

# A Lenten JOURNEY

2021



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A COLLECTION OF DEVOTIONS  
VOLUME XXIV



# Preface

For twenty-four years, “The Lenten Journey,” has been a blessing and comfort to our Westminster Canterbury Richmond community—and to the Richmond area. Our staff and residents have stories to tell, faith to share, thoughts to ponder, and challenges to issue. The Lenten Journey is a place where that can happen.

The submissions for this edition were written last Fall. Never before has a year in our lifetimes been so “Lenten,” or as “Advent,” for that matter, as 2020. Our journeys have been tough, and yet there has been joy. We have walked down a very unknown path, and yet we know that Jesus Christ journeys with us and is showing us the way. Lent 2020 was when the world screeched to a startling halt, our knuckles white from holding on. Lent 2021 is our declaration of hope: that we are always moving toward fulfillment, toward redemption, toward new life.

May this year’s Lenten Journey draw you into a new world of expectation and deepened faith—a world where death is defeated, and new life made real.

— Rev. Dr. Lynn McClintock,  
DIRECTOR PASTORAL CARE

# Introduction

## TRAVELING LIGHT

As a child, whenever it was time to pack our bags for a family vacation, my mother would remind us of her tried and true packing advice: put out all the clothes you want to take, and then choose half of them to actually pack. It was hard to do – what if you didn’t take that one extra pair of shoes and then you needed them? – but once a trip began, whether it was a vacation to the beach or backpacking in Europe – I hardly ever wished I’d brought something that didn’t make the cut. It turns out journeys are often easier when we travel light.

The forty days of Lent reflect the time Jesus spent in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry, immediately after his baptism. Jesus appears to have traveled very light, for in the wilderness his activities were limited to fasting and facing temptation. If we approach this Lenten season as a journey of faith when we might reflect on what feeds us and what tempts us, it might be wise to give some thought before we begin to what we want to take on the journey, and, I would suggest, less is more.

It would be enough to carve out time each day to lighten our loads, to lay down our burdens, to “be still and know that [God] is God.” I am confident the reflections in these pages will help us do just that. And remember, a journey is a good time to be flexible and open, to expect the unexpected, to discover the wonder of something new, and to experience God’s presence, power, and love in a whole new way.

Wishing you all the blessings of the journey,

– Amy Starr Redwine

PASTOR/HEAD OF STAFF

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# Ash Wednesday

JOEL 2:1-2, 12-17  
PSALM 51:1-7  
MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

## ASH WEDNESDAY 2021

I invite you to a modest Ash Wednesday, written in a fearful time, while the COVID-19 plague rages, during an unsettled and unsettling Presidential election – written two weeks before Advent, 2020. We will likely observe the day alone, with no one save ourselves to mark our foreheads with the sign of an ashen cross. We are daily aware of our mortality, if not our sin; every day brings new evidence that we are pilgrims who for once cannot fix anything and who endure with as much faith and hope as we dare. All the conditions and signs agree, this will be a modest Ash Wednesday.

I turned to the scriptures appointed for this day for help, and, from these readings, to the prophets Joel and Isaiah, Psalm 51, Paul's recounting the hardships he has borne for the gospel's sake, and, finally, to Jesus's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. They invite us to a modest observance: "Return to me even now, says the Lord, with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing," cautions Joel. And Jesus: "Beware of practicing your piety before others . . . when you give alms, do not sound the trumpet. . . when you pray, go into your room and shut the door. . . and when you fast, do not look dismal, put oil on your head and wash your face. . ." Besides modesty, the readings invite humility. We depend upon God and the Spirit to encourage us and keep us safe. Finally, no matter our circumstances, we are called by Isaiah to relentless service: "Is this not the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice. . . to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?"

I close with the words of St. Augustine rendered as a prayer: "O Lord, keep our hearts restless until at last they find their rest in you."

— Benjamin Sparks, RESIDENT

## WHAT ARE YOU REALLY THINKING?

What are people really thinking during these unbelievable days? I don't ask what they're saying, what fortifying biblical texts they're quoting, or what faces they're wearing, but what thoughts are they conveying, if all the censoring devices are down?

I have a hunch they may tell you something like the following: "No one knows what is going to happen next, and no one can tell what will happen after we die;" ... "It is good to be able to enjoy the pleasant light of day. Be grateful for every year you live. No matter how long you live, remember that you will be dead much longer. There is nothing at all to look forward to." ... "Useless, useless, said the Philosopher. It is all useless." Whoever "The Philosopher" was, we can appreciate his jolting honesty. When he wrote these words, maybe two centuries before Christ, there was no indication that he was facing the multitude of universal horrors engulfing us. Along with me in this awful time, maybe you have shared "The Philosopher's" outlook on life.

Of course, it is much easier to listen to this pessimistic assessment of life when we also have at hand an early Christian philosopher's "Alleluia Chorus" affirmations: "I have been put to death with Christ on his cross, so that it is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me," and "Don't be afraid of your enemies; always be courageous, and this will always prove to them that they will lose, and that you will win, because it is God who gives you the victory." We can be very grateful that the people who gathered and put ancient writings together as scripture included both appraisals of life. And thanks for Lent that forces us to ponder.

— Bill Blake, RESIDENT

Quotes above are from these Biblical writings respectively: Ecclesiastes 10:14, 11:7, and 12:8; Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 1:28, TEV.

*Friday after Ash Wednesday*

DANIEL 9:15-25A

PSALM 31

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

## LOVING GOD AND NEIGHBOR: MY GOAL FOR LIVING

When I teach in seminary, my students learn from me the major goals of the spiritual life; but as I have lived through the COVID-19 restrictions, I have found it harder to sense a lofty goal for each day.

Then I rediscovered the goal for my life in Matthew 22 – to love God and to love neighbor. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” I began to find meaning by making loving God and neighbor my goal for each day. Rather than feeling downcast, I found that I began to soar.

