

A Lenten JOURNEY

2025



A COLLECTION OF DEVOTIONS
VOLUME XXVIII

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*The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily
the views of Westminster Canterbury Richmond.*

Preface

Welcome to the XXVIII *Lenten Journey*! This booklet was the dream of Marguerite Wingo, a resident of Westminster Canterbury. First published in 1997, this booklet of reflections from residents, staff and community members has become a treasured addition to many people's Lenten devotions.

In 2025, Westminster Canterbury Richmond will celebrate its 50th anniversary as a faith-based continuing care retirement community. To celebrate this milestone, we have included previous Lenten Journey submissions in this year's devotional booklet. These previous submissions, along with new submissions for this year, reflect the deep well of spirituality that has been a hallmark of this community since its inception.

May your Lenten Journey be filled with peace, reflection and hope.

Peace this day,

— THE WESTMINSTER CANTERBURY RICHMOND PASTORAL CARE STAFF

Introduction

Welcome to the 28th *Lenten Journey*!

This treasured publication is a testimony to how God's spirit is alive and active in our beloved community of Westminster Canterbury Richmond.

The submissions in the *Lenten Journey* are offered by our residents, staff and community members in the hope that the reader's life will be enriched through hearing the journey of others. 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. 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 who took time to write their thoughts—and to the Pastoral Care Staff and volunteer editors who help make this publication a reality. We also give special thanks to Rebecca Hatch, Senior Communications Specialist, who faithfully offers her time and talent to lay out and design each year's *Lenten Journey* so beautifully.

With this being my last *Lenten Journey* introduction as your Director of Pastoral Care, I am ever more grateful for the ways in which God has brought our sacred stories together. Thank you for the blessed journey.

— Lynn McClintock
FORMER DIRECTOR PASTORAL CARE

Ash Wednesday

MARCH 5, 2025

JONAH 3:1-4:11

PSALM 32

LUKE 18:9-14

The gentle fingertip applying ashes to our foreheads in an Ash Wednesday service is a small reminder of our misdoings and a suggestion for our resolve to “do better” during Lent - and beyond.

Often in the Bible, those who had come to the awareness of their sins and were truly sorry and resolved to change their ways, sat in sackcloth and ashes. It seems that action is not what is done these days!

In our daily prayers, as the thought of the agonizing pain our Lord endured in payment for our sins, the awesome significance of Ash Wednesday becomes clearer.

As we move along the path of admission of our unworthiness and repent for straying from the straight and narrow path, the love for our Savior increases, and we are moved more and more to walk in his way.

To that resolve, we remember that he said that feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, or seeing that the homeless have shelter, is more pleasing to him than burnt offerings (or sackcloth).

What a day that could be in a Christian's life - to realize how we can be forgiven - and having the joy of knowing that a compassionate heart, with actions that follow, is what is pleasing to God.

— Helen Reynolds, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. I

FLYING HIGH WITH DEEPER FAITH

Most first adventures in our lives can be quite scary! We long to be fearless but often lack the faith to surmount the worst of our fears. The scariest for me was my first flight! It was to Germany across the Atlantic Ocean to join my husband. Quite anxious and with an ocean of tears, I awakened Dad the night before my departure. Hearing such anguish and fear while watching my tears of distress, Dad shared with me years later that it was one of the worst times of his life – seeing his child in such pain and not being able to do anything about it.

I reminded Dad then that he had planted the seeds of faith in me many years before that night – at a very early age – but I just didn't seem to have sufficient faith to take that flight! My fear was as broad as that ocean and as vast as the sky above it, thus reducing the power of faith within me. How often flesh wrestles with our faith but the depth of faith we gain in such struggles IS “the fuel” that takes us to new spiritual heights!

In contrast, a few years later, I traveled with a seminary group to the Middle East. Our departure coincided with Israel's June 1982 invasion of Lebanon which deeply concerned my family. Our group was potentially flying into a war zone. With heart in hand, we said our goodbyes. I articulated my faith to them with the words, “What better place to die and go to heaven but from “The Holy Land?” I take delight in the joyous, ebullient faith that continues to nourish my life in these subsequent years. I had, indeed, learned to fly high!

— Paige Lanier Chargois, RESIDENT

Friday after Ash Wednesday

MARCH 7, 2025

DEUT. 7:12-16

PSALM 31

JOHN 1:35-42

PRAYER FOR THE JOURNEY

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart
and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways, acknowledge him
and he shall direct thy path.

Proverbs 3:5-6

I have been familiar with this prayer for years. One day, in particular, the words “acknowledge him” stood out like a shining light. I asked myself whether I was trusting him with my heart. It was such a revelation to me that I felt the need to look up “acknowledge” in the dictionary. I found so many supporting words such as “acceptance,” “gratitude,” “awareness,” “dedication.” I find myself praying to understand him better, know him better, and know what he wants me to do.

— Bertie Milstein, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. VIII

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

MARCH 8, 2025

DEUT. 7:17-26

PSALM 30

JOHN 1:43-51

MY HEAVEN

If, when I die, I go to Heaven
May there be a sandy beach,
With the surf washing upon it
And a dune within my reach.

May my angel wings be gull wings,
My halo be the sun
And my heavenly music be the breeze
That through sea grasses hum.

I ask no gold-paved highways
When I leave this life behind;
Only golden beach extending on
Beyond the sands of time.

May "my heaven" let me listen
Forever to the roar
Of the breakers as they crash
Upon the battered, sandy shore.

When the Winds of God blow o'er me
This will be my fervent prayer:
May the breeze that lifts me Heavenward
Be filled with Earth's salt air!

— Nancy Omohundro, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. XIX

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST

It was an unexpected encounter in “the middle of nowhere” back in the day. I was a teenager driving my parents’ car, trying to impress a young woman by treating us to a drive on a less traveled road on a sunny Sunday afternoon. A tire suddenly blew. Never had a flat tire before, and besides knowing that we should stop on the side of the road, was ignorant of what to do next. And a bit scared.

Then I saw the man. He was an older man about six feet tall, dark-skinned, long hair, walking along the side the road. He approached us slowly, and as I tried to look brave, he tapped on the window. “Need some help?” Lord, have mercy!

I prayed that this would turn out well. We got out of the car. “Got a jack?”

We dug it out of the trunk, and he jacked the car up, took the tire iron out and replaced the bad wheel with the one from the trunk. “You’re all set!”

Relief and gratitude never combined so well. I asked if I could pay him for his kindness. He said that wasn’t necessary and shook my hand. As he walked away, he turned and said something I have never forgotten. “Next time you see someone in trouble, try to help. That will be payment enough.”

Reflecting on this surprise encounter more than six decades later, it is easier to see this incident as a metaphor for God’s unveiling himself to us in everyday life, in unexpected ways and situations. I certainly wasn’t expecting him on the road to nowhere that day, but I am positive he embraced us, gave us what we needed and encouraged us to go and do likewise!

