*

Friday, March 18

Romans 2:29 | *Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart –it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.*

In this verse Paul is summing up his message in Romans Chapter 2 reminding us that salvation and a relationship with God is a matter of the heart. It isn’t just coming to church so that we can tell our friends that we go to church. Paul is telling us not to just settle for appearances and ritual. Don’t just go through the motions. Be the person on the inside that you are portraying

on the outside. Let the Spirit change your life. Don't just make an appearance on Sunday. Listen, act, react, feel, become involved, and you will be changed.

I remember a message I heard at our Stewardship Campaign Kick Off meeting last Fall that really resonated with me. One of our parishioners stood up and talked about really getting involved at Church. He talked not about just tithing, but giving of himself. Not just coming to church on Sunday, but connecting with people on a deeper level and participating with our community and our events and making a difference. And most importantly, recognizing the difference this effort will make in us. I thought a lot about that message over the last few months. I see similarities to Paul's message in Romans Chapter 2 verse 29.

This verse and message at the Fall meeting remind us that being a Christian is not a ritual. We need to live our spirituality more fully and consistently. This is what God wants for us.

- Molly McConkey, 2017

Saturday, March 19



Go slowly
Consent to it
But don't wallow in it
Know it as a place of germination
And growth
Remember the light
Take an outstretched hand if you find one
Exercise unused senses
Find the path by walking in it
Practice trust
Watch for dawn

-

*A Reflection on Finding your Way:
What To Do in the Darkness*
By Marilyn Chandler McEntyre



Start a giveaway box. Begin by adding three items of clothes from your closet that you have not worn for the last year. Challenge yourself to add at least one item to the box in each of the remaining days of Lent. Notice what comes up for you as the box grows. Don't forget to donate the box after Lent!



SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT Earth Ministry

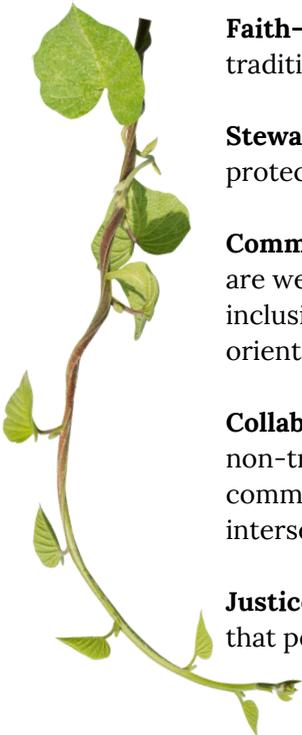
Mission & Vision

For over 25 years, Earth Ministry/WAIPL has been a national leader in engaging the faith community in environmental stewardship and advocacy.

Earth Ministry transforms faith into action for the well-being of communities and the environment. We organize people of faith to advocate for strong environmental policies and provide strategic guidance to religious communities working toward environmental justice.

Earth Ministry envisions a just and sustainable future in which people of all spiritual traditions fully embrace their faith's call to environmental stewardship.

Values



Faith-based: We are grounded in faith. We call upon the rich history of religious traditions in caring for creation and offer a vision of hope for the future.

Stewardship: We believe that Earth is sacred and that we have a responsibility to protect and restore it.

Community: We forge authentic relationships, foster strong communities, and are welcoming of all. We respect theological and social diversity and are inclusive of people of any faith tradition, age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and socio-economic class.

Collaboration: We are intentional in our outreach and build bridges between non-traditional allies. We work in coalition with religious, tribal, environmental, communities of color, labor, business, and health partners and understand the intersectionality of our shared efforts.

Justice: We seek justice for all creation by changing political and social systems that perpetuate pollution, racism, poverty, and injustice.



Put your faith into action by speaking out for environmental justice! Unsure where to start? Visit earthministry.org/advocacy to learn about ongoing campaigns and how you can be a champion for protective policies and positive change.



Support the work that Earth Ministry is doing to fight for a just and sustainable future for all by making a donation online.



Monday, March 21

This Summer, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres noted that the most recent intergovernmental climate change report was “a code red for humanity. ... Global heating is affecting every region on Earth, with many of the changes becoming irreversible.”

The U.S. infrastructure is crumbling under the weight of extreme weather. My kids have already witnessed trucks and cars submerged under 9 feet of water on the freeway near us. They have watched scuba divers search for bodies. How will they cope when the water is higher? How will children stay cool in 120-degree weather? What will they eat when the supply chain collapses?

And how will they find joy? When the electrical, plumbing, and cell phone grids collapsed under the floods last summer, our whole neighborhood brought grills to the front lawn and feasted on the thaw from our freezers. Amid anxiety, we found a way to create a festival.

We usher our kids into a schooling system designed not for climate resilience but for industrialization. They are prepped for factories or desk jobs by listening to bells and learning obedience. This old way won't serve them as the climate grows more unpredictable. Education for this moment requires that we relearn what our bodies have forgotten. My kids are learning to pick up knitting needles and work a sewing machine. We are putting seeds in the earth and raising chickens. We chop firewood, shovel compost, and make jam. There are adults in their lives who know how to do plumbing, electrical, and construction, and friends who play piano, throw pottery, gather medicinal herbs, and tend beehives.