How do we love God? We begin by realizing that Jesus first loved us and called us to be his disciples and friends. To strengthen this love, I study scripture and writings of saints. I pray alone in silence, then encounter God through music, art and creation. During the COVID-19 restrictions, I seized the days of isolation as opportunities to tell God all the reasons I loved Him.

Love of God naturally leads to love of neighbor. Loving neighbors involves care and service, but, during the virus, I felt prevented from loving my neighbors. Previously, I would visit patients in hospitals and health care. I would teach, preach, lead small groups and volunteer. My efforts at serving were curtailed.

As I prayed about how to love my neighbor, I found I could still pray for people, send cards, phone them, write church history and teach by Zoom. By daily seeking ways of loving God and neighbor, I discovered a focus for purposeful living and an accomplishment of God’s destiny for my life.

– Art Thomas, RESIDENT

## AN UNEXPECTED GIFT

During COVID-19 restrictions last summer, several floor mates and I, masked and spaced, were chatting about our situation. We agreed that in such a stressful time even small acts of kindness were important. Thus, I've decided to write about one that happened to me.

For more than a year, I have been going to a dermatology surgeon every month for shots in my legs. I've chosen to have morning appointments, rather than late afternoon. Since the distance is 15 miles, I leave soon after 8 a.m. On this particular morning it was pouring, so I was not enthusiastic about getting up and out.

After checking in, Donna led me down the hallway to a waiting room. She said, "Is it true that you are called, 'Dusty?'" (on medical records I'm "Marion"). I said "yes," and she asked how I got that name. Trying to make an involved story brief, I said, "I got the nickname in college because, 'Stardust' is my favorite song." She, being much younger than I, didn't know it — nor of the composer Hoagy Carmichael. I told her that I still think it the best popular song ever written.

Before long, she returned with her phone and held it for me to listen. My heart swelled as I unexpectedly heard Artie Shaw playing the hauntingly beautiful notes of "Stardust" on his clarinet. She said "Nancy (the other receptionist) said, 'Don't do that, you'll make her sad.'" I replied, "Oh, no, I love it."

And suddenly the rain didn't matter, nor the painful shots I was about to receive, nor COVID-19 worries, as I was enveloped in nostalgia and happiness.

Later, I left with my still soggy umbrella, but with a smile on my face, thanking the Holy Spirit for this unexpected kindness and joy.

— Dusty Pritchett, RESIDENT



## FINDING GOD IN SILENCE

When people ask about my call to ministry, I tell them a story about a youth retreat at Massanetta Springs in Harrisonburg, Virginia, when we were asked in worship to take some time to walk around the property in silence to listen for God instead of always doing the talking. I didn't think that I could do it. I'm quite the talker. It was hard to separate from my friends at the conference. I will always remember the feeling of walking in silence, taking in the sights, sounds and smells of God's creation and feeling the presence of God. I didn't immediately embrace the call to ministry, but years later after graduating from college, without a plan for what would come next, I remembered that moment and I again took time to listen in the silence. God pointed me towards the Presbyterian School of Christian Education just down the street from Westminster Canterbury Richmond, and I found a wonderful connection of community and a call to educational ministry. Two years ago when I became restless, I listened again and found myself enrolling in Union Presbyterian Seminary. Those aren't the only times I have stopped talking in order to listen. When I am anxious and stressed, I know I need to stop talking and seek the presence of God in the silence. During Lent, I'm creating time and space for silence each day. It's not easy in a world that is full of distractions. It's not easy, because I'm still quite the talker. Lent is a good time to practice disciplines that aren't easy for us but that draw us closer to God. Let me know what you are trying, and we can journey together this year!—

Leigh Anne Ring, INTERN PASTORAL CARE

# *Monday First Week of Lent*

JOB 4:1-21  
PSALM 41  
EPHESIANS 2:1-10

## KIM'S ANGLES

What can I say about my residents and Westminster Canterbury Richmond? Well I know the halls of Westminster Canterbury will never be the same, but change is not always a bad thing. I meet new residents every day, and some of us become fast friends from the moment they get here until the end. They're a delight to talk to, always laughing at their own mistakes. Sometimes I see them in the hall and many would say "Did not have to see you today. You got my statement right this month. I have no questions. Well, maybe just one, I'll stop by later and talk to you about my declining balance plan so I can better understand."

Whenever they see me, they make me feel great. Their smiles and eyes light up to let me know the way they feel about me is genuine – never fake. We would talk in the halls and catch up if we had not seen each other in a while, and then they would hug me or pat me on the arm with a caring smile.

COVID-19 has changed a lot of things that we used to share, but I want you to know that I still care. To my residents, and yes, I call them mine – each are different, one of a kind. I want to say meeting you all is a blessing. I love your stories, your smiles and even your hard lessons. I hold on to the memories of residents past and present. Getting to know you all is a blessing. You make me feel like family, and I need that sometimes. So when I hear of how highly some of you think of me, I say to you – I think highly of you, too.

– Kim Briggs, ACCOUNTING

## *Tuesday First Week of Lent*

JOB 5:8-27  
PSALM 45  
1 PETER 3:8-18a

### JUST AS I AM

Prayer: “God help me to be as my mother raised me.”

I was raised by a mother who was a fifth grade teacher and tried her very best to teach her first child (me) to be perfect in every way. My daddy was relaxed and content (I guess) to let Mother be the leader in discipline, etc. I was the only child for years, so Mother had plenty of time to instill that perfectionism in me.

I thought everybody was perfectionistic. It wasn't until I was in junior high that I observed some of my classmates seemed to be very happy with their lives. They were relaxed. Meanwhile, I was getting more and more uptight, and that increased as I sometimes failed to meet Mother's goals for me.