— Gerald McCarthy, RESIDENT

THE PRACTICE OF LENT

I didn't grow up practicing Lent. We were the type who only celebrated Easter. When I finally started observing Lent, I treated it like a punishment: deprivation to purge my most artificial sins. It was extreme dieting in the name of Jesus. I thought when I removed what brought me pleasure, it would bring me closer to God.

But it wasn't the deprivation that revealed the beauty of Lent. It was the discipline of abundance, celebrating the earth blooming around me as I marched toward death. What was passing away in Lent was the shell, the hull, the chaff. What I let go of became compost to feed the new life that was coming. I saw birth all around me. I sensed death's role in all of it.

When I met Lent in the context of new spring, it became a practice of moving toward death on purpose. What am I holding on to that keeps me from what is possible? What feels so essential that I can't imagine life without it? What do I say I'm doing to honor my relationship with the Creator but is actually an aversion to honest self-reflection? Why am I holding so tight to ways of being that keep me from every wild and unexpected thing I was created to be? What does death want from me this year?

What will resurrection require?

Lent is a march to the grave in the shadow of the spring. It is a release of control, a meeting point for the womb and the tomb, a profound complication that I cannot easily digest. Only now am I starting to understand how to practice Lent as I let go of everything I thought was essential.

— Kimmothy Smith, CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Tuesday First Week of Lent

MARCH 11, 2025

DEUT. 9:4-12

PSALM 45

JOHN 2:13-22

REDEEMING LOVE

I can't tell you how excited I was when the Lord spoke this message to my heart. Before I start writing, I always look up the definition of the words he gives me. The definition of redeeming is to buy back, repurchase, to set free from captivity by payment of ransom. Wow! My heart is so full. I was dead because of my sin which meant I could not have a relationship with God here on earth or live with him in eternity. Jesus died on the cross on Good Friday to set me free, pay for my sins (redeem me) so that I could spend eternity with him. He not only made a way, but he paid the price for that way.

GOD IS SO GOOD!

Redeeming love is a love that gives us life. A love that makes me kind when my flesh wants to be unkind. A love that knows I cannot possibly pay back my Redeemer but spurs me on to please him in every way every day. God's word is so amazing, so wonderful. Jesus, thank you for changing me. I challenge everyone to start at the beginning of the Bible and read it all the way through. We have so many chaplains and believers here at Westminster that can answer any questions you have along the way.

— Dawn Taylor, RESIDENT SERVICES

Wednesday First Week of Lent

MARCH 12, 2025

DEUT. 9:13-21
PSALM 119:42-8
JOHN 2:23- 3:15

THIS IS THE DAY THAT THE LORD HAS MADE,
LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT

When I get up to start a new day, I don't always greet the day with joy. Sometimes there is too much to do, and I feel burdened, oppressed, even as the day begins. Sometimes, there is nothing to do in the day, nothing to look forward to. Then I feel bored and indifferent. Rain may ruin my plans for a picnic or a day at the beach, and I feel frustrated, angry.

On the other hand, there are happy days, days when I can do just what I want to do, or days when there are special things to do, people to visit, places to go.

During this season of Lent, as I begin each day, and all through the day, I need to remember, "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." I must remind myself that he will help me bear the burdens. He will relieve the boredom and frustration. He will enhance the joy. Then, as the day begins and as it ends, I can say with praise and gratitude, "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it."

— Anne Rose, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. III

A LENTEN TRIAL “WHAT IS TRUTH”?

Holy Scripture has inspired creative artists down through the centuries. Lent recalls to us the condemnation of Pilate who cowardly exculpated himself from earthly judgment by placing the onus on the crowd and their anticipated “give us Barnabus.”

The sketchbook of Rembrandt van Rijn contains a masterful tableau: “The trial before Pilate.” Jesus, Barnabas, Pilate, Roman and temple guards are easily identified. At a palace window, Pilate’s wife, whose dream implored to “have nothing to do with that righteous man” looks on in consternation. At street level one sees a high priest, Sadducees and their followers. Aside, a purposely inconspicuous Peter and a servant girl witness the denial.

Rembrandt made five or six sketches of the scene, but in his final masterpiece only the stoa remains with its featured parsonages. Through his inspired perspective, we realize that we have replaced the iniquitous crowd; now we are the observers before Pilate. And now it is we who look up to the ONE who suffered and sacrificed for us.

— Stan Higgins, RESIDENT

A BUMP IN LIFE

Her ninety-eighth birthday was celebrated with gifts and a cake with candles at the home of her son and daughter-in-law. But the most appreciated present was picked and given by her eleven-year-old grandson. It was an oversized balloon decorated for the occasion. When one hit the balloon it sang happy birthday. It made her smile.

After the party, the balloon was put in the trunk of our driver's car. We set out on our long journey home. Whenever the driver hit a bump, the sounds of happy birthday came loudly out of the trunk of the car. It added merriment to the travelers and curiosity to the people who stopped for a red light or who were within earshot of us.

I thought, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could always laugh through some of the bumps in life.

— Mary Easterly, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. XII

Saturday First Week of Lent

MARCH 15, 2025

DUET. 11:18-28

PSALM 55

JOHN 4:1-26

“PRAYING” BY MARY OLIVER

“It doesn’t have to be the blue iris, it could be weeds in a vacant lot, or a few small stones; just pay attention, then patch a few words together and don’t try to make them elaborate—this isn’t a contest but the doorway into thanks, and a silence in which another voice may speak.”

In this season of Lent, we are reminded of the importance of humility and simplicity in our walk with God. Mary Oliver’s poem *Praying* reflects a truth at the heart of Christian faith: prayer is not about the grandeur of our words or the perfection of our actions, but about being still and listening for the voice of God.

Lent calls us into deeper relationship with Christ, not through elaborate acts of devotion or complex rituals, but through a quiet heart, open to hearing his voice. Whether we are praying in the quiet of our homes, reflecting on scripture, or spending time in nature, we are invited to come before God just as we are.

Jesus often withdrew to solitary places to pray, not seeking attention, but intimacy with the Father. In the same way, Lent invites us to strip away distractions and noise, to enter into a time of reflection and silence, where God’s still, small voice can reach our hearts.

Let this Lenten season be a time when we simplify our spiritual practices, trusting that God is not impressed by our eloquence but by our sincerity. As Oliver writes, it’s not about making our prayers elaborate—it’s about offering our hearts in humility and gratitude.

— Jessica Corbitt, WESTMINSTER CANTERBURY FOUNDATION

Second Sunday in Lent

MARCH 16, 2025

JER. 1:1-10
PSALM 24
MARK 3:31- 4:9

MINDS IN MOTION ACROSS BORDERS

Scripture - Isaiah 58:1-9a

In today's reading, Isaiah obeys God by speaking harsh words to his countrymen. Hundreds of years later, we who live in this great land – and who believe in the separation of church and state – still have the freedom to speak out when justice demands.

