

A Lenten JOURNEY

2023



A COLLECTION OF DEVOTIONS
VOLUME XXVI

Preface

Welcome to the 26th *Lenten Journey*! This treasured publication is born out of our lives as a community of faith.

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The English word “Lent” comes from the Anglo–Saxon word *lencten*, which means “lengthen” and refers to the lengthening days of “spring.”

The origins of Lent are Biblically-based. In Matthew chapter 4 says that Jesus went out into the desert for 40 days and 40 nights before beginning his public ministry. He prayed, fasted, and emptied himself completely of everything before the Father. Lenten practices are meant to mimic Jesus’s example. In a sense, we go out into the desert to pray, to fast, and to reflect on our life. Additionally, we empty ourselves of that which does not belong to God or is hurting our relationship with God.

The submissions in this year’s *Lenten Journey* are offered by our residents, staff and community members in the hope that your life will be enriched through hearing the journey of others. The goal is that by the end of Lent we will be in a gentler and more impassioned place than when we started, allowing the Holy Spirit to shape us more into the people we were created to be.

Thank you to each and every contributor to this year’s Lenten Journey. Sharing your story helps others see how God has been active in your life, and it encourages us to see where God is active in ours.

– Rev. Dr. Lynn McClintock
DIRECTOR PASTORAL CARE

Introduction

Lent is an opportunity to invite others as Jesus did into moments of intimacy. Moments like the upper room when Jesus asked Thomas to touch his hands and feet and put his hand in the scar on his side. How often are we vulnerable enough to fully allow people to see who we are as flawed, scarred, wounded and unfinished creatures that are beloved by God? To allow others to share in our times of laughter and times of tears. Times of anxiety and times of joy. When are we like Jesus and become vulnerable enough to be one who shares our wounds with others? Allowing others to place their hand in our wounded hands and share in the intimacy of our wounds.

Our real and fleshy Jesus is offering the gift of his wounds this Lent as an opportunity to be reconciled to him in the intimacy of seeing him and the touching of his wounds. These wounds that Jesus shares eventually turn into scars. They are not markings of shame to him but striking evidence of his love, sacrifice, and victory over death on our behalf.

The scars that Jesus carries are not just his, but they are ours also. God knows the hurt and pain that we feel because he bears the same scars that his son Jesus bore for us. This Lent let us the children of God, know and see this nail-scarred Savior who invites us to look at and touch his wounds and scars. May we truly see the wounds and scars of our siblings and be seen as Jesus sees us, perfectly wounded, perfectly scarred, perfectly flawed, perfectly loved, perfectly imperfect, perfectly unfinished, and perfectly reconciled to God because of the wounds and scars of our living Savior, Jesus.

— Rev. Marlene E. Forrest
RECTOR, ST. PHILIP'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WESTMINSTER CANTERBURY RICHMOND TRUSTEE

REHEARING JOHN 3:16

Some hymns make me cry, literally, full bore sob. I must be careful not to make a display if these hymns are sung in the congregation. Examples of hymns that induce these deep emotions would be, “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded,” and “Ah, Dearest Jesus.” But the one that, from the first note and word through all four stanzas, takes control of my mind and emotions so tightly is, “What Wondrous Love is This?” I once heard the noted choral director, Robert Shaw, say it was, “the greatest hymn ever written.” (This, despite Charles Wesley, who wrote over 5,000 hymns, affirming that he, “would gladly exchange all hymns he had ever written,” for Isaac Watt’s, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.”)

When you start singing this haunting Appalachian folk tune and lyrics, you find yourself caught immediately in a mesmerizing cycle that won’t let you go until the very last word and note. And then you sit in stunned silence. Unfortunately, most places where you would sing it will not provide the sort of meditative stretch to experience the full impact of this stirring song. Still reverberating in your ears are the sounds and the words, “What wondrous love is this? O my soul, O my soul, what wondrous love is this, O my soul! What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul?” The repetitions are, “the strong ...expressions of deep gratitude for the sacrificial gift of Jesus for the salvation of the world.” So, get your hymnbook out, turn to this hymn, and re-hear John 3:16 - through tears.

– William E. Blake, Jr., RESIDENT

NO HANDS BUT MINE

So often during Lent, the practice has been to give something up – desserts (particularly chocolate), alcohol, cursing. Not long ago, I was introduced to the concept of practicing a new, positive habit for the season instead. According to some, if we do something for six weeks it becomes habit.

One summer about twenty some years ago, I worked at a retreat center. The Director of Facilities there described his job as that of Minister of Hospitality. That title has stuck in my head. There are people we all know who fill that description. They might be the people who smile and say “hello” as they pass others on the sidewalk, or those who make a point of welcoming new people into their group. There are those who brighten the days of the sick and lonely or those who are always respectful of everyone, no matter what their status. It’s their role to help make life, which can be tough, a little more pleasant for others.

St. Teresa of Avila wrote, “Christ has no body on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours. Ours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out upon the world, ours are the feet with which he goes about doing good, ours are the hands with which he blesses his people.”

During Lent, let’s take on the practice of becoming a Minister of Hospitality. It may become a habit.

– Marion S. Chenault, RESIDENT

WHEN IT'S HARD TO PRAY

One night when Episcopal priest Tish Harrison Warren needed to pray during a medical emergency that almost ended her life, she and her husband began uttering the words from Compline from the *Book of Common Prayer*:

“Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love’s sake. Amen.”

This prayer became the foundation for her book, *Prayer in the Night, For Those Who Work or Watch or Weep*. She writes that prayer forms us. Free forming prayer – talking to God using our own words spontaneously and freely is good. But sometimes, especially at the end of the day, we may not have the words and need to pray other people’s prayers.

When her strength lapses and words will not come, Warren prays Compline aloud. She explains that it allows us to be immersed in our faith when we are wavering under the burdens of life. These words help us to pray for staff who work through the night, for friends who suffer, for those who wait for a diagnosis, for those who are hungry and for those who are dying.

Rote prayers provide a rhythm of prayers given to us by the church, the Psalms, the Gospels and the saints. When we memorize The Lord’s Prayer and repeat it in our communities of faith, we are uplifted by these familiar words. This is similar to quoting brief Bible verses such as, “I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13) We can recall these words when our own words won’t come.

On the night Jesus was arrested, he asked his disciples to keep watch and pray with him but his friends fell asleep. Warren writes, “Jesus was left alone to pray, with tears and blood, through the long night. Because of this we can ask God to keep watch with us with full certainty that he will. He does not fall asleep.”

– Charlotte K. Evans, RETIRED CHAPLAIN, FORMER STAFF MEMBER

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

DEUTERONOMY 7:17-26

PSALM 30

JOHN 1:43-51

TOO BUSY

If we open our eyes and hearts God will generally guide us to where we are meant to be.

The first time I was “in charge” of an Operation Smile mission (repair of cleft lip and or palate deformities) I was in Nakuru, Kenya. After the team finished screening some 250 children, the leaders of anesthesia, surgery and pediatrics got together to decide on the 150 patients we thought would be good candidates for surgery. That meant someone had to tell 100 families that their children wouldn’t be done this trip. That person was me, who was already stressed out.