As a young adult, I had headaches and insomnia. I was very hard on myself, and then I read an article on how God loves us, no matter what. He does love it when we try to meet his goals for us, but we don't go to hell when we are imperfect!

Interesting that I later became a psychiatric nursing instructor. I taught student nurses and each lesson I tried to teach my students was God teaching me He loved me, “Just as I am.” How ironic that praying for God's guidance, etc., helped me relax with Pat. I am not perfect in relaxing, Pat, but God is waiting to help me lessen my perfectionism.

Know God loves you and would like to see you love yourself.

Prayer: “Please God, let those who need this understand how this might relate to them.”

“Just As I Am.”

— Pat Culp, RESIDENT

THE WILDERNESS AS GRACE

I enjoy hiking, although I don't do it as much as I would like. While hiking in the woods, my mind slowly settles down, and all the items that vie for attention seem to recede into the background. As my mind quiets, I become more aware of the sounds around me. The sounds of birds singing, of squirrels barking, of leaves rustling. It is in these places that I am able to hear God more clearly.

Is this why the Spirit led Jesus to the wilderness? Was it there, after his baptism, that Jesus could hear God more clearly as Jesus began to spread the Good News?

In Luke's Gospel, we read that Jesus returns from the wilderness, still filled with the Spirit. God is there in the wilderness. God is there, in each of our wildernesses. God never leaves us.

May our wildernesses be places of blessing and of grace. May the wildernesses we traverse be places where we hear God more clearly. May your wilderness be the place where you find God again for the first time.

— David Curtis, PASTORAL CARE

FRIENDS NEEDING FRIENDS  
TO HELP EACH OTHER

When we are hungry, we need food; when one stops driving, she needs help. Resident Pat Williams and I have decided that we will use each other's strengths to accomplish our grocery shopping. God helps those who help others.

Fortunately, I still drive! We head to Libbie Market, and pray to find a handicap space. If so, I ask a stranger to bring me a cart, and Pat uses her cane.

We always share a lunch in their small café that allows us to be socially distanced. Our way of life has been curtailed, forcing us to be more isolated. So we use this time to socialize – talking about things that have changed our way of life at Westminster Canterbury Richmond and how glad we are to be there. Mental health is as important to us as our physical well-being.

Having finished our shopping, Pat has her groceries put in two paper bags, while I use plastic. This helps Pat make sure she knows the difference between our two bags.

Pulling my car beside the garage door, I pop the trunk, and Pat gets her rollator, and loads her groceries. She puts mine in a cart, and I add my crutch, and head for the card reader. Once the door opens, it's quite challenging for us to get through.

Pat leaves her groceries beside the second floor railing, and we both push the cart to my apartment. Steering an unruly cart into my kitchen, she unloads my groceries. Getting the empty cart out, Pat takes her food laden rollator and heads home. I return my cart with crutch, praying I encounter someone offering to intercede.

We laughingly comment to each other, how wonderful it is to use each other's strength to get a job done. God does help those who help themselves!

— Jane Neer, RESIDENT

LIFE LESSON

I am a northerner reared in Baltimore, MD, an only child raised by young Christian parents who were strict but demonstratively affectionate. Baltimore was a really segregated city. The only explanation for the separation, to my knowledge, was apparently just “color.”

I graduated from high school at age sixteen, two years too early for my intended RN school program, entering instead a program for Radiology techs to bide my time – thank heaven, what a life gift.

I was on E.R. call one evening for an accident victim. He was my first patient of color, 50ish, severely injured, bleeding profusely, in great pain, frightened, calling God to help him. Weeks later, post traction and surgery, I would try to visit him each afternoon and of course fell in love with him. When finally discharged, I gave him a kiss on the cheek and admonished him to stay safe.

In retrospect, the occurrence was a life changing lesson! My patient was black, and he was the first person of color with whom I really interacted. I learned a lot from him. He responded just as I would, bled red blood, cried tears in pain, called out to God in his fear. His “color” didn’t rub off. He was just like me. After all, God personally created both of us! How could I not love somebody who is important in so many facets of my life and loves me in return?

I think of Jesus, our Messiah. Doesn’t the Bible speak of his love for all of mankind. How can I do anything less?

– Elizabeth Little, RESIDENT

## BRIGHTEN THE CORNER WHERE YOU ARE

Matthew 5:14: “You are the light of the world”

“Brighten The Corner Where You Are,” is the name of an old hymn written by Charles H. Gabriel. The words were written by Ina Duley Ogdon. Its words tell us to not wait for some deed of greatness you may do. Do not wait to shed your light afar to the many duties ever near you now be true, brighten the corner where you are.

I am writing this in October 2020, in the corner where I am. We are still living in the time of a pandemic, wondering when things will be normal. We don't even know what normal is or will be. We ask ourselves: what we can do to brighten the corner where we are? What little things can we do to make someone feel a little better right where we are? How about taking time to really have a conversation with a new resident, to really listen to someone who is confused and doesn't know his or her way around the campus. Or to answer the phone to someone on the other end whom you know will talk a lot, but you stay on the line and try to listen. Giving of ourselves is something we all can do. Showing appreciation to our house cleaner or workman. Being patient with a new employee or one who has been around for quite a while. Thanking someone who has listened to us. Showing appreciation to those security guards who help keep us safe. Showing gratitude to the people who work here, and those who make policies for our betterment. We can give of ourselves.

The second and third verses of the song say, “Just above are clouded skies that your song may help to clear, let not narrow self your way debar, tho' into one heart alone may fall your song of cheer. Brighten the corner where you are.”

“Here, for all your talent, you may surely find a need. Here, reflect the bright and morning star. Even from your humble hand the bread of life may feed. Brighten the corner where you are.”

Let us love one another, and be thankful.