Little by little, we expand our community. We find our way back into work that is gentler on the earth. Slowly we entrust our children to be held, not by us, but by all of creation.

By Lydia Wylie-Kellermann

Excerpt from *Defying the Dragon: Raising Children for Joy in the Face of Climate Catastrophe*
Published in *Sojourners Magazine*, March 2022.

Tuesday, March 22

John 12:46-47 | *I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness. I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world*

In this passage, Jesus says, “I have come into the world as a Light.” The word light can mean many things: truth; salvation; peace; life. All good and positive, uplifting concepts that enhance and brighten our world. When I sat with this passage and thought about Jesus as the light, it

made me think about life-giving light, illuminating our world and our souls. The life-giving concept of light led me to think about our sun, the brightest life-giving light in our part of the galaxy. (This train of thought undoubtedly had something to do with having recently sat in on a high school biology and environment class). Our sun illuminates and warms our planet, making so much life possible through the process of photo-synthesis in plants, converting carbon dioxide and water into glucose and oxygen. It helps create a hospitable atmosphere for life, as we know it, to flourish on this little blue dot we call home. The miracle of life on Earth through light has been taking place for millions and billions of years and constantly continues – every moment, every day.

The constant presence of light in our world and universe, whether it's the sun during the day or the stars and moon at night, reminds me that God is all around us and that the light of Jesus brightens the way to a true and loving life. Today, in our busy and fast-paced lives, it is easy to forget to take time to open your eyes and appreciate our surroundings; to smell the roses, feel the warmth of dawn kiss your face or see the simmering glow of sunset stretching across the sky. God blesses us with these beautiful moments of transformative light every day and it is up to us to open our eyes and hearts, look to the light and photosynthesize it back out to the world as love.

There are those who choose to bury their heads and hide in darkness. At times I feel the desire to do this as well, when I feel defeated, small, angry and alone. But the light has a way of drifting in and lifting me out of pain and fear. I find the light of Jesus all around me. It is in the smiles and faces of loved ones and people around me. It is in the joyful laugh of children playing. It is in nature and animals colliding and wild. It is in music that fills my senses and calls me to dance and sing like ABBA, The Beatles, Lizzo, Arlo Guthrie and Queen.

So, today, take time, feel the warmth of Jesus's light surround you and give thanks for the beautiful colors of God's love, the Light of Life; oh what a magnificent sight to behold.

Prayer: Dear Lord, when we are shrouded by darkness, let the light of Jesus envelop our souls and lift us out of despair. Illuminate the way so that we may walk in love and live and dwell in the light, so that we may shine as our true and loving selves; the selves that we were made to be, just the way we are, perfectly flawed and free. Amen.

- Brigitte Ashley Bolerjack, 2016

Wednesday, March 23

1 Corinthians 1:25 | *For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.*

When I was a girl growing up in Louisiana, my father planted a fig tree in our yard. He and I both loved figs-my mother and sister, not so much. The birds, on the other hand REALLY loved them.

Every spring, Daddy and I went on the offense. We used netting, scarecrows, firecrackers. We were known to race outside shouting. We got our figs. But then, so did the birds. There was enough for all. Daddy passed away and 30 years later, we moved Mother into an assisted living facility. When I went down to see her and my family, I would stay at my childhood home. The fig tree was still there but was leggy, misshapen, half dead, and not producing many figs. I knew that there might not be many more visits to the home.

So I found my mother's pruning shears and snipped off the end of a branch-6 inches long with a few swollen buds but no leaves. I wrapped it up in wet paper towels and flew back to Seattle with it in my purse. The next morning, I dipped it in some RootTone and stuck it in a tiny pot. Then I waited and hoped. The 6-inch stick is now a 15 ft. tall fig tree with lots of green figs on it- I call it Daddy. For me this story is a bit of a parable. When things are torn down, destroyed, damaged, it's time for a little hope and faith and being foolish enough to never give up! It's time to trust that God is involved in our lives everywhere to mend, restore, and rebuild. When I saw my husband tortured and diminished by his disease, he is restored and shining bright in heaven. In all of our lives, there are times that we must never give up, have hope and faith and trust that our powerful God is in all things and working His purpose

- Yvonne Lamey, 2020

Thursday, March 24



"Earth Dance" by Karen Loveland, 1999
Published in Minnesota Women's Press,

*Our mother,
which art the earth,
Nurturing are thy ways.
Thy web of life be woven
Thy way be found within, as it is all around*

*Thank you this day for our daily bread and sweat
and forgive us our misuse of you,
as we forgive others their misuse of us.*

*And lead us not into exploitation,
But deliver us from lording it over you,
And over each other,
And over all our other fellow creatures*

*For thine are the waters of life,
The hills, valleys and plains of home,
The breeding, seeding, feeding ground,
For now, and for as close to forever
As we will ever come.*

Friday, March 25

Psalm 79:8 | Remember not our past sins; let your compassion be swift to meet us; for we have been brought very low

The future, the horizon our eyes have been directed towards for the past year. Within that all encompassing horizon there is the hope that God has better times in store for us. That tomorrow will be better than the day before; and that our world will be made better by the following generations. Following generations, there is a lot of pressure put on them isn't there? To do not only good, but better than their parents and grandparents. There is a phrase I never really liked, it says "the future is bright." Now yes, the future is bright there is no denying that, it always will be. However there is a time that this phrase seems to leave out: now. A bright future must begin with a bright now. God fills our lives with small and large opportunities to do good. To help one another, to choose love instead of hate. Take those opportunities, so that when the time comes for us to meet that ever enticing horizon, the following generation will have just a little less to make better.