After we had finished packing our equipment from screening and were meeting to decide which patients would be done and which wouldn’t, a “first mission” nurse came to tell me about a boy aged nine and his mother who had just arrived and wanted to be seen. They had spent two days walking, then took a bus and then walked more to get here. I told the young nurse to tell them they were too late, they missed screening and to come back next year. She teared up, and said, “Really?” I told her she had two choices: give mother and child bad news or tell 100 children to come back next year. She left. Upon return she said the mother and child would continue to wait so they could see me. Exasperated. I went out to see the child and mom. He looked like a cute, perfectly normal nine-year-old. When I asked why they were here they said that Nathan had his lip repaired by us last year and he just wanted to show us how handsome he was!

Thank you God for putting me in my place and for leading me exactly where I was meant to be.

– Sam Fuller, RESIDENT

SERENDIPITY

According to legend, the rulers of the ancient, isolated kingdom of Serendip (possibly today's Ceylon) resolved to bequeath his realm to whomever of his three sons best succeeded in his quest for earth's most prized treasures. Two told of the wealth and splendor in the great empires, but the third prince only marveled at the abounding spiritual beauty, art, philosophies, learning and wisdom that he discovered. It was he, the ruler found, to be the most worthy future king.

Today, we speak of serendipity as the gift of making unintended or unexpected discoveries by faith and accessibility alone. The apostle Matthew tells how three wise men brought treasures to the child in Bethlehem. It is fitting that after our annus horribilis of COVID, Epiphany in 2021 brought to us three benevolences more valued than gold, frankincense and myrrh: three immunizing vaccines against the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Virginia's great authoritarian scientist, Francis Collins, has insisted: "For a believer, science is a form of worship. It is a glimpse of God's mind when you do a scientific experiment. For a scientist, atheism is really hard to defend because that would be the assertion of a universal negative, and even scientists aren't supposed to be able to do that." Collins summarizes, "God is the greatest scientist of all. It is only us mortals who are determined to put science and religion into different positions."

In his epistle to his spiritual child, Timothy, Paul advised, "Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith." (1 Timothy 6:20)

"Grant us wisdom, grant us courage." Grant us serendipity!

— Stan Higgins, RESIDENT

THE WESTMINSTER CANTERBURY WAY

When I reflect on my 21 years working at Westminster Canterbury, I can't help but feel full of gratitude. Westminster Canterbury has become my second home! I am so grateful for the residents that I have had the pleasure and honor of assisting. I came to Westminster Canterbury as a seasoned occupational therapist and as a brand new mom. Over the years, my residents have taken an interest in my boys. They have inquired about their activities and accomplishments, offered advice when things weren't going well, laughed at funny antics and offered me such love and support. The boys were loved on and read to by staff and residents when they were in the Child Development Center. To this day, employees in the Child Development Center inquire about those little boys who are now 17 and 21! Residents opened their arms when my oldest son was a server in the Canterbury Room. They offered him grace as he was learning to be a server and cheered him on as he left for college. Residents engaged my younger son in playing games and doing art projects as he volunteered in the Summer Youth Program and with our church youth group. A few years ago, many of you filed into the Theater to hear my sons speak about their experiences with being dyslexic and attending The New Community School. You all made my family feel like celebrities! All the while, I have followed many of you through the continuum of care. You have allowed me the privilege of being with you at some of the not so brightest times; when you were sick, after surgery, when your body was hurting or during a personal transition. These are often intimate moments that I consider to be holy moments. It is my hope that I have used my occupational therapy skills, techniques and strategies to ease these difficult times and help you reach your personal goals. What a blessing it is to go to work each day and work with residents who have become like family.

A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones. (Proverbs 15:30)

— Jennifer Massey Miller, REHABILITATION

Tuesday First Week of Lent

DEUTERONOMY 9:4-12

PSALM 45

JOHN 2:13-22

THANKFULLY GRATEFUL

I am thankful for my church and job.

To have a roof over my head and for my kids, grandkids.

All who I came to know and to talk with about the good news.

About how the Lord healed me.

We all should put the Lord first at all times.

He is our healer, our helper, our provider.

I am thankful for all the things that God has made or done for us.

He is an awesome God.

Lord Almighty God.

Praise ye the Lord.

Thank you Lord.

– Yovandel Perkins, DINING

Wednesday First Week of Lent

DEUTERONOMY 9:13-21

PSALM 119:42-72

JOHN 2:23- 3:15

GOD'S VOICE

My ears are insufficient to hear,
my eyes to see,
my mind to comprehend
the presence of God,
and yet,

When my humanness is not enough,
God's voice is unmistakable
It transcends sound,
infuses my body,
not just my mind.

God's voice is a loud, quiet voice
That seeps like a moving tide,
Touching every grain of sand.

God's voice roars into my stillness.
It fills and overflows.

– Marty Glenn Taylor, RESIDENT

ENDEMIC THANKFULNESS

Little did I know when I filled the gas tank in March 2020 that I would not fill up again until June! I came to work—often walking or riding my bike--and that was about it. Church was online, groceries were delivered, trips to see family and vacation were all cancelled, having friends over was out of the question. Life changed in an instant!

The suffering of isolation of our residents and the stress on our staff still brings tears to my eyes. It was a very hard time. For those of us who are introverts (Surprise! I'm an introvert.), cocooning at home with a book and cup of tea wasn't a horrible thing. Zoom kept us in touch with our church and family, but many people did not have that kind of technology or proclivity toward enjoying quiet. Some got sick, and some lost their lives.

In the approximately 200 TV970 live updates, our chaplains accentuated the positive, while acknowledging the struggle. We encouraged residents and staff to “dig deep,” and to find points of light, connection, and hope as much as possible. We emphasized sticking together as a community to find our way through this “Great Unknown.”

The pandemic now becomes “endemic.” We will learn to live with COVID. The endemic may also help us learn to live in a new way with God. Sure, we could do all those things that the good chaplains encouraged us to do. Couldn't hurt. But how about “endemic thankfulness”—a new normal that acknowledges that we live with risk, but that our response is a continual thankfulness that God see us through. If gratitude can be experienced as “endemic” in us, it becomes a way of life. With God, in God, through God. Always God.

— Lynn McClintock, DIRECTOR PASTORAL CARE

Friday First Week of Lent

DEUTERONOMY 10:12-22

PSALM 40

JOHN 3:22-36

FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

For everything there is a season . . .

. . . and for us there is a dividend of TIME!

. . . TIME to digest the wisdom we have gained through three years of COVID . . .

. . . TIME to strengthen ties with cherished families and friends

. . . TIME to find new ways to be of use and service at this extended stage of our lives

. . . and TIME to be thankful to Westminster Canterbury, for safely piloting us here.

— Ann Archer, RESIDENT

Saturday First Week of Lent

DEUTERONOMY 11:18-28

PSALM 55

JOHN 4:1-26

LENT

Lent can be looked at as a time of preparation. And hasn't life been exactly that? We spend much of life preparing for what is coming. But how do we prepare for the unknown; the bone that breaks, the heart that needs a fix, the front tooth that drops out? How do we prepare for old age?