— Sally Maynard, RESIDENT

## *Second Sunday in Lent*

GENESIS 17:1-7, 15-16

PSALM 24

MARK 8:31-38

### NEVER FORGOTTEN

A few years ago, Sally Maynard asked me to play the piano for communion services in The Gables. Although I hadn't played for a service since 1972, I agreed, and she provided a copy of "Our Growing Years." Leafing through the hymnal, I thought, "I'm in over my head!" Then I came across the first hymn I had learned as a kid, "Sweet Hour of Prayer," and was surprised that I could still play it, albeit more slowly and stiffly. Those early years of lessons and playing hymns in church had imprinted the notes and technique in my fingers' memory, and they still knew what to do. Some things can never be forgotten.

God's love for us is far more deeply imprinted than any of our dim memories. He assures us of this in Isaiah 49:15-16: "I will not forget you. See, I engraved you on the palms of my hands." What a beautiful reminder of God's constant awareness of us. Our faces and names are always before Him.

Today, we can easily feel overlooked and forgotten. How comforting it is to know that we are etched on God's hands – remembered, cared for and loved.

— Susie Frazer, RESIDENT



## A LONG QUIET SUMMER

Hidden in evergreen and bamboo treetops, high above Westminster Canterbury gardens, a thousand million cicadas shared my late afternoons. Though I never saw them, hidden as they were, I learned their voices lauding sultry summer days. As I walked to Cochrane Pond, those raucous voices rose and fell, grinding out love songs, earsplitting chainsaw racket swirling over the campus.

Always there, never quiet, neighborhood cicadas became my late afternoon friends. By mid-summer, I looked forward to their discordant chorus of hope during those quiet, socially distanced days.

Cochrane Pond, my destination, was home to others sharing afternoons and early evenings. Along the path, goldfinches circled feeding stations above waving fountain grasses. Sparrows darted through trees. Mallard ducks honked their greeting—or ignored me—as they dipped, dived, and sailed over the water of their home. Direct descendants of Harwood Cochrane’s original flock, some swam in groups or alone, while others waddled along the footpath seeking snacks of bugs and seeds.

Occasionally a long-legged heron high-stepped from shadows under a pier along the water’s edge while, from his perch on the roof of the duck house, the unimpressed double crested cormorant turned his back, keeping the tip of his beak up in the air. In late summer, I was cheered by the arrival of the devoted, aristocratic couple, Ferdinand and Isabella, Canada geese, making Cochrane Pond their second home for many days. Though migrants, they were tolerated by the mallards, who are natives, after all, born and bred at Cochrane Pond. Mallards own the place.

As daylight waned, dusk settled into treetops, a rose-gold moon was faintly rising. Cicadas wound down their frantic buzzing, reluctant to turn nightfall over to soothing hymns of tree frogs and crickets for my reflective walk home.

Ours is a wonderful, wonderful world!

— Lucy Boswell Negus, RESIDENT AND RETIRED STAFF MEMBER

## THE MEMO: MOTHERHOOD

Months after getting married, my husband and I were extremely excited that we were expecting our first child. After his birth, I would soon learn that, “I didn’t get the memo.” Having a fairly easy pregnancy and working on my feet until the day of his delivery, I was in for a rude awakening as a new mom. The day of my son’s arrival, we were greeted by the physician who then explained that my child had a few medical concerns that we would have to follow up with a specialist when we left the hospital. I was hopeful that everything would be just fine, after all, it wasn’t anything major and we were able to take him home a few days later. The day we took my son home with us, he cried the entire car ride home, and we stayed up all night. I remember holding him in my arms and pacing the living room floor attempting to calm him down. Nothing worked. I constantly questioned if I was cut out for this mom stuff, and my most important concern was, “Why didn’t I get the memo?” No one told me how hard this would be. It wasn’t long before I was overwhelmed with doctors’ appointments, weekly therapy visits, and planning for a four hour surgery he would need when he turned one year old. This was all too much to handle too soon, and I hadn’t even started back at work. Fortunately, I wasn’t the only one. I had many of my residents and co-workers who shared their mommy stories and advice to keep me grounded. My support system was strong and encouraging. The years definitely went by fast, and my son has not let any of his medical issues hold him back. Needless to say, five years later getting the news of expecting my second child was a little scary, but I could finally say that this time I got the memo and read it thoroughly!

— Shakeela Webster, ACCOUNTING

# Wednesday Second Week of Lent

JEREMIAH 30:12-22

PSALM 72

JOHN 12:36-43

## A LIFE CHANGING EVENT

It was a day in 1956, two years after the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Earl Warren, had ruled to make segregation illegal. I was a sophomore at Westhampton College of the University of Richmond and had enrolled in the Political Science class of Dr. Spencer Albright, a highly respected professor. The court's action had made little progress in the south, much less in Richmond, my home since birth. However, there had been a considerable amount of discussion about it.

Dr. Albright had just opened a discussion of "Brown vs. Board of Education" when a young man in the class raised his hand. When Dr. Albright recognized him, the man began a tirade against the decision. The class was extremely attentive. When the student finally finished his remarks, Dr. Albright, still standing at the blackboard with chalk in hand, looked at us all and in his gentle but firm voice said, "Maybe the decision was wrong. Maybe there aren't any Christians."

His words rang so deeply in my soul that I heard nothing else in the class that day. I kept thinking, "All my life I have been in Sunday school learning scripture, in church hearing wonderful sermons, singing in the choir, playing hymns and yet, I have been matter of factly going along with the good people of my family and friends who accepted the customs of treating many of God's children very differently from the way we were living!"

Of course, Jesus loves each and every one of us equally! That one sentence, "Maybe there aren't any Christians," that day long ago changed my life forever. Thanks be to God!

— Nancy Bain, RESIDENT

MY FAVORITE PRAYER

We are fast approaching the Lenten season, Good Friday and glorious Easter, which brings me to my favorite prayer: “To love the Lord thy God with all my heart, soul and mind and the second is like unto you, that you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” This prayer has been in my heart all my life.