I confess that I have not done it often. I have simply admired those who did – many at a great cost to themselves.

In this season of contemplation, I pray for my country. I thank God for those who serve us by their willingness to govern, and for the many who minister in difficult places. May God guide and empower them all. And may I have the wisdom and the stamina to support them and to “cry out” at appropriate times.

O Gracious God, help us to speak the truth in love...

— Betsy Rice, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. XX

ON LOSING JAKE

To say my son died by suicide says nothing about who he was before that moment. This was not a spur of the moment decision, but tragically, carefully planned. Jake had left five bowls of food for his dog, and a note, "Just throw my body in a dumpster." How? How could this precious son ever believe that he was so worthless? I spent months in the freefall of deep grief. When I wept to my counselor, "Why did he leave me?" she replied, "He didn't leave you. He left his pain."

I watched his kindness again and again, to friends, to family, to strangers. Months before, Jake saw a neighbor struggling to get a ladder up to the gutters on the second story. He dropped what he was doing and went over to help, climbed the ladder and tossed the soggy rotting leaves to the ground. Then he waved goodbye and left. On another day, a ragged man who sat on the corner of Cary Street recognized Jake, as usual, shoving his hand in his pocket, reaching again for a dollar to share. Jake once told me about Mike, an Iraqi policeman he had made friends with, though he couldn't talk about the horrors of war Jake had experienced while he was there.

How could his spirit be thrown away, into some cosmic dumpster? Surely, I reasoned, if God is Love, God must hold this precious, hurting soul.

One morning while meditating, my heart opened. In that moment I knew that Jake's spirit had been enfolded into the loving spirit of the universe. This was not a thought; it was beyond belief, it was a deep, still knowing, an opening of peace that settled over me. Ineffable, invincible, incredible love within which all of creation has existence. Loving, liberating, lifegiving God. It was a moment that turned my heart around to understanding God, LOVE, in a way that has expanded my life.

— Susan Shearouse, RESIDENT

Tuesday Second Week of Lent

MARCH 18, 2025

JER. 2:1-13
PSALM 61
JOHN 4:43-54

TETON WILDERNESS 1958

We set up camp in the early afternoon of a perfect July day on a point of land protruding into a large, lush meadow formed by the North Fork of the meandering Buffalo River. Later that afternoon, I crept off alone to explore the river to see what might lie beneath the surface of its dark, luminescent pools. The grass grew taller as I approached a slow river bend, where easily frightened prey, surely present in its pool, caused me to drop to my knees. There, quiet, hunched over in the high grass, fly rod in hand, I paused to get my bearings. Suddenly something made me look up. There, in the direction from which I had come, between blades of grass masking my presence, was a lone wolf no more than fifty yards away majestically loping toward me, bounding through the tall grass. I froze where I was, aware only of my beating heart, my shallow breath. He continued closer, did not see or smell my presence until close enough for me to nearly touch his small black nose— the tip of his tongue, his bottom teeth barely visible. He froze for a few seconds, our eyes glued to each other, a time that felt much longer, until, emitting a soft yelp, he turned, tail between his legs, fled back the way he'd come. In that brief suspended moment, there was no grass, no meadow, no stream, no pool, no trout. There was only the sky, our eyes, our breath. For that moment, we were there naked— an infinitesimally small part of the whole, the whole of creation, a small, small part of the All.

Something happened to me that afternoon in a meadow by a stream south of Yellowstone. The feeling remains with me all these nearly 70 years—sometimes buried within, sometimes bursting consciously forth.

—Edwin Child, RESIDENT

BEHOLD, A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW

Matthew 13:3

Whenever I read the parable of the sower and the seeds, I apply this parable to myself, and I become the soil. Too often, I turn a deaf ear and the good deed that I might do falls by the wayside. Sometimes I accept the challenge with good intentions, accomplish little for loss of interest, and I become the stony soil. Often my enthusiasm for an undertaking accepted with great expectation, soon wanes, and I become the thorny soil. But, once in a while, with God's help, I venture forth with joy and thanksgiving to bring forth good measure, and I become the good soil.

When I obey God's command – *"Be still and know that I am God"* – feel his presence and listen for his word, I am able to change the stony, thorny soil into good and productive earth.

Thanks be to God.

— Martha Michaux, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. VII

Thursday Second Week of Lent

MARCH 20, 2025

JER. 4:9-10,19-28

PSALM 71

JOHN 5:19-29

AN AMAZING GOD

Do you ever sit and recall the many gifts God has given you on your life's journey? I love it. My friend, Becky, and I were in nurses training together. We had both been called by God to go to foreign countries as missionaries. After graduation, Becky went to Korea, and I went to Congo Africa which was near the rainforest where I met Elizabeth. I forgot my Bible for Bible study one night, so Elizabeth loaned me hers. When I opened it, my eyes fell on Becky's name on her prayer list. Elizabeth said she was in a church talking about missions while she was on furlough, and a little girl came up to her and said, "I think God wants me to be a missionary." Elizabeth put Becky's name on her prayer list and had been praying for her all those years in Africa near the rainforest. God gave me the blessing of telling Elizabeth that Becky had gone to Korea. One year, Becky and I met in the States when she was on furlough. Again, God gave me the blessing and gift to tell her Elizabeth had been praying for her in Congo near the rainforest all these years.

Sometimes I'm sure I miss God's gifts, because I am caught up in other things. I need to remind myself to "Be still and know he is God." What a wonderful God that he would trust us with his gifts. God sent his greatest gift of all.

— Pam Lane, RESIDENT

Friday Second Week of Lent

MARCH 21, 2025

JER. 5:1-9
PSALM 69:1-8
JOHN 5:30-47

RESPOND TO THE TAPPING

One day, I realized I was living my life by two words – “attitude” and “gratitude.” Those two words grew in importance to me. I began to tell friends and staff – they wanted to use them also. When you look in the mirror first thing in the morning, you have the control of what you can make of your day – good, happy, helpful, all kinds of lovely things. Then sit quietly in your room, and thank the Lord for his blessings. Show your gratitude with a prayer. We all have so much to be grateful for.

— Alma Bingham, RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. XXI

Saturday Second Week of Lent

MARCH 22, 2025

JER. 5:20-31

PSALM 75

JOHN 7:1-13

A HOUSE OR A HOME?

In 2024, we packed up the house I grew up in. My mother wanted a house that was smaller, on one floor, and easier to maintain. My siblings and I supported her and were grateful she made that decision herself.

As we packed things up, moved furniture out, and gathered for some of our last big family meals, we shared stories. We laughed. There were moments of silence for the heavier memories. And we were joined by those who had gone before.