I made a little list to help me answer this question:

Make new friends and nourish old friendships.

Volunteer to help here at Westminster Canterbury Richmond.

Try something new. If you can't draw a straight line, take an art class.

Write a note to a grandchild or a sick friend. Every one of us likes to receive real mail occasionally.

Call a friend who doesn't drive and offer to take him or her to the store, or to get a pedicure.

If you still cook, take something you've made. That is the best treat. Or, a batch of anything from the Galleria can be divided into treasures for many people.

— Frances Burch, RESIDENT

Second Sunday in Lent

JEREMIAH 1:1-10

PSALM 24

MARK 3:31- 4:9

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU SHOULD PRAY?

Several years ago when someone got a cold or sore throat (especially if they were a child) we didn't worry about it. We knew it would eventually go away. Some people would always have a hard time "shaking it," but eventually would. Others would just wake up one morning and it would be gone. We didn't fret over the issue.

However, now, many of us get exposed to several very contagious diseases – the flu, the COVID virus etc., and we don't seem to lose it very quickly. Our beginning conversation with people we meet always begins with, "How are you?" and we really want to know. It wasn't just a social question to be nice.

I bet God is hearing from us more these days! We can talk to God when we get the flu, and it doesn't cost a dime like a new prescription would. "Dear God please make me better. I'm tired of coughing." Think about it. We probably talk to God more as we get older, but especially now that we might be prone to catch a contagious disease. You do think he listens to our prayers, don't you? We also pray for our family and those we love. I'm sure he has a sense of humor regarding our issues ("God used to hear from her once a week or so – now it's at least daily".)

During Lent let's up our time praying.

– Pat Culp, RESIDENT

BIBLICAL JUSTICE

My oldest nephew, an ordained minister, holds a doctorate in theology from a prestigious university. In 2009, he authored a book entitled *Jesus and Justice: Evangelicals, Race, and American Politics* (Yale University Press, New Haven & London).

He is a committed activist and passionate supporter of progressive values, particularly as they apply to social and racial justice. However as Mark A. Noll, the Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame noted in the book's foreword, "the author does not try to hide his own progressive bias, but this does not prevent him from a sympathetic treatment of a wide range of evangelical political efforts."

My nephew is a New Testament guy. Jesus said, "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:44-45)

His uncle was a career law enforcement officer. My focus was holding accountable those who violated the law. Social issues, including ethnicity, gender and race, were less important than pursuing criminal justice within the legal system.

I am an Old Testament guy. "No one can be established through wickedness, but the righteous cannot be uprooted." (Proverbs 12:3)

You would think this dichotomy would make for some interesting family dinner conversation. Yet because of our divergent views, religious, social and political discussions have evolved from awkward or uncomfortable exchanges to a "don't ask; don't tell" or "agree to disagree" status quo.

Where we do agree is the shared belief that we are both members of the same earthly family, and more importantly, both children of God. May it ever be so.

— Jack Frazer, RESIDENT

WHAT IS WORTH WAITING FOR?

We live in a world of impulse buying and instant gratification (or disappointment). How many times have I seen something “new” at the grocery store and brought it home, when I had no honest idea of what it was, whether it was any good, and whether it would be available [reduced at a price] in a week? And then there are all the nostrums I see being hawked on Facebook and in Google News ads promising instant relief from every imaginable affliction for only pennies a day. Should I order some right now? Is there time to consult the doctor? Scurvy might kill me overnight! We’ve all been there, haven’t we?

Of course we know better. We, and our ancestors, have been told from childhood “haste makes waste,” “look before you leap,” “measure twice, cut once,” “slow and steady wins the race,” “patience is a virtue,” “anything worth having is worth waiting for,” “make haste slowly.” Still, it is hard not to want to jump ahead a month or so when the Christmas decor starts to appear the day after Halloween.

My point is simply that since we are now in the middle of Lent, and that is forty days of somber sobriety, we may want to jump ahead to Easter right away but shouldn’t. Easter without Lent would be like Christmas without Advent. You need time to contemplate good prospects in order to appreciate their fulfillment. Lent sets the stage so that when Easter arrives we understand what it means and what it costs. It is vastly more than marshmallow eggs and jellybeans. It represents new life, bought at great cost. So it is wise to take the days of Lent to ponder on God’s gifts. And then, when Easter does arrive, we can welcome it with understanding, enjoy it with gratitude, and remember it every day of the year, not on impulse but deliberately.

—James H. Hall, RESIDENT

THE EAR TRUMPET

(my grandfather, a story - part I)

Breakfast at the oval table, empty dishes pushed aside

“Get the Book” you say

(not much else heard these days)

The ritual has started! I jump down from my chair;

rush to retrieve your ear-trumpet from “The Desk”

and hand it to your shaking fingers

and watch it lift to your ear

and swing into Father’s face

as he looks up today’s passage

from the Day by Day.

Do you hear every word

or do you coast among familiar chords

gathering the comfort of trusted words

that pour in to fill the silence

behind the trumpet in your ear?

I will praise thee;

for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:

marvelous are thy works;

and that my soul knoweth right well.

You nod your head: affirmation

belied by the protrusion from your ear

only one passage by which to hear

the voice of him, whose work you are.

– Harlan McMurray, RESIDENT

THE TATTERED JACKET
(my grandfather, a story - part 2)

In the rafters of the barn
on rusting nails and leather straps,
license plates, sickles and rakes
worn-smooth tools neatly aligned
cleaned, sharpened and oiled.
“Never put a tool away to rust and dull.
It can last you a lifetime.”

Ancient leather jacket hanging
from a thong around your waist,
cane in one hand, weed hook in the other,
frayed straw hat sloped against the sun.
There you go across the pasture:
death to dandelion, thistle and thorn.

And if your heart skips a beat
you lay out the jacket
and lay out yourself
and wait on the Lord's end of strife
to rise, lift the jacket and walk home.

“It'll be another week before it hits again.
Let's trim the hedge before it owns us.
Never felt better in my life!”

Until the day the Lord's strife prevails
among the dandelion, thistle and thorn
and the leather jacket unlifted, bears you Home.

– Harlan McMurray, RESIDENT

Friday Second Week of Lent

JEREMIAH 5:1-9
PSALM 69:1-23,31-38
JOHN 5:30-47

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

Wendell Berry's poem, *The Peace of the Wild Things*, is a favorite of mine. This poet's landscape is the farming country of Kentucky. He has spent his life stringing words together from his personal experiences of God and the outdoors. I was amazed to discover Wendell Berry knew just what was in my heart when he said:

When despair for the world grows in me...
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests... and the great heron feeds...
I come into the presence of still water
And I feel above me the day blind stars
waiting with their light.

Recently I stressed over the world's happenings, and in particular those troubles closest to home. I feared I would wake to a place and life so terribly different. Then it came to me. No matter the event, the geese will still fly off in the fall; the robins will suddenly appear with the first hint of spring; the moon will remind us of its bright light each month and the many-colored flowers will appear from their earth beds throughout the growing seasons.