How blessed and thankful that I live at Westminster Canterbury which is my prayer every night for all the wonderful staff, employees and residents that make our life so safe and wonderful.

Blessings to all.

— Mary Anne Harris, RESIDENT AND RETIRED STAFF MEMBER

SILVER LINING

We are in troubled times. Millions of us have lost our jobs, have lost our health insurance, and so cannot buy life-saving medications. Some of us cannot feed ourselves and families. Our children are not in school, and some do not have computers to work from home. Some of us are old and are evicted from our homes. Many are suffering from loneliness and depression. It sounds like gloom and doom, but let us take another look. Yes, all this might have accelerated because of COVID-19. However, behind every dark cloud is a silver lining and we are still here on mother Earth and alive.

At this stage of life, we ask or beg for help from our heavenly Father. Look around. He has given us scientists and doctors with many tools, so listen to their advice. Help will come to take us out of this pandemic, so be patient. Our Father can and will help. He has given wisdom to many of our fellow human beings and has blessed us with more than enough for our needs and that of our families.

Let us find a person or cause and put our time, talent and money to help others have a less stressful life.

— Ruth Small, RESIDENT

## *Saturday Second Week of Lent*

EXODUS 19:16-25

PSALM 75

MARK 9:2-8

### THANKFUL

I, Yovandel, am thankful to have a job. I am thankful for my family and everyone I come into contact with. I am most of all thankful for my kids and grandkids. I am thankful for the Lord who is head of my life. The Lord is good all of the time. I love the Lord with all of my heart and mind and soul. The Lord brought me from a mighty way. I don't take anything for granted. The Lord is my strength. He is a way maker, promise-keeper, light in the darkness. My God that is who you are. Lord, you are good all of the time.

— Yovandel Perkins, DINING

WHEN HE SPEAKS

Did you hear the wind whistling through the trees?

Or the thunder during the storm?

Or the bird singing on a sunny day?

Or the person saying "I love you," "I am sorry,"  
"I appreciate you," "Thank you" or "How can I help"?

Or the baby cooing and babbling?

Or the rain as it hits the ground or roof?

Or the sobbing of a loved one, coworker or acquaintance?

Did you see the tears on the face of a loved one  
filled with love, joy or happiness?

Or see the sadness in their eyes when you are in pain,  
feeling sick or unhappy?

Or see the outstretched arms waiting to embrace you?

Or see the hands held out for you to assist them in any way  
possible or offering you support?

God is speaking through these people or these events. He lets us know that He is watching over us and giving us signs. The signs are for us to receive the help or to give the help. Sometimes just to let us know we are not alone or unloved. He provides us with what we need when He knows we are ready to accept and appreciate it. We make choices to accept or reject the signs and to face the consequences, good or bad.

— Annette Foster, DINING

# Monday Third Week of Lent

1 KINGS 6:1-4, 21-22  
PSALM 80  
1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-23

## REJOICE AND BE THANKFUL

The following may not be the exact words of an anthem I remember singing as a member of a youth choir.

*Christ in his garden when a boy  
Grew roses red which were his joy  
Leave me the thorns young Jesus said  
To be the crown upon my head  
So for his forehead pure as gold  
A crown of cruel thorns he wore.*

It seems strange to me that I can remember an anthem sung so many years ago but cannot remember things I have done recently.

When we are asked, during the month of November, to submit our meditation for the Lenten Journey booklet we receive every year, I am thinking more about Jesus's birth than his death and resurrection.

Since March 2020, my thoughts have changed. Life and death situations have occurred daily. We have all had to cope with a deadly virus. We have had lots of time to think about many things. Thoughts we could never imagine thinking, some pleasant, some not pleasant.

Although I know God never leaves me, "His love endures forever." I wonder if He is testing my faith. Faith makes us strong.

The mask that covers our nose, mouth and chin – protecting us from illness – does not make us blind. We still see beauty all around us. Rejoice in the risen Lord, and be thankful.

– Charlotte Lovelace, RESIDENT



# Tuesday Third Week of Lent

2 CHRONICLES 29:1-11, 16-19

PSALM 78:1-39

HEBREWS 9:23-28

## DAY BY DAY

*Day by day, dear Lord,  
Of thee, three things I pray:  
To see thee more clearly,  
Love thee more dearly,  
Follow thee more nearly, day by day.*

As I began to think about Lent, I followed my habit of looking for a favorite hymn for the season to help me focus. “Day by Day” was calling me! Short, direct and it even provided me a “to do” list!

“See thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly.” Three goals on which I can focus each day of Lent. This will require intention but is drawing me.

I have just read Bishop Michael Curry’s book, “Love Is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times.” I remember his challenge to establish a “rule of life.” He explained that Benedict had seventy-three such rules! Curry advises that we consider starting with one to three core principles to help focus our spiritual life.

See, love, follow. Very straightforward principles with layers and layers of complexity. I am anticipating this journey! But I know with certainty that this journey will be lifelong. I pray it will be a constant companion . . . day by day.

— Wilda Ferguson, RESIDENT AND RETIRED STAFF MEMBER

# *Wednesday Third Week of Lent*

EZRA 6:1-16  
PSALM 119:97-120  
MARK 11:15-19

## MERCY

I see Richmond's first light and feel good that Jesus Christ brings me to my knees with joy. My Heavenly Father was there when I went to sleep. He remains with me all day. I do not deserve this happiness. Thanks be to God for my Bible and prayer book.

— Grace Lindner, RESIDENT

## THE CIRCLE OF LOVE

Over the past year, I have been needle pointing banners for our new Spiritual Center to represent the five major faiths and one to represent those who have no faith at all. Every banner has its own color scheme and symbols appropriate to the belief represented. However, there is one constant: four circles in every banner.