- Izzy Greenberg, 2021

Saturday, March 26

Nearer to the earth's heart,
Deeper within its silence:
Animals know this world
in a way we never will.

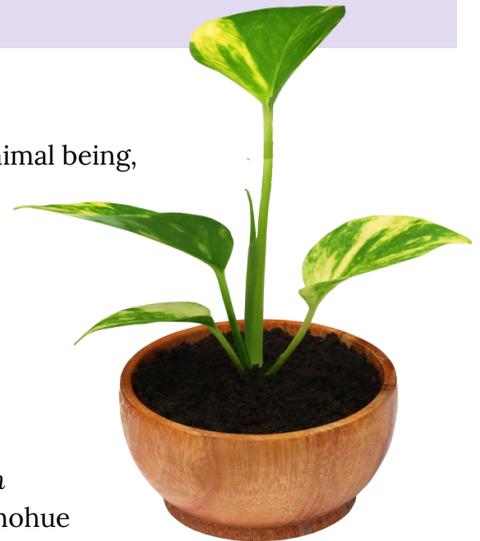
We who are ever
Distanced and Distracted
By the parade of bright
Windows thought opens:
Their seamless presence
Is not fractured thus.

Stranded between time
Gone and time emerging,
We manage seldom
To be where we are:
Whereas they are always
Looking out from
The here and now.

May we learn to return
And rest in the beauty of animal being,
Learn to lean low,
Leave our locked minds,
And with freed senses
Feel the earth
Breathing with us.

-

Excerpt from *To Learn from
Animal Being* by John O'Donohue



Pay a visit to your local nursery, and purchase a small plant, or even seeds for your soil! Tend to your plant throughout Lent, and watch as it grows. What delights you? What surprises you? Notice what arises within you as you chart your plant's growth.



SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT

Refugee Resettlement

Mission

Founded in 1978, Diocese of Olympia's Refugee Resettlement Office (RRO), an affiliate of Episcopal Migration Ministries and the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia, serves refugees and asylees in the Seattle area. Our clients come to us from anywhere in the world seeking guidance and assistance in building a new life in America and achieving economic self-sufficiency. Our mission is accomplished through resettlement, job placement activities, and business development programs that promote self-employment.

Our mission is accomplished through the following services:

- Resettlement
- Immigration
- English Classes
- Employment Assistance
- Individual Development Accounts
- Micro-Enterprise Programs
- Citizenship Classes
- Business Training
- Financial Literacy Training
- Childcare STARS Training



The wrap-around nature of the Refugee Resettlement Office means that there are many different ways to get involved. Whether you're a gifted tutor or mentor, or prefer to work behind the scenes, there's an opportunity for you! Visit dioceserroseattle.org/volunteer-1 to learn more.



Donations and support are a vital part of our ability to provide for these families. Scan the QR code to make a donation today!





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 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

Monday, March 28

Psalm 107 | Psalm 107 nudges us from our backyards to imagine the hearts and lives of those in transit: the refugee, the wayfarer, the pilgrim, the immigrant, the sojourner, the alien, the wanderer — all of those en route to the cross from the four compass points of the north, the south, the east and the west.

The United Nations Refugee Agency reports that every 4 seconds someone is forced to flee. Whether along the border of Mexico, in Syria, the South Sudan, or the Ukraine — this statistic is staggering. Psalm 107 asks us this Lent to remember those in transit — in all their fear, their grief, their suffering — and to pray to the Lord to save them from their distress, and to trust in the Lord who will lead them from places of stress and violence toward a story of redemption and liberation.

[The] power and the purpose of this Psalm lies in its trajectory toward something greater, a collective that cannot stay put in particular places but must instead immigrate to a new location to stand alongside all the others who celebrate the same liberation.

I'm giving up giving up for Lent. My Lenten discipline is solely this: to look to the north, the south, the east and the west and to remember the despair of my neighbor and carry the weight of that load on my shoulders, and the grief of their hearts in my own.

By Lisa Nichols Hickman

Excerpt from *Lent: Remembering Those in Transit*. Published to Sojourners.com, March 2015

Tuesday, March 29

Psalm 90:1 | *Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another.*

Upon the first reading of this passage, the thought that immediately came to mind was that of the generations who have gone on before us as a refuge in love, support, sacrifice and faith. We found ourselves quietly reflecting here and simply thanking God for that rich legacy of “refuge” in our lives, even when we weren’t aware of it or didn’t fully understand it or didn’t always accept or appreciate it. From there the image of refuge moved on to the reminder that God himself has been our Refuge over all the years of our lives, and has given us an unshakeable foundation which has shaped the way we live, the way we see the world, the way we interpret the unpredictable and unexplainable events of life, and in the end gives us confidence as we head into our future yet unknown. This unshakeable foundation is that he is the God who in the forever wonder and mystery of it all became one of us. The outrageous irony is that the one who is our Refuge himself became a refugee. God became powerless in Jesus — for us. We are told he left his homeland to become a stranger, one who was “despised and rejected”, one who “had nowhere to lay his head” so that we fragile and fearful and wounded human beings, who are uncertain about ourselves and

our future, would know that we have a humble, vulnerable, accessible God who knows us intimately, came for us, welcomes us, and calls us to be part of his very own life.