God so loved this world – all its creatures and creation – that he gave his only son. The Easter season reminds us that this is so. Christ's presence is with us and in us. How do we know? We have to be still and listen. We have to go lie down where the wood duck rests and the great heron feeds, as Wendell Berry tells us. Here peace finds us, opens our hearts to prayer and thanksgiving. It is a peace that pushes back despair and fear, it is a peace to pass on to our fellow pilgrims. Remember, God so loved the world.

– Kay Remick, RESIDENT

Saturday Second Week of Lent

JEREMIAH 5:20-31

PSALM 75

JOHN 7:1-13

THE HOLY ISLAND

“Leave me alone with God as much as may be.
As the tide draws the waters close in upon the shore,
Make me an island, set apart,
alone with you, God, holy to you.

Then with the turning of the tide
prepare me to carry your presence to the busy world beyond,
the world that rushes in on me
till the waters come again and fold me back to you.”

In this time of intentional quiet, prayer, and reflection in the church year, this prayer echoes in my soul. This prayer was written by St. Aidan who lived in a monastery on the small and beautiful island of Lindisfarne, England, in the 600s. The holy island, as it is often called, is isolated from the mainland except for a short time twice a day when the low tide reveals a narrow land bridge. It might be easier to spend time quietly alone with God living on a small picturesque island. Instead, we have to find or create our own island where we can be still in God's presence.

Have you found your island? It might not be a physical place, it could be a state of mind, or a prayerful intention that allows you to feel more deeply connected to the Creator. Maybe you're still searching for a way to feel temporarily closed off from the world and more open to the presence of God. Lent is as good a time as any to find your island. You might attend a different worship experience, try a new form of prayer, or just try to sit quietly and be more attentive to God's all-encompassing presence. Those deeply meaningful and intimate moments prepare us for the turning of the tide so we can face the world again with a renewed sense of God's love and care.

— Jenny te Velde, CHAPLAIN

CHOOSE POSITIVE

It's a mantra that some find easier to experience than others. Positive isn't about wishful thinking or ignoring the pain in life. Rather, positive is an outlook, a way of thinking, a way of being. Each of us gets a certain number of decisions about what makes it into our life's orbit (friends, interests, where we spend our time) as well as a certain number of items that we didn't get to choose. The more fortunate we are might be measured by how many of these choices we make for ourselves.

But no matter who or what is in your orbit and whether or not we choose for it to be there, they each provide a chance to choose positive.

When trash thrown away rather than left on the ground, the negative might focus on how it got there. The positive is excited that the environment is cleaner. In both cases, the trash is gone and in neither case can the source of the litter be altered.

Choose positive.

When the dinner reservation is running behind, the negative complains about the inconvenience. The positive enjoys few minutes to meditate, to start a conversation, or even to smile at a stranger. Choose positive.

When the summer rain cancels your plans, the negative complains about bad luck. The positive finds a gazebo and enjoys the peaceful sounds.

When one reads the previous example, the negative conjures up a thunderstorm and dismisses the idea. The positive ensures they have an umbrella for their future walk to the gazebo.

Choose positive.

As a songwriter, I have previously summed up this sentiment with the line, "We should all look back to one-day say, 'These are the best of days.'"

No matter the situation or surrounding, we have an endless sea of choice. Choose positive.

– Clay Mottley, PUBLIC RELATIONS

GRATITUDE

There is no doubt that anyone who reads my thoughts has had similar experiences in the past as well at this time in life. As soon as I could talk, my parents taught me to say “please and thank you.” At age two, I was attending Sunday school weekly and later of course, church. I lived a good, fulfilling life including the joys and sorrows that all of us experience. We have much for which to be thankful.

However, over the last three years I have been using the word “grateful” all the time. Being somewhat handicapped, in that I have balance and heart issues, I must use a rollator or walker when I leave my apartment, and sometimes in my apartment! Sound familiar?

I was born musical (which included dancing) and did all this as well as teach music and a great deal of accompanying in many areas. – The primary word is DID – PAST. I am now 86 years old and am deeply grateful to God for keeping me able to think straight and still use my fingers, and have beautiful music touch my soul.

God so often sends into my life, people whom I know well or even slightly, who show kindness and compassion. In addition, it is AMAZING that so many times “an angel” out of the blue whom I’ve not seen before or since will suddenly save me from some dangerous occurrence.

Let us continue to thank God and pray we can always be helpful!

– Nancy Bain, RESIDENT

Tuesday Third Week of Lent

JEREMIAH 7:21-34

PSALM 78:1-39

JOHN 7:37-52

ADD TO YOUR FAITH

II PETER 1:3-8, NIV

As I matured in faith, I realized the potentially greater sacrifice was to add something to my life instead of eliminating something during the 40 days of Lent! That decision nurtured a more mature faith and a more meaningful relationship with God through Christ Jesus!

This text suggests that the Season of Lent can lead to new spiritual maturity and empower new levels of faith. Having denied Jesus, Peter had learned quite well that life can drain us of our faith. This directive calls us to be more intentional and determined to grow the faith we have into the greater faith that God wants us to have!

In my teens I sacrificed sweets and even once gave up cigarettes for Lent while in college. Such sacrifices are aids in our becoming more disciplined but what do they do for us spiritually? Peter declares that the more powerful sacrifice, perhaps, is in what we ADD to our lives far more than what we eliminate!

For five years I have read the entire Bible during Lent. It ushered in fresh scriptural insights and definitely boosted my faith! A friend recently rejoiced over a new book that guided her through the Bible in a year. My retort was, “Well, it doesn’t take you that long to read any other book!”

Focusing on God’s word for 40 days leads us into greater sacrifices! Reading 16 to 18 chapters per day quickly reveals and clarifies how blindly we fill our time with “empty” behaviors that often sap our strengths rather than adding any strength to our lives!

So, let’s make Lent 2023 a more spiritually joyous and faith-strengthening season!

– Rev. Dr. Paige Lanier Chargois, RESIDENT

LIFE GOES ON

Growing up, I always thought my parents were superheroes. I thought they were invincible, and they will be here forever. We all think that, right? My mom's passing was a shock but I feel like she prepared me for this. Weeks before Mom passed, we talked about life after death and how we gotta move on and not dwell on it. I remember telling Mom, "I'm not sure I can move on, I don't like change." Mom said, "Sometimes change is for the better, whether you're changing your diet, changing your lifestyle, changing jobs; whatever it is, change is sometimes for the better." I didn't understand her words at the time, but the day that she passed those words hit me.

People always say, "LaToya, you are so strong. I have never seen you cry." Of course I have cried many days and nights. Shoot, I still cry 'til this day and it's been eight years since my mom's passing, but in the words of Mary Eliza Carter, "life goes on." You can't dwell on a death; you have to take care of yourself. Sounds selfish, but it's not. It's ok to grieve and cry it out, but don't cause your health to deteriorate so you end up sick. Cry, scream; do whatever it is you need to do to help you feel better. Just remember Liza's words "LIFE GOES ON."

— LaToya Spain, MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

THE GIFT OF THIS DAY

I'm a morning person. I love waking up early, before dawn. I make a pot of coffee and after feeding the dog, I sit on my couch to read. As I read, I raise my head to look outside from time to time. I notice the change from the darkness to the gray to the red reflections of dawn's first light.