The circle motif was in the first banner, a copy of an eighteenth century Coptic icon of the eternal Christ. I decided to keep the circles in all of the other banners which I had the freedom to design. I chose to do this because the circle is a sign of unity. I feel we, of all faiths, need to discover the unity amongst us, and it seemed to represent the ideal of the Spiritual Center as being a place for all to feel included and welcomed there.

I am now working on the fourth banner in the series, and, as I've worked these first four banners, I've come to think of these circles as representing the line from the play, "The Lion King," "The Circle of Love." As we have lived through this season of COVID-19, it has become abundantly clear that the one essential in our lives is the gift of love.

Love is essential for us to live, to celebrate life, to respect and care for one another. Without love, we lack compassion and empathy, we lack joy and a deep sense of fulfillment. Without love, we lose our own sense of humanity, our connection with one another, and with God. And so, I wish you a Lent spent in the practice of love. Love abundantly, wastefully (if there is such a thing), and as though your life depended upon it – for it does!

– Vienna Cobb-Anderson, RESIDENT

THERE IS A BALM IN GILEAD

Since Antiquity, epidemics and plagues have altered the chronicle of history as they surged through Europe and the rest of the world. Outcomes of wars were determined in 430 B.C. Athens and in 262 A.D. Rome. During 1334-51, about 30% of the world's population died. The Plague reappeared in London in 1603-1665 and in Hong Kong in 1894. During the following 20 years, more than 10 million deaths followed in India.

Twentieth century discoveries of antibiotics ended the bacterial carnage until nature designed viral infectious agents. Our nation's first pandemic occurred in 1793. Philadelphia was the national capital at the time, a city struck by the lethal yellow fever virus. Ten percent of its population died, and an additional 40 percent fled the city. The worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 followed.

Now, a century later, the COVID-19 has erupted from China. By May 2020, evidence of the first effective anti-COVID-19 therapeutic agent (Remdesivir) was achieved in England (with participation of scientists at the Medical College of Virginia). At that time, more than 300 potential vaccines were under study, and the CDC expected the first to be in therapeutic use by November 2020. The world anticipates repetition of the successes in the worldwide elimination of smallpox and of poliomyelitis in the 1950s.

Scholars will note the name of Remdesivir's British origin: Gilead Sciences LTD; and they also will recall the old spiritual:

*Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain,  
but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.  
There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;  
there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

We are reminded that Jeremiah concluded his lament over Jerusalem with the plea: "Is there no balm in Gilead?" No earthly remedy can compare with the healing that comes from a sense of God's presence; nothing else can "heal the sin-sick soul." The coincidence of name reminds us that there is a balm in Gilead!

REMAKING

I think back to the first months of the pandemic and how quickly my life changed. My calendar was a blank of days with no events marked to remind me of a date and time to show up. With all the time I could wish for, there was a moment of panic. How will I give meaning to my days? The answer came from the gift envelopes sent out by the Friends of The Society of Saint John (SSJE). On the back I read the message that seemed to be just for me. "The promise and hope of Easter is that in the midst of all this grief and loss, God is making all things new . . . a remaking of your lives." Yes, I thought. I can bring a new sense of purpose to my life. I will be creative with the hours of my day. I have time for a poem, a prayer, a song and a dance. Every morning I started off with poems from Wendell Berry's, "A Timbered Choir" and "Given." I found his words comforted me, and I loved rambling through his fields and woods. I showed up for prayer every day. Sometimes words tumbled out fast as I sought God's love and strength for healing for all those suffering. I think the power was in the showing up. Music, too, has healing power. I began listening to Celtic music that reached inside me and stirred me to move. I would stand up, close my eyes and just swirl and sway through my apartment. It was a freeing experience from stress and worries. We do have choices that reflect hope not fear. God's invitation at this Easter season is not only that we remake our lives, but that we participate in remaking of the world.

— Kay Remick, RESIDENT

## EXPERIENCING THE WILDERNESS

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” (Matthew 4:1)

We, too, have known times in the wilderness; times of pain, isolation and confusion. These times of testing, these markers on our journey of life, can become fulfilling times of personal *revelation when we seek God’s purpose* in them.

The wilderness is God’s retreat, the place in which we are drawn away; the place where we come to the end of ourselves. It is here we learn that we will never know ourselves until we *know* Jesus — not know about Him but have a personal encounter with the living God.

In the desert, devoid of distraction, in solitude and silence one can hear that still small voice of God. The desert, dry and arid, demands we recognize our “thirst.” There, He confronts our deepest need and revives us with His living water, as He did the woman at the well in Samaria. In the blinding glare of the desert sun, we clearly see our pitiful *spiritual poverty* in the light of His perfection as did Paul. Here, our faith is tested and proven as was Jesus’ faith.

The wilderness is where we come to seek the *face of God* rather than His hand. Recognizing who we are and who we are not, we bow in submission, worship and adoration. We receive His forgiveness and love. As we experience Him, we *clearly see* that we *do know* and *are known* by the Sovereign God.

“Do you want to be made whole?” Jesus tested the lame man at the Bethesda pool who had been in the same “wilderness” condition for 38 years. This man had to face himself, recognize he had failed to see the truth, until by personal experience he met the Messiah. As did I. Jesus asks the same of you and me today.

Jesus came that we may experience life - life *anew*, abundant, and eternal. “This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”  
(John 17:3)

— Ann Neidow, RESIDENT

## WHO'S WILL?

"Thy will be done."

When I think of my younger self, struggling with forging an identity, asking: "Who am I? What do I want to do? Who do I want to be? How do I plan, manage and control the minutes and days of my life to get there?" Giving up control to God made no sense at all.

In fact, I rebelled against it, seeing Jesus's words to God from the cross as simply incomprehensible. Clearly, to me at least, Jesus had much work still to do. He needed to live. He needed to help God understand that a God willing to sacrifice his only begotten son, even metaphorically, was pretty strange, to me the mother of three.