Lord, thank you that you are our Refuge in this unstable and broken world. Help us to reach out and be a refuge to others, to welcome the stranger, the refugee, the marginalized, the “other”, the ones who don’t have anywhere to go or “anywhere to lay their heads”, the ones with broken hearts and dashed dreams. Give us your grace Lord to remember that we too, like you, are refugees. Amen.

- Jim and Rachel Clifton, 2018

Wednesday, March 30

Hebrews 2:7 | *Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect.*

Fully human in every way? I grew up with a sentimental, airbrushed notion of Jesus. His hair was radiant, and everyone looked happy to be with him. He was not someone I could identify with. I also received the sentimental version of the incarnation – a quiet, happy baby, sitting in a thing called a “manger,” and receiving gifts from kings. Many years later I figured out that a manger is a thing that animals eat out of, and that it’s usually located in the same place where animals do other business.

That was a significant realization for me, but another followed at the end of 2013, when our youngest child was born. Our first infant, he was, in the early days, this tiny thing, utterly helpless. A human being, usually asleep, entirely dependent on the adults around him, and able to lie on my arm in the space between my hand and my elbow. I remember at the time, though the haze of sleep deprivation, being amazed that the Almighty would choose to experience this, would choose to be this.

Although there are joys in infancy, it may be a mercy that we forget those early years. There is, as I’ve seen in the past year, a lot of pain and discomfort. Teeth come in, but we don’t understand why, or what’s going on. We have needs, but we can’t communicate them. Our wills are thwarted by the big people, and we can do nothing about it. It’s an extraordinary thing, but also profoundly ordinary – we’ve all been this at some point. Jesus was this too, one of us, fully and completely.

Jesus is one of us in birth, and being fully human, he is one of us in death as well. In Lent, Jesus turns towards Jerusalem and the trials that await him there. We, too, will turn towards those things as we follow His story. Just as we have our aches, pains, trials, and disappointments, Jesus had His, and He suffered them as one of us. We may have to walk the road alone at times, but we can take comfort that our savior has shared in that experience, and knows it as one of us.

- David Franson, 2015

Thursday, March 31



*God, who is in us here on earth,
holy is your name in the hungry who share their bread and their song.
Your Kingdom come, which is a land flowing with milk and honey.
Let us do your will, raising our voice when all are silent.
You are giving us our daily bread
in the song of the bird and the miracle of the corn.
Forgive us for keeping silent in the face of injustice.
Don't let us fall into the temptation
of taking up the same arms as the enemy.
But deliver us from evil.
Give us the perseverance to look for love, even if we fail;
so we shall have known your Kingdom
which is being built forever and ever. Amen.*

Friday, April 1

Psalm 30:3 | *You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead; you restored my life as I was going down to the grave.*

We live in daunting times; I want to deaden feelings that impede my ability to cope and I often avoid TV news. It feels to me as if someone has stepped behind the wheel and pressed their foot to the accelerator and life's choices speed by so fast that it is hard to truly make a well-considered decision about anything. Feeling perpetually anxious is foreign to me. I expect most circumstances in life to work out for the best. I enjoy change.

But I reach for the hem of Jesus's garments many times a day asking for words, for wisdom, for clarity of vision these days as I work with clients. I feel homesick; a dull ache in my solar plexus, longing for a return to a place where others will agree to a set of behavioral norms and a shared vision, but I now inhabit the tower of Babel where everyone speaks a different language.

The good news is that when I reach out, Holy Spirit is ALWAYS there. I feel a tingle in my forearms as She takes over and I am listening to the words that come from my mouth, especially if it is about healing a broken relationship or a need to embrace their God. I am invariably calmed at the discourse that follows. God restores my life daily and assures me that Spirit is as close to me as my own breath. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Thanks be to God!

- Marlena Love, 2015

Saturday, April 2

Following his death in a plane crash in 1961, the following poem written by the Dag Hammarskjold, deceased UN Secretary General who was widely believed to be an agnostic humanist at the time, was found among private papers entitled, *Negotiations with Myself - and with God.*

Have mercy
Upon us.
Have mercy
Upon our efforts,
That we
Before thee,
In love and in faith,
Righteousness and humility,
May follow thee,
With self-denial, steadfastness
and courage,
And meet thee

In the silence.

Give us
A pure heart

That we may see thee,
A humble heart
That we may hear thee,
A heart of love
That we may serve thee,
A heart of faith
That we may love thee,

Thou
Whom I do not know
But whose I am.

Thou
Whom I do not comprehend
But who hast dedicated me
To my fate.
Thou -



In the space provided, write a prayer for those who are displaced...

RENEWAL FOOD BANK

Your Community Food Bank



SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT

Renewal Foodbank

Our Story

Renewal Food Bank is an independent non-profit agency dedicated to providing food to the most vulnerable in our community regardless of gender, cultural or ethnic background, or religious belief. As a member of the Northwest Harvest and Food Lifeline hunger relief network, Renewal Food Bank has served more than 500,000 individuals since opening the doors in 1998. Each week nearly 300 families visit our centrally located center to choose from a variety of nutritious options donated by a very supportive community. Whether a client, donor, or volunteer, your involvement is welcome and critical to the success of Renewal Food Bank.