It's a holy time, this daybreak. Suddenly, before me is a day that is unlike any other day in all of God's creation. Dawn is that brief moment of the conductor's raised baton, before the orchestra plays. It is filled with hope and possibility.

Years ago, I learned the secret of living one day at a time. This way of life reminds me to live in this set of 24 hours and not to live in the wreckage of my past nor in the wreckage of my future. It tells me that today is a gift and it is a gift freely given.

Each day, as dawn breaks, I ask myself what I will do with this gift of today. Will I bring hope and light? Will I bring peace? Or will I bring complaints and anger or even indifference? How I live this day is my choice. And my choice may not only change the world for me. My choice may change the world, however slightly, for someone else. It is a powerful gift, this day.

What will you do with your gift of today?

— David Curtis, CHAPLAIN

RECEIVING AND REFLECTING THE LIGHT

God works through story telling. A familiar favorite is about the Sunday school teacher who asked her class, “Can someone tell me what a saint is?” One little girl remembered church windows depicting the apostles and the beautiful light streaming through the stained glass. She answered, “Saints are people the light shines through.”

This innocent answer captured the original intention of Gothic cathedral builders whose central aim was to let in the light. During this period, artisans developed glass windows in a vibrant range of colors on which they painted elaborate narrative scenes from the Holy Bible. Clergy used the stained glass windows to illustrate scripture readings and homilies for a largely illiterate population. Worshipers experienced the unique light from stained glass, which changes constantly as sunlight varies with the time of day, the seasons and the movement of clouds. The windows produced an effect on people’s senses and emotions described by art historians as, “mysterious and palpable.” As a result, many people became followers of Christ during the Gothic era.

Jesus said: “I have come into the world as Light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness” (John 12:46). He further declared: “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

May we receive and reflect the light!

— Susie Frazer, RESIDENT

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

There are so many lessons learned over a year's time. And I appreciate this time of year as it helps me focus on which lesson stood out. During the depths of COVID, my husband and I were both able to go to work and continue a somewhat normal life. We were so grateful. But we had an unfortunate incident happen. Our home was broken into. Items were stolen. If this has happened to you, you understand the loss and the extreme anger that follows. You try and imagine the person who would do this. You come up with various scenarios of what they did in your home, how long they were there, what items were taken you haven't even discovered yet. Why your home, why you. And I hate to admit it, but you question almost anyone in your life that you think could do this to you. You look at people differently.

My husband and I were very lucky. The intruder turned himself in after just three days. The police chief told us this rarely happens. Our items were long gone. But this intruder gave me the gift of knowing the "who" and the "why" and the "what happened while in our home." All of the scenarios I had imagined were completely different from his confession—shockingly different. I often think about the decision this intruder made; the decision to come clean and go to the police. I can imagine it was not easy for him. And I often wonder how heavy the guilt must have felt for him, to turn himself in and face the consequences. Was what he gained by confessing as much as what I gained from his attempted redemption?

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

— Laurie Hemler, SALES

EXAMINING OUR SCAPEGOATING PATTERNS

A scapegoat is one of two goats used in a special ritual described in the Hebrew Scriptures. One goat is chased into the wilderness, taking with it peoples' sins and impurities, while the other goat is sacrificed to God (Leviticus 16:21-22). The term "scapegoating" refers to this ritual and describes a universal human tendency to project our inner troubles onto others to try and root them out of ourselves. History reveals countless innocent victims of scapegoating. A most horrifying example occurred in the Holocaust when Hitler blamed Jews for the suffering of the German people after WWI.

Scapegoating can also be quite subtle. We all tend to scapegoat because it is easier for our egos to point a finger at others before we choose to see our own part in problems and conflicts. If we look carefully at where our fingers are pointing, we may notice that the deep frustrations that we hold about others can reveal hidden aspects of ourselves that we would rather not see.

The phenomenon of scapegoating highlights the cosmic importance of Jesus. The cross exposes the human tendency to foist guilt and shame away from us and onto others. Recall how in his innocence and suffering, Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Lent is a season of examination that invites us to better "know what we are doing." Moreover, Lent is a time to observe the steadfast love of God revealed through the Lamb of God who is calling us to scapegoat no more. Because as the classic hymn, "Comfort, Comfort Now My People" exclaims, "To my people now proclaim that my pardon waits for them! Tell them that their sins I cover and their warfare now is over."

— Jay Morgan, CHAPLAIN

IN THE UPPER ROOM

Listen to Mahalia Jackson, known to be the greatest gospel singer, sing the spiritual, “In the Upper Room.” You will be forever haunted by her voice and by her simple words: “In the upper room with Jesus, with my Lord.. .”

This upstairs room is where Jesus and his disciples sat to share supper together, a supper which would be Jesus’ last before being crucified the following day.

I visualize a simple table and simple men sharing a simple dinner with Jesus. It would not be the first time. Jesus, after all, spent a good part of his ministry eating with them and with people of all kinds. But tonight is no ordinary dinner even though only bread, the most universal food, as well as wine are served. Jesus himself taught us in his prayer to ask for our daily bread, after all, for our sustenance and survival. Bread is life but, he is talking about another life.

What is extraordinary at this simple table is that Jesus, as he shares the bread, tells his disciples: “This is my body,” and pouring wine, “This is my blood which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Obeying Jesus, the disciples then share the bread and the wine with Jesus and with one another. What an extraordinary moment! But what does this mean for us today?

According to its original meaning, people who eat bread together are called “companions.” The disciples were companions and people who ate the bread and the fish were also companions. Every time we share a meal with others, we are companions. Jesus invites us to participate in his extraordinary meal and be companions with him and one another.

So, remembering Maundy Thursday, let us participate in Christ as we celebrate communion and as we share meals with others. Let us invite Christ to our table as he has invited us and be grateful for “the bread of life!”

– Christiane Rimbault, RESIDENT

THE CONTEMPLATIVE CALLING OF MARY SPENCER

The Biblical story (Luke 10:38-41) of sisters Martha and Mary illustrates the dilemma we, ourselves, may find ourselves in as we consider our work responsibilities, service projects and family responsibilities during this Lenten season. As Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening to his teaching, Martha busily prepared a meal. Irrked by her sister's neglect of kitchen duties, Martha asked Jesus to scold her, but Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things . . . Mary has chosen the better part." Martha epitomizes the active life of service, while Mary exemplifies the contemplative life of prayer.

So, also, Mary Harris Spencer (1743-1835), chose the better part. In 1785 she was converted through the preaching of President John Blair Smith of Hampden-Sydney College. Called "The Hermitess of Briery Congregation," this Presbyterian widow of Sion Spencer, mother, and grandmother, after years of being a busy Martha in her church and family, secluded herself in a remote location on her Charlotte County, Virginia, farm to give herself up entirely to devotional exercises. She had a little cottage built for herself a half-mile from her family within a wooded area near a spring. Although she permitted brief visits by others, she hastened them away because night and day she meditated, sang and prayed. Friends would conceal themselves to listen to her audible prayers as she communed with God while hidden behind a large rock by a flowing stream. She chose to become a contemplative during her last two decades.