I will miss that house. Although I grew up in that house, now it will be someone else's home. And I will still have a home. My home is not a building. My home will always be where my family is.

The walls may change, the address will be different, but one thing remains the same: home is where the heart is.

— David Curtis, PASTORAL CARE

GRATITUDE

During the course of my lifetime, this “older” person learned more than I’d cared to about the emotions that accompany that life. Joy. Sorrow. Pain. Anger. Regret. Guilt. Gratitude.

The dark times we pass through are obviously the difficult times. At some point, I came to realize that often the things I saw as the great, dark places were the product of my mental attitude after a pretty long involvement with “life.” I think I finally “get” what is a pretty important lesson – the understanding of gratitude.

That lesson began at a Thursday Eucharist at Westminster Canterbury when the celebrating priest suggested keeping a daily “gratitude diary.” Well, how tricky could that be? It’s not. In fact, that simple exercise has opened so many doors to me to realize that for so many things that had just slid by me before – my angst/anger/pain/whatever – was largely due to my attitude at the moment.

The daily entry into my “gratitude notebook” has now become an important part of closing down each day. Simply looking over the accumulating variety of past days also proves how much I have to be thankful for and how often I failed to realize that. That’s been a great leveler of the field of life as well as a true acknowledgment of genuine gratitude.

A somewhat surprising side effect for me was better understanding the sometimes heavy loads that other people carry and the grace with which they bear these loads. You’d never know, with some folks, that they’ve anything but jollies to carry, and it turns out it is because of gratitude.

– Sandra Shirey, RESIDENT

Monday Third Week of Lent

MARCH 24, 2025

JER. 7:1-15
PSALM 80
JOHN 7:14-36

LISTEN CAREFULLY

Do you hear many times daily the hurried comment:
“Have a Good Day?”

Have you ever wondered if any of these comments have any meaning for those expressing them, or for that matter, any of those to whom they are addressed? You know what? I hear each one coming my way and somehow try to apply them to my life. Though perhaps glibly said, it feels good that someone is making the effort to pass along such a pleasant thought. If we listen carefully, could this verse from St. Matthew, Chapter II, have more meaning for us?

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

With fervor, we could give a deeper meaning to a trivial passing comment.

— “Sunny” Adams, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. VII

LENTEN STUDY AND LENTEN LIGHT

I have understood for some time that the Lenten season is a time for personal study and reflection just as Jesus used his 40 days and nights in the wilderness for self-discernment before beginning his ministry. We mere humans have scripture to use for this purpose.

There is a Collect attributed to Thomas Cranmer and used traditionally in England for the second Sunday in Advent which I have often felt is misplaced, being in my thinking, more appropriate for the Lenten season. It reads:

“Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear then read, mark, learn and inwardly digest these, that by patience and thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.”

I believe it is necessary to not only read, but to study and attempt to understand those things which are required of us to work on as part of our call from our Baptismal vow. And doing just that, we are better served to make that effort in the quiet of the Lenten season rather than the hustle bustle of the days of Advent right after “Black Friday” until Christmas Day!

It is my contention that from the beginning of Lent, a season of shorter days in the somewhat darker months of the year, we should study scripture to provide us with LIGHT because that light, in these days of darkness, can give us HOPE.

There is a hymn which to me is so instructive – It begins – “I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus.” And ends – “Shine on my heart, Lord Jesus.” So rather than giving something up this Lent, I want to take on some quiet reflective study which will help me to see the light which I need so much in my life to know that there is hope.

“Shine on my heart, Lord Jesus!”

– Cabell Chenault, RESIDENT

Wednesday Third Week of Lent

MARCH 26, 2025

JER. 8:18- 9:6
PSALM 119:97-8
JOHN 8:12-20

BE STILL AND KNOW

Still is such an odd little word with multiple meanings, I know
But the “still” that I am seeking today Is the stillness of letting go.

The stillness of quiet. The stillness of peace.

No longer striving. The still of release.

So today’s prayer is this:

Lead me by waters still and let me be used

As you will.

As you will.

Amen.

—Anne B. Tribble, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. IX

WHO GETS TO SHARE YOUR WORLD?

“People who are decent and kind get to share my world. Everyone else can take a seat.”*

These words, written by advice columnist Amy Dickinson, were meant to guide an individual who was having relationship problems. As a fan of “Ask Amy,” I saved this column in a file marked “Friendship.”

The Bible has quite a bit to say about friendship. One of the most inspiring stories on the topic is that of Jonathan, David’s best friend and brother-in-law. Widely considered a hero, Jonathan was known for his courage, deep love, loyalty, integrity and faith in God. He even defied his own father, King Saul, to save David’s life and ensure his kingship (1 Samuel, Chapters 18, 19 and 20). To this writer, Jonathan set impossibly high standards for being a good friend.

With humility and gratitude, I marvel at having Jonathan-like friends. Each one is unique. Several are lifelong and include kin; others have stuck close for decades; a few are fairly new; and some are in heaven. Within the bounds of our respective relationships, all of them consistently reflect[ed] the fruits of the Holy Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5: 22-23). Moreover, what a friend we have in Jesus, who grants us forever friends, starting with the presence of himself every moment of every day.

Amy Dickinson would approve of the friends who share my world. Who gets to share yours?

Let’s give thanks and pray for our friends during Lent and always.

— Susie Frazer, RESIDENT

* (“Ask Amy,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, June 20, 2023, C4).

Friday Third Week of Lent

MARCH 28, 2025

JER. 11:1-8, 14-20

PSALM 88

JOHN 8:33-47

“MUST BE JESUS!”

I was on the elevator going to visit friends in Health Care. A very attractive aide, new to me, got on the elevator and said, “Good morning. How are you?”

I said, “I couldn’t be happier.”

The aide looked at me with a big smile and said, “Ah! Must be Jesus.”

You know, I had never had anyone tell me that my happiness was because of Jesus. (Most people attribute it to sudden good fortune, hearing from a special friend or something like that.) I’ll never forget the good feeling that the young lady’s comment gave me. It reminded me of one of my favorite scripture verses: Psalm 34:5, “Look to Him and be radiant.”

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if folks could see Jesus in us every day – and tell us so?

— Marguerite Wingo, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. I

MAUNDY THURSDAY MEMORY

I had just learned that my beloved 102-year-old Aunt Martha Thomas was not supposed to survive the night. Tears trickled down my face as I lamented life without her love, and tears intensified as I conducted the evening service commemorating the sorrowful agony and death of Jesus. Facing a three hour drive to Richmond, I prayed persistently that I could arrive at Westminster Canterbury's Health Care in time to pray with her and hold her hands before she died. This petition was answered: I arrived two hours before she expired late Maundy Thursday 2011. Although she was sedated, I hope she sensed my expressions of love and remembered all I had shared with her the previous week. Then I pondered if her passing on Maundy Thursday had symbolic significance for the way she had lived life.