Whether it's leading a food drive at your school or organization, or volunteering on-site, there are plenty of ways to get involved with Renewal Food Bank! To learn more, visit renewalfoodbank.org/get-involved.



Renewal Food Bank has a very modest operating budget (less than \$100,000 a year) and yet we've been able to serve up to 300 families each week. Last year we had 36,870 people, that's nearly 14,173

family visits! This is only possible because of the generosity of people like you. It literally takes a community of caring volunteers, businesses, churches and service organizations to keep the food bank going. Every donation counts, whether you volunteer, drop off food, or help us meet our monthly bills with a financial donation.

Scan to donate



Monday, April 4

For me, joy in the everyday begins with food. If I can take time to make food and drink holy, if I make my table a place of family and community, a place of health and wellness, a place of good choices that sustain creation, I am grounded. Food is the place where I began my journey towards social justice, as a self-righteous young vegetarian who lusted after meat.

Food is the thing we all have in common, and with it, Jesus set forth the Eucharist. Is that enough for you to believe food is important?

Do you ever wonder why Paul spends so much time advising his churches on food and dinner manners? It's because the Eucharist was a wine-and-bread-leavened feast that intentionally leveled the strict hierarchy of Roman society. This enables Paul to confidently state, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

God through the Eucharist invites us to reflect on the mystery that transforms flour, water, and yeast into risen bread, and then transforms again into the risen Christ, who nourishes our souls. It is a profound mystery that a crushed grape becomes the wine that lifts our spirits and loosens our tongues to laugh and love the ordinary in each other.

There is also powerful mystery in the transformation of cabbage and salt into sauerkraut, of bones, skin, and feet into broth, and of milk into yogurt, in the transformation of garlic, olive-oil, and root vegetables into deliciousness.

Ordinary foods like loaves and fishes can multiply and transform individuals into a community that nourishes one another in body and spirit. Love is the leaven in the Eucharist that we eat.

By Jeremy John

Excerpt from *Lent: Falling in Love with the Ordinary*. Published to Sojourners.com, March 2014

Tuesday, April 5

Genesis 43:9 | *If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, let me bear the blame forever.*

In Genesis 43, Judah explains to his father Israel that the family may only purchase additional food if his brother accompanies him. The food supplier requires proof of the family situation. Israel resists proving their situation but concedes when told that this is the only way they are to receive food. Judah pledges to take responsibility for his brother and return him safely to his father. If Judah fails to return his brother safely, he will carry that burden for the rest of his life.

These too are times of scarcity – jobs, money, physical and mental health, vaccines, being together in-person with friends and family, hugs, smiles and the list goes on. We can diminish the scarcity by taking responsibility for our ‘brothers and sisters’. A few suggestions – a generous tip for a struggling restaurant or delivery person, wearing your mask, reaching out to a lonely individual, a walk with a friend, support for a local charity, a prayer. If we take responsibility for our community, we have a better chance of safely reaching the other side of this pandemic.

- Mike Eggenberger & Bonnie Grant, 2021

Wednesday, April 6

Mark 8: 1-10 | *His disciples replied, “How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert? He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?”*

As an Episcopalian, with a shaky background on understanding of the Bible, I researched my assigned passage. Jesus had spent the past three days with a large crowd of Gentiles, preaching and likely healing several of his followers. Food was in short supply, and Jesus, filled with compassion, asked his disciples about the available food stores for the crowd before sending them back home. The disciples, realizing that there were only seven loaves and a few small fish available, asked how anyone could get enough food in this remote desert region. Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, and broke the loaves to distribute to the crowd of four thousand people. Jesus took the few small fish, gave thanks, and distributed to the people and they were satisfied. Afterward, the disciples picked up seven baskets of broken pieces of bread. Jesus then travelled by boat to a different area, while the Pharisees questioned him and asked for a sign from heaven.

With faith, we all have enough. Jesus, provided both for the spiritual needs of the assembled crowd (teaching and healing) as well as for the physical needs of the people with both loaves and fish. And yet, after feeding the crowd of 4000 with seven loaves, seven baskets of broken pieces of bread remained. There was an abundance of food for his followers.

In the past year, my life (and the lives of my family members) has changed in many ways. Some of the changes have been very difficult, and others, not so much. Yet through all of these changes, I have felt this same grace from God. Even when the baskets seemed empty....there were still more than enough broken pieces to sustain me.

- Heather Smith, 2014

Thursday, April 7

Romans 2:3 | *For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified.*

This passage reminds us that Lent is not just a time of reflection and self-examination, but a time

of action. This chapter of Romans makes the point that all – Jews, Greeks, Gentiles – will be judged not on their knowledge of the law, but on whether they act in accordance with the law. But how do we know what it means to act in accordance with “the law”? As Lex discussed in his sermon on January 29, 2017, we need only look to the pattern that Jesus established: “[Jesus] every act was an act of justice. His every thought was a thought of kindness. Every step he took was taken in an act of obedience to his Father’s good will.” As we seek to follow this pattern, we cannot expect to be perfect all the time. But “we can do ...what we can do. Stand up, speak out, act for justice. And do it with a kind and merciful heart... And above all, walk humbly before God. Seeking God’s guidance and God’s will in everything. Knowing you don’t have all the answers and you won’t ever have all the answers. But always, always, working to know God’s will – God’s justice – and then do it.” This Lent, let us all renew our commitment to be “doers of the law” who live this “Jesus way”: “To do justice. To love kindness. To walk humbly before God.” And let us support each other in these efforts, acting as a community to amplify our impact.