Like Mary of Bethany and Mary Spencer, some seniors may find themselves called to contemplation, intercession and Bible meditation as they discover the time retirement brings. Lent may be the time for us to discover these joys.

— Rev. Dr. Art Thomas, RESIDENT

ONLY FOR A MOMENT

At this stage of my life there is a nagging question: How am I supposed to live out the rest of my life with gratitude and purpose? Prayer and listening have brought no clear answers. But, what has helped is a clarion call from my dear friend, Patricia. I offer her prayer composed shortly before she died in 2010.

Dear Lord, if I can love like You

For only a moment

Then I can touch another

With Your caring

Your gentleness

Your forgiveness

Your acceptance

Your humor

Your compassion

Teach me, Oh Lord

This love so I can

Walk on the good earth

With your light and

I will truly have lived

If only for a moment

— Mary Frances Lowe, RESIDENT

TRANSITIONS AND CHANGES

As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. (Genesis 8:22)

I have a photo of a daffodil springing up through the snowy ground. I snapped this picture years ago, thinking how beautiful it was to see a bright yellow flower in the midst of this wintery image.

It was that in-between time where the seasons are changing: in this case, from winter into spring. The weather was warm enough for a daffodil to bloom, and then, typical to Virginia weather, a cold snap arrived bringing snow and ice. I love to look back at this photo because it reminds me of transition, or “in-between” time. The time where the season is beginning to change, but it’s not quite fully there.

We all have times of transition and change in our lives. I give thanks to a God who created changing seasons, reminding us of how our own lives evolve and change. We all have seasons of great joy and hope, sometimes we have seasons of great sadness and grief. Or, perhaps, like the photo of the daffodil and the snow, we may experience the overlap of seasons at the same time. Thanks be to God for walking with us through all of the seasons of our lives.

– Logan Augustine, CHAPLAIN

Friday Fourth Week of Lent

JEREMIAH 23:1-8

PSALM 102

JOHN 6:52-59

I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS

In difficult times, when all about seems to be in turmoil, its not unusual to find oneself feeling isolated – alone despite being in the midst of many.

But then, in going about, one encounters that special person who emits an encompassing personality, an affection – love – which envelopes and diffuses concern and emptiness:

The healthcare dining lead waving madly window to window across the patio, blowing kisses.

A late-night smoker, reading his volumes, who surrounds with fatherly peace – affection, humor.

The marvelous family, father, wife, daughters; exceptional personalities who each draw you to them simply with their demeanor, affection with welcome regardless of expired time.

Or, simply the act of speaking and exchanging pleasantries; the constant daily exchange with individuals while passing.

In an instant, one returns to the general population and the emptiness seems minimal. The warmth, the exchange of friendship offers options for support and the isolation is diffused.

Perhaps, one experience, in a unique way, “I will be with you always.” (Matthew 28:20b)

– Scott Boyer, RESIDENT

Saturday Fourth Week of Lent

JEREMIAH 23:9-15

PSALM 107:33-43

JOHN 6:60-71

DO YOU KNOW?

Do you know why we sing so much?

When we are going through a crisis, are sick or feeling depressed,

Do you know the impact of singing songs to God?

He hears us and sends peace and comfort down to us.

Do you know the history of our song?

Do you know how this was the only way we could fellowship?

It was the only thing our ancestors were allowed to do sometimes.

It was a way of telling Bible stories or verses to our children,

It was a way of sending messages to others to help guide them to safety.

Do you know that when words don't come, God hears when you moan or hum a hymn?

Do you know that singing is a form of praise for where the Lord has bought you,

Praising him for what he will do for you,

Having faith and trust in God.

Do you know?

— Vanessa Perry, PASTORAL CARE

SUFFERING

Why is suffering necessary? No one really has the answer to that question but, I would like to share some observations made while working for over fifty years in healthcare.

The mysteries and uncertainties of life, paradoxically, seem to be necessary to faith development. Suffering becomes the crucible in which God works to establish faith. The process of suffering tests our cognitive beliefs; the shallow beliefs are destroyed, and more deeply entrenched beliefs become deeply rooted in the heart and the gut. As a friend once said to me, “some people learn by seeing; most of us must learn by feeling.”

The experience of tragedy changes us; life becomes divided into “the time before...” and the “time after...” Our view of the world and our beliefs regarding the Divine become more established. Our faith either deepens or slowly begins to evaporate.

Take a few minutes to meditate on Mary’s experiences leading up to the birth of Jesus.

What was it like:

- to be stigmatized as a pregnant, unwed, young woman in that time and place?
- to face a possible future as an unwed mother?
- to give birth in a stable surrounded by filthy animals?

How much impact did those early experiences have on developing the faith she would exhibit during Jesus’ torture and crucifixion?

As we rest in this Lenten time of darkness that precedes the resurrection of Christ, let us reflect on our own experiences of pain and suffering:

What have we learned because of those experiences?

What impact have they had on our lives?

How have they informed our faith?

Has God been at work, using our experiences to draw us closer to God and humankind?

SILENT FAITH

Matthew 1:18-2:23

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife. (Matthew 1:24)

His name was Joseph. His place and acts were essential to God's plan. We have no record of anything he said, except, "he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him."

He followed what God used to take him from Bethlehem to Nazareth. He married his betrothed when she was with child. He recognized God's word in Caesar's orders and took her with him to Bethlehem. Of course, they knew the child would be born there. When the wise men had gone, he obeyed the angel again and took them to Egypt by night, then stayed there until directed back home.

There are times when faith is to be proclaimed by clear voices and visible acts. There are other times when we just do as commanded, silently.

— M.L. Grayson Foy, RESIDENT

JESUS AND HIS MOTHER

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary. “You have favor with God. Blessed are you among women. You will bear a son and name him Jesus, and he will do great things.” Gabriel explained to her how this could be. And she agreed according to the word. She treasured these things and pondered them in her heart. At the lowly manger, at Jesus’s birth, there were shepherds and choirs of angels. When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and Joseph took him to the temple and Simeon recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Simeon said that this child would cause many to rise up and others to be cut down and a sword would pierce Mary’s soul. When Jesus was twelve, the family went to the temple. When they were leaving, Jesus was not among them. Mary was concerned and went looking for him. She found him at the temple and expressed her concerns. Jesus said, “Didn’t you know that I would be about my Father’s business?” She had a crucial role at the wedding at Cana, Jesus’s first miracle. There was a time when Jesus was with his disciples. Mary was concerned about him and wanted to take him home. Jesus didn’t let them in. Instead, he said, “Those who follow my words are my family.” Mary must have wondered why he didn’t open the door. Mary was present at the crucifixion. Surely, she felt the sword pierce her heart. In his agony on the cross, Jesus provided for his mother’s care. To Mary, he said, “Behold your son.” To the beloved disciple John, he said, “Behold your mother.”

“She bore to us a Savior when half spent was the night.”*

Thank you, Mary!

– Ethel Hall, RESIDENT

**From “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”*

LOVE IN EVERY SEASON

I began writing this during Advent, and it spilled over to the week between Christmas and the New Year!