As the years have passed, "Thy will, not my will be done," plagued me, recurring as a question seeking an answer I could not fathom. I felt there was truth in there somewhere but I could not grasp it.

In this, the fourth quarter of my life, looking back on 78 years, I am acutely aware that my most productive periods have not been the times I thought I was planning, organizing and controlling.

The times in my life I look back on with joy are those times when I simply did the job at hand, whether raising children, supporting a husband, getting a degree, being a friend, serving a non-profit or letting go of expectations.

Life happened.

One day, albeit briefly, "In whose service is perfect freedom," made sense. "Thy will, not my will, be done," was less mysterious, at least in those moments when I can quiet myself enough to listen.

Life is happening still.

What is asked of us? It is really very simple. To do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.

It is the "humbly" that still trips me up!

THE PSALMISTS' COMFORT

As we move through these forty days of Lent, many questions come to my mind. What was Jesus thinking and feeling? Surely, he knew these were his last days among us. How did he prepare himself and, especially, how did he prepare his disciples? We know he tried to tell them he would no longer be with them, but they did not understand. Perhaps he looked to the Psalms for comfort and encouragement. These wonderful songs and poems express all the emotions of the human heart: fear, anger, despair, abandonment, but also trust, hope and above all, love.

We are living in fearful times today. Nations are fighting for political control. There is rampant poverty, racialism, a pandemic, violence, unbelief and much more. As in Jesus's time, the "old ways" are being upended. And so, during our own Lenten journey, let us do as the psalmists and Jesus did when their lives were in an upheaval. Let us lift our voices and sing our own psalms to God. Like the disciples, we do not know what lies ahead. We may be full of fear and doubt, but, as those who have gone before us, you and I can open our hearts to God and know that, in the end, "The Lord is our shepherd," "Our rock and our salvation," "Our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Lord, you have told us not to be afraid. Please give us the faith and hope and love to see what lies ahead.

— Anne Foard, RESIDENT



# Wednesday Fourth Week of Lent

ISAIAH 30:15-18  
PSALM 69:1-23, 31-38  
HEBREWS 4:1-13

## MESSAGE OF THE DAY

“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

We, as humans, have both a physical heart and a spiritual heart. You must keep both healthy and nurtured to live. As much as we need blood to fill our hearts, we need love and compassion to fill our hearts. Take time to fill your heart with the good that you do and give glory to God for all that you have, both physically and spiritually . . . Then pass it on and share it!!! Your kindness and smile might be the only happiness in someone else's day. Spread the spiritual wealth you've been given by our merciful God!

— Sharon Poznanczyk, PARSONS HEALTH CENTER

FAITH AND A HOLE IN THE GROUND

Have you ever been ice skating? I tried a couple of times – my ankles just weren't strong enough. But I did learn one thing – you need to be sure of the ice, that it will hold you. So what's that got to do with "faith?" Well, I could have great faith in thin ice, but, the fact is, it will give way, and lead to disaster. So the object of our faith is paramount. My faith is in a person. He validated my faith in him because he did something that had never happened before. On that first Easter morn, He created an empty hole in the ground, and He rose from the dead. By doing so, his claims, as to who He is, ring with truth. He is the singular source of faith that is sure, steadfast. The incomparable reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ makes every other day worthwhile.

— Barton Campbell, RESIDENT

## STAND

STAND. Such a simple word that we use every day. Stand up for those being bullied, stand straight so you don't fall, take a stand against racism, stand by me, stand up for the United States of America against those who wish to tear us down; the list goes on and on. But how about what the Bible says regarding the word, "stand?"

"Let us stand forth together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me." (Isaiah 50:8-9)

"So be subject to God, stand firm against the devil, resist him and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

Many other references exist, but one of the best is in Ephesians 6:10-18. Here we find instructions to put on God's whole armor every day so we can stand. Try to visualize a soldier of that time and how he went into battle. Stand, holding your ground, by first putting on the belt of truth. Those soldiers wore long tunics, and they would tuck the length up under their belts to keep from stumbling. Here it is the belt of truth which holds everything together. Next would come the breastplate which would cover their front, and perhaps back also. This is the breastplate of righteousness to help us with temptation. Verse 15 says put on your shoes of peace. The soldier would have ones similar to our sport shoes of today with cleats to keep them sure-footed and ready for battle. Peace helps us to stay firm. Nothing can get through the shield of faith, which is our next piece of armor. It was probably wooden, huge, and thickly covered with all sorts of padding to keep them safe. Faith keeps us safe too. We need the helmet of salvation that Jesus bought for us. Finally comes the sword, which is our defense weapon – the Word of God. Now that we are prepared; we need to pray at all times in the Spirit so that we may stay alert and ready to STAND. Let us all STAND together.

— Sarah Jones, RESIDENT

## *Saturday Fourth Week of Lent*

HABAKKUK 3:2-13

PSALM 107:33-43

JOHN 12:1-11

### THANKFUL

Thank you God, for being in my life. For the gift that you gave your Son Jesus, to die for our sins that we might be blessed to share eternity with you in heaven. Even as we have had to change our lifestyle during this time of the Coronavirus, wearing masks, limiting social gatherings, foregoing hugs, limiting so many things with family and friends, we have the gift of “hope.” During this time of Lent, I have found more time to listen to friends who are shut in, to spend more time in prayer. My faith has grown stronger knowing that you, Father, are in control.

I do not understand all that is happening in our world, but I have confidence because God is in control. Amen.

— Mary Bevan, RESIDENT

FORGIVENESS AND GRACE

“My Lord Jesus Christ, my neighbor has injured me, hurt my honor with his talk, and interfered with my rights. I cannot tolerate this, and I wish to avoid him. O God, hear my complaint. I would gladly feel kindly toward him, but I cannot. How totally cold and insensible I am. O Lord, I am helpless and forsaken. If you change me, I will be sincere. O dear God, change me by your grace, or I must remain as I am. Amen.”