- The Williams Family, 2017

Friday, April 8

John 18:1-19:42 | *The woman said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.”*

If someone were to ask me, “What do you stand for?,” it might take me a while to answer. It is certainly a challenging question which requires introspection and careful thought. I think as I considered my answer, however, I would discover that it isn’t necessarily quite the same question as, “What do you believe?” It’s much bigger than that. Perhaps the real question should be, “What do you believe enough that you are willing to risk being unpopular or even criticized for your position?” Often, we may give others the impression that we stand for something when, actually, we haven’t really given it much thought at all. Perhaps it’s just that we’ve followed the crowd, which sometimes may seem like the easiest and most comfortable route to take. Or sometimes, even though we want to do the right thing, our actions and the choices we make tell a different story. The reality is that often, despite our best intentions, we might find it difficult to truly stand for the things we feel in our hearts, because we fear what others might think.

In order to be convicted and sure enough in our beliefs to act, we must do some soul-searching and then act intentionally. Acting intentionally requires an element of not only honesty, but also bravery. In this passage, when the woman asked Peter if he was one of Jesus’ disciples, I imagine Peter found himself deeply conflicted. He had been a disciple of Jesus’ for a long time, and yet when it came time to take a stand publicly, he chickened out. He denied Jesus by telling the woman, “I am not.” In a split second, Peter took the easy way out, to save himself. He was not honest with Jesus, and he was not true to himself. Rather than stay by Jesus’ side, Peter chose to huddle around the fire and warm himself with the slaves and the police. I wonder what Peter was feeling at that moment, after denying Jesus.

When this type of situation happens to me, and I act as Peter did, I feel guilty, weak and disappointed. I realize that I haven't been brave enough to be honest with myself. I've created a disconnect between what I believe in my heart and what I could or should achieve through my actions. This passage has made me think about these questions in the context of my own life. I will definitely be examining myself this Lenten season and asking for God's help. Even though it might be hard, I will be asking God to help me do a better job of letting my actions reflect my beliefs, to be honest with myself and others, and most of all, to not be afraid

- Catherine Blundell, 2011

Saturday, April 9



Hope is a crushed stalk
Between clenched fingers
Hope is a bird's wing
Broken by a stone.
Hope is a word in a tuneless ditty –
A word whispered with the wind,
A dream of forty acres and a mule,
A cabin of one's own and a moment to rest,
A name and place for one's children
And children's children at last . . .
Hope is a song in a weary throat.
Give me a song of hope
And a world where I can sing it.
Give me a song of faith
And a people to believe in it.
Give me a song of kindness
And a country where I can live it.
Give me a song of hope and love
And a brown girl's heart to hear it.

-

Dark Testament, Verse 8
By Pauli Murray



Take a moment today to compose a word of encouragement to someone in your life who is dealing with a hardship. It can be as simple as a text message or as elaborate as a letter. Remind them that they are loved and consider extending an offering of care or support as you are able.

Sunday, April 10 | **Palm Sunday**



After telling a parable to the crowd at Jericho, Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

*"Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!"*

*Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!"*

*Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop."
He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."*

Luke 19:28-40

Monday, April 11 | **Monday in Holy Week**

It's easy to focus on a dystopian view of the world. When I was a reporter, in what seems like a lifetime ago, one of the mottos in the newsroom was "if it bleeds, it leads." The news, in other words, is not exciting unless it is related to the most awful thing that has happened in a human community that day. And now that news is a 24/7 reality, we can get a constant dose of bad news. The current anxiety and sadness people feel is with good cause. I would never want to downplay the horror of the times in which we live. Death seems to be stalking us more than usual with a global pandemic and civil unrest demanding change to the U.S. society. It's been a difficult year. But when news outlets "look for the helpers," they relegate their feel-good stories to about two minutes, usually after 28 minutes of tragedy.

That phrase, "look for the helpers," comes from Fred Rogers of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood fame. It was meant to support very young children when they are frightened by the news, not to paralyze adults into doing nothing. But it might help us reorient our thinking to focus on whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable (see Philippians 4:8). What might it mean if we bathe our prayer life in this orientation of the word, if we let go of worry as much as possible and pray with thanksgiving (verse 6)? What if we start our day with prayer and thanksgiving before we reach for social media or the television remote? What if we look for joy to temper the rage we understandably feel in the face of bad news? What if, instead of just looking for the helpers, we learn and keep learning how to become one of them (or "some of them," if we figure out how to collectively do it)? Maybe peacemaking lives in this reorientation to the world.

By Valerie Bridgeman

Excerpt from *Shoring Up Our Souls: Reflections on the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A*.