The Bible tells us Christ is God's love brought to us. This is the greatest gift we receive for Christmas! And we can be its reflection of what we would like to see in others.

If you want love, give love. If you want honesty, give honesty. If you want respect, give respect, etc. You get in return what you give. How much better and more meaningful for those friends and family in our lives than shopping for more things?

And, God the Great Creator has inspired each of us to create. Our giving can also be a gift of our best creations made for our loved ones with them in our thoughts, blessing them as we create.

— Emma Lou Martin, RESIDENT

GRATITUDE

On the fifth anniversary of the death of my granddaughter, Lelia Moran, I thought of all the people that God sent to us during her illness. When Lelia was three years old, she was diagnosed with a brain tumor, and after proton therapy at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia and chemotherapy at Virginia Commonwealth Health System, she became an angel on December 6, 2017.

We met some amazing doctors and nurses in Philadelphia who cared for children with cancer and met families who were looking for a cure for their child's cancer just as we were. We spent Christmas 2017 at an apartment in Philly. Lelia and her two brothers were "adopted" by the FBI and they provided many Christmas gifts for the children. We were able to attend church services on Christmas Eve and feed the reindeer in the park nearby.

When Lelia returned to Richmond for chemotherapy, we were greeted by Connor's Heroes who decorated her room in Peppa Pig and Disney Princesses, as she was in and out of the hospital. She was treated by amazing doctors and nurses, some of which we still stay in contact with. Friends and family supported her in so many ways from blankets, because she was often cold, to anything you could think of in Peppa Pig style, which was her favorite!

The gratitude of our family stretched as people prayed for her recovery from around the world. Her website was visited by many and kept up to date by family members. On December 6, God called our little one home because he loved her so and she would no longer have to deal with chemo, dialysis or be in and out of the hospital.

As I reflect on this fifth anniversary, it is with humble gratitude for all those who were placed in my life as we shared four years with our amazing granddaughter, Lelia.

– Kathy Morton, VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

WHAT'S LENT?

Growing up in a small, north-central Texas town, I never really understood (or should I say, grasped) the meaning of Lent. You see, when I speak of my hometown being small, it truly was as the population was only 3,624. You could say the only thing about the town that was large, was the Baptist church my family attended. It took up a city block, and there weren't that many!

We faithfully attended services (twice on Sundays). This small-town Baptist church gave me a great foundation for my spiritual journey, and I'm truly thankful. However, in the weeks leading up to Easter, I don't recall much being said about the Lenten season.

Fast forward forty plus years. I'm living in Richmond and a member of a Presbyterian church. The liturgical calendar tends to be a bit more relevant to me now with an emphasis on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

One Maundy Thursday service many years ago, is especially meaningful. Following a simple meal we shared in the fellowship hall, we were asked to wash the feet of the person next to us - just as Jesus did with his disciples. I happened to be seated with the late Dr. Charlie McCarthy who was a kind and gentle person. Through this simple and humble act, I was reminded of the commandment that Jesus issued to his disciples that evening.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13: 34).

Lent is now, more than ever for me, a time of self-reflection and sacrifice. And as Jesus commanded his disciples, a time to love and serve others.

— Owen Sharman, SALES AND MARKETING

DOGS AND CATS, PRAISE THE LORD!

For the last two years, fans of the Westminster Canterbury Richmond Dog Park, with the help of the Pastoral Care staff, have held a “Blessing of the Animals.” The occasion is celebrative as we ask God’s blessing on various creatures who have enriched our lives.

For much of my adult life I have had cats; now, a dog. Perhaps the word “have” is misleading, as it suggests that I am somehow in control. The cats, with no regard for my feelings, have always made clear that I am not in charge; the dog tries to disguise that truth in a flurry of wet kisses. The message is the same, however: I am their steward, not their sovereign.

My relationship with these God-given tutors has led me, little by little, to wonder whether the creation itself is a cosmic relationship. Perhaps our creator has formed each of us creatures (whether people, dogs, cats, rodents, birds, fish, insects, vegetation, water, earth, air, planets or galaxies) to be closely connected to every other creature as well as to our uncreated God.

Psalms 147 calls upon all creation to praise the Lord, for sea monsters to join with angels; sun, moon, and stars with wild animals; fire and hail with mountains and trees; kings and young men and women with the depths of the oceans and the heights of the heavens. Together is how we should praise the Lord. Human praise is incomplete, if turtles, bees, and meadows do not join in.

It is humbling to realize that I need cats and dogs at least as much as they need me. If our shared vocation is to praise God in the mighty chorus of all creatures, then perhaps it will be my furry friends who teach me how to sing.

— Rebecca Weaver, RESIDENT

NEW EVERY MORNING

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 3:22-23) If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; the old is gone, the new is here! (II Corinthians 5: 17)

Whenever I go through big life changes, face difficulties, failure or fear, I try to remember these verses and let their truth sink deep into my heart. Regardless of what lies before us, God's love never ceases and in his mercy is new every morning! A new day is a fresh new gift.

Since I'm about to enter a new phase – retirement! – I am striving to embrace change. It is exciting, scary and bittersweet. Yet, these profound words of scripture have given me reassurance and hope – God's mercies are new every morning! Every day will be, as always, one that starts with light, mercy, love and newness.

And from II Corinthians comes another word of reassurance and strength – in Christ, the old is gone, the new is here! Over these years in the Westminster Canterbury community, I've learned the truth about elderhood, a time to live purpose-filled, active, healthy lives. I have seen this in our community and I know the words of scripture are true – the new is here each day and the faithfulness of God never ends.

As I ponder moving forward in my life, I treasure the time we've had together. My precious friends and dear colleagues have challenged me, shared joy to lighten the load, offered grace and friendship, and become cherished partners in mission. And always, easily found in this faith-based atmosphere, God is the peace and love that makes all good things possible. May it ever be so on this campus and in whatever community you find yourself.

Let us Pray: Lord, thank you that your mercy and faithfulness is new every morning and that in Christ we are made new. Plant these truths deep in our hearts so that our lives might glorify you, each and every day. Amen

– Gayle Hunter Haglund, VICE PRESIDENT RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY

My husband Tom and I came to live at Westminster Canterbury Richmond seven years ago. We chose it because it appeared to be a lively, happy community where things were happening. The residents were friendly and welcoming. As the years flew by, we made many wonderful friends. When the COVID-19 pandemic rocked the world, we both agreed that we couldn't have been in a better place than this wonderful community. Just as we were starting to regain our footing after the pandemic, unexpectedly, Tom died. Everyone dies at some point, that's expected, but no one saw this coming. His untimely death shocked the community and especially me.

I have never experienced a loss like this. What has made this bearable is our wonderful, special Westminster Canterbury Richmond Community. Now, I must make a new life here, alone. They have comforted me, supported me, included me, even wiping away my tears when I was overwhelmed by frustration. Never again will I feel awkward about putting my arm around someone's shoulders or hugging someone who is hurting. That simple human gesture means so much to both parties when empathy is involved.