I reread the story of the Last Supper: "When Jesus had given thanks, he broke the bread and said, "This is my body that is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me...." Aunt Martha spent her life remembering Jesus. She helped found River Road Church (Baptist), she attended Sunday School and worship every week until she turned 100, and she regularly attended the Westminster Canterbury Richmond Sunday vesper services.

I also recalled that on Maundy Thursday Jesus had washed his disciples' feet saying, "If I, your lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." Since I had just washed the feet of two parishioners during worship, I remembered that from 1976 to 2008 Aunt Martha had weekly washed feet in a different way of service by visiting people in health care in response to Jesus' words at the Last Supper, "I give you a new commandment that you love one another."

— Rev. Dr. Art Thomas, RESIDENT

Fourth Sunday in Lent

MARCH 30, 2025

JER. 14:1-9; 17-22

PSALM 66

MARK 8:11-21

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

“Count your blessings. Name them one by one. Count your many blessings. See what God has done.”

Do you remember that good old song?

I have been blessed since the day I was born to two wonderful Christian parents and to be born in America.

As a child of the Depression, I was blessed to feel the love that surrounded me as I was growing up – to be able to run into the house without using a key, to catch a bus downtown to the movies and not have any fear that someone would harm me – to skate around Byrd Park Fountain Lake at night with other teenagers who respected their parents and would be back home at the time their parents expected them.

As the years went on, there were many trials and tribulations. I was blessed because God used them to make me a stronger person giving me compassion, tolerance, understanding, patience and love for others.

Now, in my golden years, he has truly blessed me by giving me divine guidance to come to Westminster Canterbury to be in all these beautiful surroundings and meeting these wonderful people.

Yes, I’m still counting my blessings one by one.

— Elva Bell, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. II

Monday Fourth Week of Lent
MARCH 31, 2025

JER. 16:10-21
PSALM 89:1-8
JOHN 6:1-15

THANKING GOD

As I awoke one morning
And looked across the way
My heart filled with joy
Seeing the beauty of the day.
I did not forget these were gifts from God,
The earth, the birds, and living things in the sod.
So gratefully in silence there.
I offered God my morning prayer:

I thank you Lord for our many blessings of
Life, of love and to pursue happiness.
As you guide me in all things, I pray I will listen to you and
live my life to love others as myself.

Psalm 136:1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
His love endures forever.

— Jo Ann Wicker O'Hara, FORMER RESIDENT
Reprinted from Vol. XVIII

THE WEEK MY MOTHER DIED

I came home after a long week. My sister Mary had left a voicemail. “Call me. It is urgent.”

I was tired of complaints from my sister who lived three miles from our mother. She and my mother fought constantly. Mary often wanted me to come out to fix whatever was the problem; our mother’s refusal to take her pills on schedule (resulting in two trips to the emergency room in ten days), blackmailing the alcoholic caretaker, and trying to fire the aides she called her “wardens.”

Mary said, “Mom is dying. You should come out.”

I called Mom to tell her I was coming. She said, “Why?” I said, “Mary said that you were having a hard time.” She said “That’s not true. Come anyway. We can go out to lunch.” I hung up, felt stupid and annoyed.

On Tuesday, the pain in my mother’s body finally broke through. Mom was like a wild animal – shaking and crying and panting. My sister called the oncologist in Seattle. He said, “I will need to see her first before giving opioids.” Mary slammed down the phone, called the local doctor, who saw Mom immediately, and gave her pain medication.

I got the information as I was boarding a plane and was grateful that my feisty sister was on site.

I got to Mom’s house at 2 a.m. She was awake, not in pain, and wanted to hold my hand.

That night Mom went into a coma. At one point, she woke up briefly, saw me, and said: “My joy.” Mom never woke up again. On Friday night, she died.

Mary said: “I think Mom knew this was Holy Week, because she died on Good Friday.”

Each year during Holy Week, I revisit this sacred journey: grateful for my feisty sister, for Mom’s final blessing, and the honor of witnessing this fierce matriarch going home to God.

– Elspeth McClelland, RESIDENT

WHEN THE BAD DAYS OUTWEIGH THE GOOD DAYS

Have you ever prayed to God and thanked Him for providing you with shelter, food, a job? Have you ever thanked Him for your good health, strength, a sound mind and body?

As we remember previous years, we are only shown death, depression, earthquakes, cheating spouses, oil spills, increases in unemployment, and floods. The TV, news, and radio focus so much on the bad, we are left to wonder where the good was. It would seem the bad days truly do outweigh the good ones. So what do people mean when they pray and thank God for their good days outweighing their bad days?

I would like to challenge everyone to look over their life. Think about the trials and heartaches you have been through. Afterwards, think about how you felt after those difficult times were over. How did you feel then? I'd like to think those terrible times we may have gone through, although significant, made us stronger. They made us realize God's infinite power as well as His grace and mercy. Whatever we may have gone through God was by our side guiding us, comforting us, holding us in His loving arms. Let us focus on the world joining together to provide help when tragedy hit. Let us focus on the giving spirit shown for families who lost their possessions due to fire. Let's thank God for giving us one more day to help someone else. As we think about the future, let us all remember no matter what we go through, He will always see us through it. Maybe then we can truly be thankful for our good days outweighing our bad days.

— Vanessa Perry, PASTORAL CARE

Reprinted from Vol. 14

Thursday Fourth Week of Lent

APRIL 3, 2025

JER. 22:13-23

PSALM 69:1-8

JOHN 6:41-51

FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS,
THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO

If someone were to visit my apartment, he would assume that I did not live alone.

Despite “all the stuff,” it’s just me. Everything has a story behind it or an event. It could be a simple Christmas gift or a bargain I just could not resist.

In the passage from Matthew, Jesus reminds me that I cannot take these things to Heaven. During this Lenten season, I must remember that He is really all I need - my Main Source.

It is important for me to “seek first His Kingdom” and all the other “stuff” will be added unto me as well.

Matthew 6:33

— Cybil Faulks, FORMER CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER EMPLOYEE

Reprinted from Vol. VI

Friday Fourth Week of Lent

APRIL 4, 2025

JER. 23:1-8
PSALM 102
JOHN 6:52-59

CARING

We all should care for one another,
And pray for one another.
Most of all, love one another,
And know that the Lord wants this for all of us
No matter who we are.
I love the Lord with my whole heart,
My whole heart said the Lord.
The Lord is our strength.
The Lord is love and caring.
— Yovandel Perkins, DINING

GOD'S PATIENT PRESENCE

"I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" Psalm 27:13-14

God has always been present to me, long before I was ready to embrace him. Looking back, I recall the moments vividly. Maybe a force that remains mysterious drew me to the glimpses of light amidst the darkness. I grew up in a home of two religious backgrounds—a Hungarian born Jewish father, a Syrian born Christian mother—but no practicing faith.