Published on *Sojourners.com*, October 2020

Tuesday, April 12 | **Tuesday in Holy Week**

John 12:24 | [Jesus said], "Very truly, I tell you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain."

It was a cold November several years ago when a couple hundred grieving friends and family crammed into the undercroft of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church on Bainbridge Island. We were there to honor Marilyn Brandenburg a beloved deacon in our diocese, jazz musician, former first grade teacher, lay Franciscan, and dear friend. I remember seeing her ashes on top of the makeshift altar. The canister of her remains was covered by a very unusual pall: a bright rainbow colored wig that she had worn after losing most of her hair. Even in her dying Marilyn had a great sense of joy and poked fun at death itself. But the part of her story I cherish the most is that of her being foolish for thinking she could make a difference in the world. Frequently we find ourselves soaked in pessimism and discouragement as we age; youthful idealism often turning to hopelessness about making a real difference in world. I have often wondered how the original

disciples felt as Jesus walked the road to the Cross, seeing all of their hopes and dreams evaporate before their very eyes. After receiving a diagnosis of cancer Marilyn kept on doing what she loved but with even more intensity. I will never forget witnessing the fruits of Marilyn's ministry to the incarcerated women at Purdy whose lives were often hard and joyless. One day we Franciscans joined her inside the prison walls, along with our bishop, to witness Crystal's confirmation and entrance into the Episcopal Church. Who would have thought that a grain of wheat could have grown in such harsh conditions and become so much more? I can hear Marilyn's winsome voice in my ear "What are you saving yourself for, my dear, a diagnosis?"

- The Rev. Steve Best, 2015

Wednesday, April 13 | **Wednesday in Holy Week**

John 13:21 | *Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me."*

Betrayal is the ultimate form of failing others with malice. That Judas betrayed Jesus, with extreme malice, is unquestioned. But did Jesus forgive this betrayal? I want to think "yes." I want to believe that Jesus forgives even the most heinous of acts. But even though I want to believe that it is true I also know that it's difficult. Why is this? I believe it is because my "dark side" wants to wreak vengeance on those who betray the young, the weak, the ill and infirm, or those that cannot defend themselves. But, I also know that we must work to follow Jesus in his most beautiful of acts, the act of forgiveness in the face of deep betrayal. And yes, it is probably impossible to forgive the acts of some. Especially those that inflict unspeakable acts of violence on those most innocent. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to find a way to do so. During this time of Lent let us prayerfully seek ways to forgive those who have betrayed others.

- Arne Hendrickson, 2016

Thursday, April 14 | **Maundy Thursday**

John 13:14 | *[Jesus said], Now that I have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.*

Deacons feel a special affection for this passage, in Christ's extraordinary act of service, the washing of his disciple's feet. It is a reminder that we are all called to serve in humility and love, just as Jesus did, all of us who sit at his table and share in his body and blood. The Eucharist compels us also to do what Jesus did for others.

The liturgy of Maundy Thursday is about intimacy. Intimacy revealed in a meal and washing of feet. Intimacy can be frightening. It calls us to a place of vulnerability, risk and openness, a place where we can be changed, transformed. It is about relationship, oneness and union, with God, each other and ourselves. It is how God loves. It is how we are to love. Jesus gives us an example of unconditional love and service, a parable in action.

To allow Jesus to touch our feet is to allow him to touch our will, to remove all that prevents us from following him, to scrub away our insecurities, to wash away our weariness, to buff off our bitterness. Can we allow Jesus to wash that part of us that needs to change, that needs healing and forgiveness? Can we accept that Jesus wants to make us whole, holy and fully human? To be a disciple and part of the Kingdom, we too need to be washed.

Foot washing is a divine courtesy that God has for us. It demonstrates how Jesus cares for us all through life. See how in gentleness he kneels down before us to raise us up. This is the mystery of God. Jesus asks us to look to him for inspiration and guidance, to serve in a humble, sincere and loving manner, to notice when people need help, to be available to comfort and support, to be unashamed to be the servant.

- The Rev. Kathryn Ballinger, 2014

Friday, April 15 | **Good Friday**

Job 14:1-14 | *For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease. Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stump dies in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth branches like a young plant.*

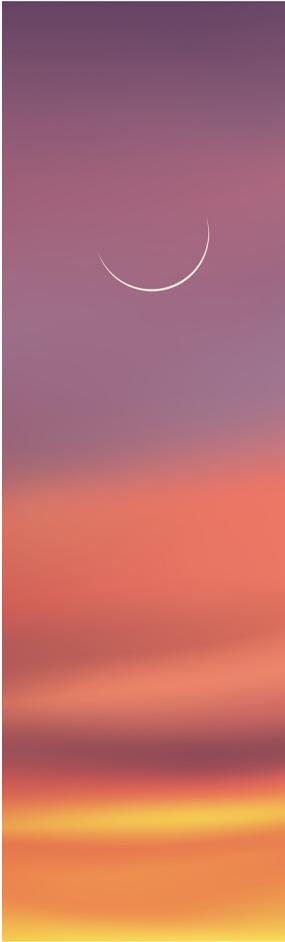
[Several years ago], our family was blessed with a wonderful baby, a first child and granddaughter, Siena Margaret. She is lovely, funny, sassy and very bright... a bundle of hope. Last summer she and I spent much of it together in my gardens, watching the small flowers and herbs we had planted together grow and mature. We dried some of those summer herbs, chives and basil, and gave them to our family and friends as Christmas presents.