Yes, death is a natural part of living. At some point it will come to us all. You who live in this wonderful community at Westminster Canterbury Richmond are blessed with a variety of coping tools to help you face it. The Pastoral Care office has wonderfully caring clergy who offer support and comfort to the bereaved. There is an in-house group on grieving, as well as psychological counseling through our clinic. No one needs to suffer alone. Reach out when you need help. You live in a wonderful community where your friends and neighbors stand ready and willing to help you through anything.

— Sharon Botts, RESIDENT

TELL ME ABOUT GOD,
I'M BEGINNING TO FORGET!

We all come from God. (We say we are created or made by God – in God's image and likeness.)

John Philip Newell, the Celtic poet, liturgist and teacher tells me, "I am a unique manifestation of the Divine," (or of God)! When he said that at a retreat this fall, I had one of those epiphany moments. I thought, yes, I am unique, and I grew up with the teaching that, as humans, we are created in the image and the likeness of God. We read that in any number of places in Holy Scripture.

If we can believe that about ourselves, don't we also believe that about all other human beings? They are, each and every one **UNIQUE!** They too are created in the image and the likeness of the Divine! The same God!

If only we would choose to act out that belief every day and everywhere. All people, whatever race, ethnicity, color, religion, gender orientation, financial status, whether housed or homeless, native or foreign or immigrant, are much more the same than different. If only we treated everyone more as brothers and sisters – **FAMILY** – and loved each other as God loves us, what a wonderful world it would be! Ooh yeah . . .

IF ONLY!

– Cabell Chenault, RESIDENT

Wednesday in Holy Week

JEREMIAH 17:5-10, 14-17

PSALM 55

JOHN 12:27:36

HIS LOVE

In the changing of the seasons, I am closest to God,

I feel His love.

Drinking in the splendor of colorful leaves and the crisp air
of fall,

I feel His love.

Shivering warms my heart in the cold of winter,

I feel His love.

With the warmth of a spring day and new life,

I feel His love.

In the heat of a summer's day, with a soft breeze,

I feel His love.

As I look around my world, I see the beauty in everything
He created,

I feel His love.

He gave His only Son for me,

I feel His love.

— Susan Fletcher, HUMAN RESOURCES

MY JOURNEY OVERCOMING
LONELINESS AND SADNESS

Three years ago, my husband and I moved into Westminster Canterbury and were very happy and pleased. We enjoyed four or five months of a good life together. All of a sudden, my husband developed a heart issue, totally unexpected, and was placed in health care. This was at the beginning of COVID. I was unable to see or be with him.

A very dear friend, knowing I was lonely, offered some assistance and said we will sit outside on the rockers and you'll meet some new friends. When these nice people knew of my situation, they were so warm, loving and reassuring. The nurses who were taking care of my husband would bring him out onto the balcony where I could see him from the outside. Many of these new friends, who didn't even know my husband, would walk down and wave to him. This was so helpful to me. Unfortunately, another serious condition occurred and he passed away, which increased my loneliness and sadness. A good neighbor invited me to her church, and the church gave me such peace and hope.

— Weezie Gray, RESIDENT

THE LAST SEVEN SAYINGS
OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

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." (Luke 23:33-34)

Then he (the criminal) said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." (John 19:26-27)

And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), "I am thirsty." (John 19:28)

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30)

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46)

PAIN LIKE NO OTHER

Pain, pain, pain, oh what spell it has me in. Will God ever let me get back to normal? When, when, is what I need to know?

In January 2022, my back started hurting. I consulted pain specialists and they assured me it would get better with some injections. In May after having five injections, nothing worked. As a senior, with other complicated issues, I definitely didn't want any more surgeries, however. I was forced to visit one. First, I had to consult a physician assistant to see if I was a candidate. I had to wait months to get an appointment. I saw three physicians' assistants, had X-rays before the big guy walked in.

We discussed the X-rays, and he immediately saw where the pain was coming from. I had three back surgeries forty plus years ago. Due to the aging process, nuts, bolts, and other hardware had become loose. The doctor decided that I needed surgery, and I told him I couldn't wait another month. I needed it now!

In two weeks, I was on pre-op surgical table talking to an anesthesiologist about my DNR (do not resuscitate order). Did I realize that my heart could stop beating or lungs could momentarily collapse, and that pounding on my chest could possibly bring me back? In tears, I explained I didn't want any of that but just let me go.

I was to walk the afternoon of the surgery so when a physical therapist came, I felt like jelly and took one step to a nearby chair and collapsed. After five days in the hospital, I was transferred to our Parsons Health Center, which took six weeks of occupational therapy and physical therapy. Finally, I moved back to the Courtyard to survive on my own with God's help.

Being back in my apartment was wonderful, but He was going to test me. Being fearlessly independent, I wanted to be on my own. I quickly realized that I needed to hire a helper to jumpstart me in the mornings. Pain had shifted to both hips so it still hurt to stand up straight.

Going back to physical therapy, changing meds, using heat and cold compresses, and with God's help, the beat still goes on.

HAVE YOU NOT HEARD

The summer of 1950 is permanently etched on my soul. As a rising high school sophomore for the third summer, I attended Jumonville, a Methodist summer camp in the mountains of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Those wonderful memories have now distilled into the essence of summer camp, with the exception of one — vivid and lasting.

We campers gathered for evening service in the stone Whyel Chapel built on that mountaintop in 1880. The sanctuary, inviting and warmed with candlelight, was soon alive with rowdy campers filing into the pews. Then a hush fell over the sanctuary as the minister stood before us. He simply held his right arm out to his side and spoke, “Boys and girls, *this is Jesus Christ. Jesus, these are your boys and girls.*”

That was all. That was the end.

That was everything. That was the beginning.

Weeping immediately broke out and continued all evening as we were dismissed to our bunks. No one spoke. No one knew what this meant or why we were so distraught.

No one had *taught us* about the *presence of the living God, the Holy Spirit* who had visited us that night, the *Spirit of Truth* (John 14:15-17). The counselors tried comforting us but we didn’t want to be comforted by them. Yet we did not know the Holy Spirit is the *Comforter*. We did not know our tears were tears of unrecognized *remorse*, that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:7-10).

We did not know the Holy Spirit is sent to teach and guide us, to bring to remembrance all that Jesus taught (John 14:25-26). “*Do you not know* that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God *dwells* in you” (1 Cor. 3:16, 2 Cor. 6:16b)?

Many years would pass before I matured into the Truth of that unforgettable night. The **evidence** of that promise, that gift of God within us is the fruit of the Spirit. That fruit continues its process of ripening within me today. It is a journey.

— Ann Neidow, RESIDENT

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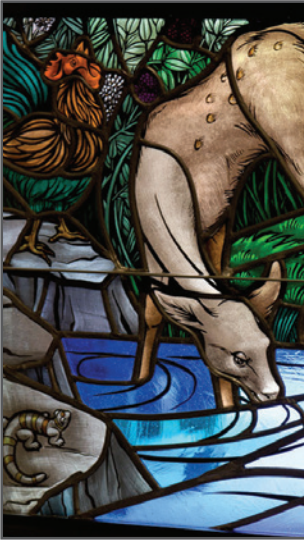
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