How did the daughter of an Episcopalian minister who lived around the block become my best friend? Why did I eagerly await lunchtime at my Presbyterian private school? Definitely not for the food, but for the blessings and prayers I never heard at home. What made the school Christmas pageant so special? Not the costumes or the candy but singing *Adeste Fideles* in Latin and listening to Luke's story of the birth of Jesus.

When my mother died during my teenage years, I experienced a deep need to have a religious service. With no church affiliation, how could I broach this with my atheist father? The only clergyman I knew, the father of my grammar school friend and still a neighbor, reappeared in my life.

Soon thereafter, amidst the turmoil of the late 1960s that made me feel uncomfortable at the neighborhood public high school, I found myself the only non-Catholic at a Catholic high school—and yet felt profoundly at home. There I read the Bible for the first time in my life and recited the Lord's Prayer with more conviction than the Pledge of Allegiance.

Another twenty years would pass before I would regularly attend church, marry, and be baptized at the age of thirty-nine. Now another decade later, I'm here at Westminster Canterbury, living the next chapter of my spiritual journey.

God is not only present to us. He is patient. He waited for me.

— Suzy Szasz Palmer, RESIDENT

Fifth Sunday in Lent

APRIL 6, 2025

JER. 23:16-32
PSALM 118
MARK 8:31- 9:1

STAYING YOUNG

Today, we found FIVE TIPS for staying young:

1. Your mind is not old, keep developing it.
2. Your humor is not over, keep enjoying it.
3. Your strength is not gone, keep using it.
4. Your opportunities have not vanished, keep pursuing them.
5. God is not dead, keep seeking him.

(John 10:10 – “abundant life”)

— Jeanne Wight, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. XVI

HEAVEN
THROUGH MY MOTHER'S EYES

Mom was a resident of an assisted living home in Brevard, N.C. about ten minutes away from my home. We had already buried my Dad. And, mom was wending her way through Alzheimer's, just as her mother had. She was smiling and happy, beloved by the staff. I was blessed that she took the happy path not the more frequent fork in the direction of anger.

She could no longer leave her bed and conversation was very limited. So, I read to her from a small book written by a pilot who had crashed, died and eventually returned to his body. He took a beautiful tour of heaven and involuntarily came back to this world, to write his book. Moved to tears, I told her that I wished that I could see what she was going to see.

The phone call to me announcing her pending death came late. I was entering the facility as the nurse said she had passed. That was not quite right. I learned that death is not an event but a process. As I was standing next to her, her eyes and jaw had closed. She was lying flat on her back, face upward. Then I turned and looked at her again. Her head was now turned facing me, beautiful light blue eyes focused behind me. The glow in her eyes and on her face convinced me that she had been able to grant my wish. She showed me heaven. I believe.

— Karen Zefting Alcorn, RESIDENT

AN OLD SAYING REVISITED

The entire concept of a Day of Gratitude, planned as it was at Westminster Canterbury in the fall, really resonated with me. When I concentrate on all the good that surrounds me, it's a good day, but some days my grievances, big or small, can feel so heavy they can be overwhelming.

Recently, I was told this story by a friend who was going through a rough patch and could not seem to shake off the sadness surrounding her. She began experimenting with a practice she had heard about, a practice of counting pennies.

On bad days, she sat down with a handful of pennies. She then recited the wrongs and sorrows that she felt. As she announced each of them, she would put a penny in a pile. The pile grew with each sadness or grievance.

She then began reciting the good things that had happened. "My dear friend called me to wish me a good day." "My spouse cooked dinner for us last night." "My daffodils are beginning to bloom." Each time she mentioned a good thing, she took a penny out of the sadness pile. Soon the pile of sorrows disappeared, and the friend had to begin adding new pennies to the pile of blessings.

The image of the stacks of pennies showed her in a very visual way that her pile of blessings far outweighed her sorrows. Her sadness began to lift.

All of us have losses and disappointments which can weigh us down. May we all be open to the great (and small) blessings that are ours each day and realize that our bucket of blessings is a full one, greater by far than our bucket of sadness?

Thank you, God, for this fine day!

"We must give thanks for this day and every day no matter how flawed. Bow your heads, give your gratitude to God and have faith in him, and in a better tomorrow." *Beneath a Scarlett Sky* by Mark Sullivan

— Marion Chenault, RESIDENT

Wednesday Fifth Week of Lent

APRIL 9, 2025

JER. 25:30-38
PSALM 119:145-8
JOHN 10:1-18

GOD AND GRIEF

Because I do not know any medicine for grief
but to let ourselves grieve.

Because I do not know any cure for sorrow
but to let ourselves sorrow.

...Because I do not know any solace
but to give ourselves into the love that will never cease to find us,
that will never lose its hold on us,
that will never abandon us to the sorrow
for which it holds the cure.

Jan Richardson, select verses from *The Cure for Sorrow*

Grief finds us all. A common human experience that somehow remains unknown, intangible and unique to each of us. There are no quick fixes, no way out but to let ourselves walk the road of grief. While on the journey of grief, we must remain open to support and keep our eye on the love that carries us when we can no longer walk ourselves. It is a journey that is lonely, yet we are never alone.

Lent and grief are both painful journeys through darkness. As we join Jesus on his journey to the cross, we are given a new kind of affirmation, of understanding of our own pain. The God who lived, who breathed and ate, who wept at the death of his friend, who experienced deep suffering and death - that is the God who understands our grief because he has felt it too.

God meets us where we are, through friends and family, through our faith communities, and through every tiny glimpse of hope and light we can find. The love of God and those on this journey with us are what never cease to find us, never abandon us, and offer us what solace they can along the way.

— Jenny te Velde, PASTORAL CARE

SHALL I SEE HIM?

My great-grandmother was a compelling presence in my life. She died well before I was born, but as a child I was often compared to her. Like her, I enjoyed reading and writing poetry and like her, I was always quick to instruct everyone around me what would be best to do in any and all situations.

As I matured, I turned to her poetry to admire her use of intricate rhyme schemes. Much later, I printed the letters between my great-grandfather and her which gave vivid accounts of the battles raging around them at “The Bloody Angle” where they lived near Spotsylvania Courthouse.

Not many weeks before she went away, realizing that the end was not far distant, she wrote the following poem. I read it at my mother’s and also my aunt’s funerals.

Besides sharing her name, her manner, her love of poetry, I, also, these days share her question:

Shall I see him? Shall I see him?
When I cross the border line?
Face to face with awe to greet him,
Jesus Savior, Lord divine?

All my earthly aspirations,
Full of evil, flecked with sin,
I shall drop them at the portal
If he bids me enter in?