But after Christmas time had come and gone, there were no plants for us to water, to dry or bundle. Siena began to express fear that the flowers may not come back. Spring time coming is not exactly believable for a two and a half year old, even though promises of spring and more flowers kept coming from her grandmother. Siena Margaret lives in the here and now, and she needed concrete proof, results to back my promises, my hope.

So last Saturday after breakfast, we put on our rain jackets and rubber boots, and went out looking for the flowers. And sure enough, under last year's leaves, the flowers were coming, in spite of the rain and the dark wet ground. Siena Margaret was delighted! She insisted on fetching her little watering can and watered everything that looked remotely like a bud or a shoot. She seemed to instinctively know that watering the new life would help secure its delivery into our lives yet again.

I found something else in my garden this year. I found hope, waiting patiently to show itself to a wee child. To transform itself into buds of faith right in front of her eyes. I saw a magical invitation to Siena, inviting her to think hopefully and to believe in the promise of life. Siena Margaret helped me understand Job 14:7-9 in a way I never have before. Thank God.

- Gini Davis, 2013



A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the altar, not to go out. --Lev. 6:6

First you dress in linen
then scoop out the ashes.
Stop and wash with water,
then you change your garments

You want perpetual motion
but fires don't burn forever
and the ritual of the offering
is this lesson from the waters.

and scoop out the ashes.
Lather, rinse, repeat;
then you change your garments.
No one said it was easy.

Fires don't burn forever
(except for that holy pillar)
so take a lesson from the waters
and the reeds you sludged across.

Lather, rinse, repeat;
out here in the wilderness
no one said it was easy
to keep the fire burning.

Remember that holy pillar
like a beacon in the darkness
and the reeds you sludged across
each shaky step toward freedom.

Out here in the wilderness
there's little wood to scavenge
to keep the fire burning
all night until morning.

Like a beacon in the darkness
God's instructions on this are clear:
each shaky step toward freedom
keeps the fire burning.

There's little wood to scavenge
and you want perpetual motion
all night until morning—
that's the ritual of the offering.

God's instructions on this are clear.
Stop and wash with water.
Keep the fire burning.
First you dress in linen.



The poem reflection for this Holy Saturday is what's known as a **pantoum**. It is composed of a series of quatrains (4 line stanzas) and the second and fourth lines of each stanza are repeated as the first and third lines of the next, and so on. Every new stanza looks back to the one that came before it. Reflective by nature, it is a lovely form, particularly in this season of Lent. Using the guided template on the

next page, compose a pantoum of your own. **Reflect on your Lenten journey.** What has come up for you in this season? What have you noticed? What has surprised, delighted, frustrated you? Try to avoid the temptation of perfectionism. Let your words be an offering to God.

A Reflection on the Journey...

Begin by writing four original lines:

A	
B	
C	
D	

REPEAT lines B and D, and expand your ideas in lines E and F:

B	
E	
D	
F	

REPEAT lines E and F, and expand your ideas in lines G and H:

E	
G	
F	
H	

Finally, repeat lines G, A, H and C in the following order:

G	
A	
H	
C	



But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Luke 24:1-12

Wednesdays in Lent



AM Offerings With Pastor Jane

Join Pastor Jane on Wednesday mornings at 10 AM for Eucharist in the Chapel followed by a small group series, "Yes!", a program designed to empower participants to use faith resources in the pursuit of creating a life in which you can say "yes!" to God, to neighbor, and to yourself.

10 AM · Eucharist
10:30 AM · Small Group Study

PM Offerings With Father Steve



Join Father Steve Wednesday evenings at 5 PM. Together, you explore the power of compassion to deliver us from temptations as well as the roadblocks that interfere with our ability to help others in need and work for justice and equality.

5 PM · Small Group Study*
6 PM · Contemplative Worship
6:30 PM · Community Dinner

**Classes begin on March 16th*

A photograph of fresh bread, cherry tomatoes, and prosciutto on a wooden surface, serving as a background for the supper announcement.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SUPPER IS BACK!

Wednesdays, beginning March 9
6:30 PM, follows Wednesday Worship
\$5 Soup & Salad



Holy Week & Easter Offerings

Palm Sunday, April 10

- Sunday Worship · 8 & 10 AM | Sanctuary
- Livestream on Facebook at 10 AM

Tuesday, April 12

- Service of Healing & Reconciliation · 7 PM | Sanctuary

Wednesday, April 13

- Stations of the Cross Exhibit · 4 PM | Sanctuary

Maundy Thursday, April 14

- Maundy Thursday · 6 PM | Great Hall & Sanctuary

Good Friday, April 15

- Midday Service · Noon | Sanctuary
- Evening Service · 7 PM | Sanctuary

Holy Saturday, April 16

- Easter Vigil · 7 PM | Sanctuary & Labyrinth
- Youth Glow-in-the-Dark Egg Hunt · 8 PM | Labyrinth

Easter Sunday, April 17

- Sunrise Worship w/ Eucharist · 7 AM | Location TBD
- Traditional Sunday Worship · 9 & 11 AM | Sanctuary
- Livestream on Facebook at 9 AM