If he bids me! He will bid me,
Such as I he came to save,
‘Twas for sinners trusting in him
On the cross his life he gave.

— MHHG, 1912

— Marty Glenn Taylor, RESIDENT

EXPERIENCING LENT

To appreciate Lent, we must look back to Christmas. The Son of God took on human life and was born into this world just as we were. He was destined to live among the people of that time, and experience humanity, even as we do today, with one great exception. He would not sin. Further, he was born without the stain of original sin, because he was born, not of man, but of God. And even though Jesus would be tempted in all ways even as we are, he relied on his human powers to resist sin, and therefore became a perfect man, sinless before his Father in heaven. Thus, there is only one name under heaven by whom mankind can find forgiveness, and this even while we are yet sinners. Because Jesus is in the Father, and the Father is in Jesus, God redeems mankind through his own reconciliation with us. Behold, a savior was born.

Conversely, to really appreciate the time of Christmas, we must absorb the season of Lent, because it is the trials of Christ, commemorated during Lent, that carve a path forward through the thicket of sinful temptation, to the joy of Easter morning. And Our Lord's mission of saving us began at Christmas, to the day of his crucifixion, when Christ bore up under horrendous suffering until he released his spirit to his Father, whereupon our Father in heaven raised his Son, our Lord, from earth, in such a way, through his glorified body, that death has no more dominion over Jesus. During this Lenten season, walk with Jesus on his way of suffering for our sake, by dwelling on the fact that all Jesus did, was for us, each one of us. It helps to periodically consecrate an hour or so during Lent to reflecting on Jesus' sufferings for our sake, so that we, too, by faith in the Son of God, will attain glorified bodies, to the eternal praise of the Father. Reading through the stations of the cross is a very effective way to do this.

— Harry Edwards, RESIDENT

TRAVELING TOGETHER

In Kate Bowler's daily meditation book, *Have a Beautiful Terrible Day*, there is one section centered on Lent. And in particular, there is one reflection which spoke to me, "Love one another deeply from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22 b NIV) For some time, I have been thinking a great deal about community.

I considered myself blessed to be a member of the Westminster Canterbury community. I see us traveling together during this challenging time in our lives and in the world. I believe that to live the words of Jesus, "love your neighbor as yourself", community is where it happens.

Supporting one another is the call I hear. This means being present to others with kind words, a smile, an invitation, a shared experience, a listening ear. As Kate Bowler says,

Link my life to others
so that their worries
become my own.
Give me errands I don't want
which ease the burdens of others.

During this Lenten season, we are all reminded of the Father's great love that brought Jesus among us. It is not always easy to live in community, but I believe it is only through daily contact with others that we have the chance to grow into our love for others. The opportunity to open our hearts wider is a gift from God.

The more we love, the more love there is. Love multiplies love. In this small corner of the world, small acts of love among us is a positive thing. It is the one way of speaking out against the meanness and ugliness present all around us today. So I say, "thank you God" every day for this community as we travel together.

— Kay Remick, RESIDENT

A LAMENT FOR PALM SUNDAY

Luke 19:35 - 44

As Jesus came near and saw Jerusalem, he wept over it, and said, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." In Luke, Jesus weeps over the city on his way to the cross.

I am writing in Advent, when there is much in our world to compel weeping: destruction in Ukraine, devastation in Gaza with the deaths of children and the sick; and stubborn continuation in our wealthy land of homelessness, and of people untreated, even murdered, who are mentally ill. Wretchedness abounds where'er we turn our eyes. How long, O Lord?

So much darkness demands that I question how God can permit his beloved creation to unravel into pervasive suffering. An answer is suggested in this story. The One who is celebrated on Palm Sunday is on his way to suffering and death. Only a week after his joyous welcome into Jerusalem, Jesus is tortured and killed on a bloody cross. In his death, he joins the multitude of victims in our world, as he has joined us in our weeping.

I was in a bible study in Scotland sixty years ago with people who had lived through World War II. The text was from Colossians where the Apostle declares that Christ is in all things and through all things. A woman who interrupted the reading scoffing: "Where was Christ in all that — in the death camps and crematoria of the Nazis — if he is in all things?" Immediately, a man responded and said, "Where else would you expect to find him? He was right alongside them, in the ovens, in their suffering."

"Where can I go to to escape your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I climb the heavens you are there, there, too, if I lie in death." (Psalm 139)

Thanks be to God.

— Ben Sparks, RESIDENT

FROM THE HEART

One of the most significant things I have done in my almost five years here at Westminster Canterbury, was speak at my dear friend's funeral. He was one of the best, and I loved him. When his family asked me to speak, I was honored but did not know what I would say.

As the day approached, I could not find the words to record on paper. I did not know what would lie ahead of me.

When it was my time to speak, I stood and spoke from the heart. My words were true and honest. That is the best I could do for him, because that is how he and I always spoke- honest words from the heart.

It was so hard to lose him, but I am proud of what I did for him that day. That is how friendships should be- always from the heart.

— Spottswood Hall, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. XV

ON INNOCENT SUFFERING

“Why does God let innocent people suffer?” An all powerful God who is love would not let that happen, right?

The reason the question is so difficult is because, I believe, there is no answer. We cannot understand why, because there is no explanation. The Ancients believed suffering was the punishment for sin. “He must have done something wrong.” So why do babies suffer? For the sins of their parents? God can’t be so cruel, can he? At least not the God I believe in. More frequently today, we hear “It is God’s will, and we poor humans don’t know enough to understand God’s purpose.” This is a little more comforting, but still doesn’t satisfy me. How could a loving God cause little children to be murdered, whatever his purpose?

After reading the book of Job again, I end up in the same place Job did. Bad things happen. Sickness, hurricanes and other natural disasters, and human inhumanity, happen in life. They are part of the world God created. He does not do them- they are just part of life on this planet. We can wonder, but, like Job, come to the realization that we don’t and can’t know why. Pain and suffering are part of life and add to its fullness. As the old folk song says, “Without the hurt, the heart is hollow.”

The faithful are subject to suffering and death just like the faithless. What people of faith do have, is the comfort that their God is with them, that he cares for them and that through the communion of faith their burdens are shared with others in their faith community. In times of sorrow, nothing helps like love, family and friends coming together. In such times, God is there. Palpably there. The heart is full, even though heavy. The belief that love conquers all gives us the strength to carry on, and despite the suffering, live on in love and thankfulness, continuing to understand that whatever befalls, life is wonderful and a blessing.

— John W. Bates, III, RESIDENT

THIS WONDERFUL PLAY

The joys of Christmas are succeeded by one's preparations for LENT- of course! We don't appreciate one without the other as hard as we try. Imagine how dull one would be without the other. And how lucky we are to share both seasons in this wonderful play. Then the very next step: Easter around the corner! Such a thrill, the Lenten preparation of relearning the significance of Easter eggs and the urgency to church attending with the changed attitude of the future! "The Lenten Journey" leads us directly to where we need to be to appreciate Easter fully, together with our friends and family as we all recover from the excitement of Christmas and get ready for the gratitude and love Easter calls for.

With love for this and many many Happy Easters to you all.

— Ilse Fuller, FORMER RESIDENT

Reprinted from Vol. XV

THIS IS THE DAY

This morning, the daily online posting of the Upper Room was absent. I looked back through deleted emails to find one I had discarded because Janice had not gotten up in time for us to have breakfast together, so we had missed our daily devotions.

The first one I found in the “deleted” file was based on “This is the day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it.” This was the text on a banner Janice made for our wedding celebration 48 years ago. Still, in the present, it feels even more appropriate as I am surprised to find myself arising each morning not with dread at my aging but with immediate thoughts of what the day might hold in the way of learning something new in the studio or working to complete a project that has grasped my attention. Who could conclude anything but that the day should be rejoiced in? That rejoicing is the only suitable response to the arrival of this new day.

What a blessing each day brings. What a gift to savor the opportunities for creativity this place offers. What a surprising discovery of sensitive and encouraging staff who seem to take pride in exposing us to fresh insights and new experiences on a daily basis. Thanks be to God!

— J. Harlan McMurray, RESIDENT

ALRIGHT, LET'S GO

Isaiah 41:10

Psalms 46:10

Philippians 4:6-7

Feelings of anxiety are familiar to me. I tend to be a planner, and I like to think that I know what to expect and can prepare accordingly. So naturally, I was feeling anxious before becoming a father in October 2023.

I had an inspiring dream about a week before our daughter, Phoebe, was born. My younger brother, Sam, and I were planning to travel to outer space. Looking at a large map of stars, I pointed to its center and said, “let’s go here.” Sam flipped the map over, pointed to a far corner filled mostly with unknown space, and said, “We’re going here.” I said, “Alright, let’s go.” I awoke feeling a mixture of awe and comfort.

Remarkably, Phoebe was born on October 20th, Sam’s birthday. I feel the dream represents an invitation to embrace the unknown. Since then, there have been many surprises and joys I could never have anticipated. I’m learning to trust in the joy of watching her become herself, a process that continues to unfold beyond my plans or predictions.

I am learning that life rarely follows our carefully drawn maps. Instead, God calls us to venture into less charted territories, those spaces where faith matters more than understanding. Scripture promises that through life’s greatest transitions—from welcoming new life to saying final goodbyes—God’s steadfast love never wavers. This sacred truth can light our way even when the path disappears into fog. And so, I pray not just for myself but for all of us: May our hearts and minds be open. May we walk with courage into mysteries that lie ahead. May we trust that God’s presence goes with us into every unknown.

— Jay Morgan, PASTORAL CARE

DIDN'T YOU KNOW?

Luke 2:49-50
Hebrews 2:16-18

Intriguing words in The Nicene Creed read that Jesus was “very God of very God and very man of very man.” I have been thinking hard in this Lenten season about how Jesus experienced this. How and when did this first century Jewish child become aware of his special role in the world? Or was he an adult when he developed this consciousness? As far as we know Jesus left no autobiographical account, nor do we have anything near a complete biography.

Did Jesus’ mother tell him about her ecstatic experience surrounding his conception and birth? If so, would that explain his wanting to know more, as evidenced in the story in St. Luke’s gospel of his questioning the learned teachers about the significance of Jewish biblical texts? If Mary had divulged to him the revelation she had received before his birth, why should she have been surprised that he was wanting to know more about what lay ahead for him?

Christian writers, as the author of the work, Hebrews, pursued the humanity of Jesus as a source of enormous comfort and assurance to followers, that they had an ideal human who lived life in the same, ordinary way that they did, and therefore understood, empathized, and because he was also, to use the later term, “very God of very God,” aided them.

Because of this “god/man” we can join in singing with St. Bernard, “O Jesus, ever with us stay, make all our moments calm and bright; chase the dark night of sin away; shed o’er the world thy holy light.”

— Dr. William E. (Bill) Blake, RESIDENT

THE EASTER MESSAGE DELIVERED

As a boy growing up in Allentown, Pennsylvania, I attended an Evangelical and Reformed church, replete with four beautiful stained-glass windows above the altar, an excellent organist who played with authority and passion, and a beloved pastor who, to my young eyes and ears, was indistinguishable from God himself during worship.

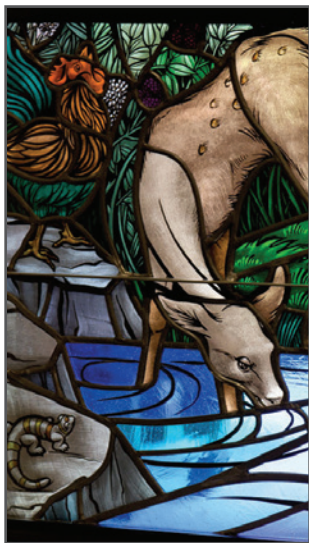
Not so much physically—our pastor was of average height, and slightly overweight, with precisely two chins resting comfortably on his clerical collar. But the wisdom and confidence in his eyes and his impassioned baritone voice set him apart from anyone I had ever known.

My most vivid remembrances of him are drawn from the portion of Sunday worship dealing with confession and absolution. In those days our church used the Lord's Day liturgy of the Reformed Church, which dated back to the mid-1800s. Each week, we confessed our sins (we actually called them sins back then). Then our pastor (using his God-voice) intoned:

Hearken now unto the comforting assurance of the grace of God, promised in the gospel to all who repent and believe. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live...Unto as many of you, beloved brethren, who truly repent of your sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with full purpose of new obedience, I announce and declare, by the authority and in the name of Christ, that your sins are forgiven in heaven, according to his promise in the Gospel, through the perfect merit of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

His voice, saying these words, is forever etched in my memory. For causing this Easter message to live in me, I thank you, Dr. Renoll.

— Bob Clewell, RESIDENT



WESTMINSTER CANTERBURY RICHMOND

was founded in 1971 by the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches and opened in 1975. As a fully-accredited continuing care retirement community, Westminster Canterbury ensures the best life possible for more than 800 residents. Vibrant Pastoral Care programming has always been part of our community and continues through worship, education and spiritual

exploration that is respectful of many faith traditions. Residents also enjoy a wide variety of cultural programs in our Sara Belle November Theater, Spiritual Center and Center for Creative Living. Each year, thanks to generous donors to Westminster Canterbury Foundation's Fellowship Program, around 100 seniors-in-need receive life care – housing, meals, medical expenses and all the vital living Westminster Canterbury has to offer. We welcome all.

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