Even in his prayers, Martin Luther was blunt. The 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformer had been betrayed by his neighbor. He knew what Jesus would have him do: As often as the neighbor offends, forgive (Matthew 18:21-22). He knew that Jesus had enjoined his followers to love their enemies, to do good to those who hated them, to bless those who cursed them, and to pray for those who abused them (Luke 6:27-28). Luther knew all this. He also knew that he was incapable of doing any of it.

The problem lies in our heart. To forgive our neighbor, we must first love our neighbor, and Luther knew that he did not love his neighbor. He could not force himself to love. He could not manufacture a change of heart. Jesus’s injunctions drove him to his knees to pray for grace. Like the psalmist, Luther recognized and would have us recognize that only God can convert the heart: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me” (Psalm 51.10).

Luther’s blunt prayer helps me to be honest about my own limitations in love. It gives me hope that a lifetime of failures of my heart may yet be healed by grace.

— Rebecca Weaver, RESIDENT

# *Monday Fifth Week of Lent*

ISAIAH 43:8-13

PSALM 31

2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-11

## BLESSED

Many times, we ask someone “How are you doing?” They usually reply by saying “I’m blessed.” One may wonder what is truly meant by that statement. For me, it is a testimony of one’s faith.

Being able to endure any struggle no matter how big or small.

Love from the heavenly Father unconditionally.

Engagement of prayer by feeding your body, mind and soul with His words.

Strength to overcome whatever may come my way.

Surrendering to God’s will and staying true to the faith.

Empathy toward others to feel and understand their pain.

Determination to stay focused and know that God is on my side.

— Naomi Hines, HOUSEKEEPING

## WHERE IS MY MISSION FIELD?

Does being on a 'mission field' always mean being in a foreign land? No. Followers of Christ have a 'Mission Field' wherever they are. It can be as close as one's own neighborhood. A step out of our apartment. God delights in using us right where we are!

Our salvation through Jesus Christ is a free gift from God. We do not earn our salvation through "good works." Our "good works" are responses to His mercy and love; an outpouring of our faith.

Our time to respond to God's love does not end because we become older. It is not diminished with a pandemic or isolation. As long as we have breath, we have a 'mission field' and a contribution we can make. God expects no less of us.

Your mission field may be different from mine. Yours might involve phoning a lonely friend. Mine might entail spending time in God's Word to share with someone. Your mission field might be praying for those hurting or greeting someone with an encouraging word. We are on our mission field when we write kind notes to others, when we leave a flower at someone's door, when we share a pastry - all are gestures of love to honor God and draw others to Him. Are we producing something lovely with our words and deeds? Are we planting hope in the hopeless? Are we sharing the good news?

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him." (Galatians 6:9)

— Nancy King, RESIDENT

## ASSURANCE

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Romans 8:28:  
“... and we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

It is probably one of the better known verses in the entire Bible, but we often forget the part, “for those who are called according to His purpose.” I believe that part is telling me that, unless I truly love God and follow His commands to the best of my ability, it would be hard to claim His promises.

The “work together” part reminds me of a cook preparing to bake a cake, taking all the ingredients (sugar, butter, eggs, etc.) and blending them together. Singly, not one ingredient is very tasty, but when blended together all that changes.

As with the cook, so with God. He takes the “untasty” as well as the tasty experiences of life, blends them together, and they end up being used for God’s glory and our good. Only the grace of God makes this possible. That’s our promise and our assurance. Thanks be to God.

— Scottie Arnest, RESIDENT



BLESSINGS

Deuteronomy 7:12-16

Ezekiel 34:26-30

Ephesians 1:3-14

Having recently celebrated a significant milestone in my life, I can honestly say that taking life's journey for granted is no longer an option. Although, to be honest, I have not taken too much of life's experiences for granted. There are so many blessings that we daily accept and enjoy that we do take for granted.

As I reflect on present and past blessings in my life, of which there are many, I now realize that each experience has been a blessing in some manner. I have also learned that there are requisites for enjoying God's blessings, for instance, thankful reflections on the goodness of God, and a sense of our unworthiness, among others. These reflections contribute to encouragement and gratitude. I am aware that each day of life is a glorious blessing, and I am making an effort to learn to accept it.

What a joy and a blessing it is to give thanks in all circumstances, especially as we go about our lives accepting material and spiritual blessings each and every day.

Praise be to God and our Lord and Savior who have blessed and continue to bless us in so many ways.

— Ardieth L. Pierce, RESIDENT

## NOTES OF TRANSFORMATION

When I think of Lent, I think of God's goodness and mercy towards us. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Lent is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of the resurrection. Jesus Christ sacrificed and withdrew into the desert for forty days. Although, Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ after his death on the cross, Lent recalls the events which led up to and includes the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Although the disciples failed him, Jesus Christ revealed that his death transforms death into the eternal life. Death will no longer have power over us, and death is NOT final.

The season of Lent will always have a special meaning to me, because this was also a time that my late husband Jerry was transitioning to live an Eternal Life with Christ. Years and months prior to his death, he began to write notes about his life, his works, and his esteemed love and gratitude for what God had done during his earthly travels. There were so many notes and writings throughout the house, I concluded those notes to be his method of preparing himself for the journey meeting and living with his Savior. I am comforted by faith in times like these, knowing that I will see my husband again to share Eternal Life.

— Sadie Givens, HOUSEKEEPING

# Saturday Fifth Week of Lent

JEREMIAH 33:10-16  
PSALM 137:1-6  
MARK 10:32-34, 46-52

## ODE TO JOY

“May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace . . . by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13).

For thousands of years, the word, joy, has held special meaning in inspired writing and speaking:

“Your word to me became a joy and the delight of my heart.” (Jeremiah 15:6)

“For the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

“Restore to me the joy of your salvation.” (Psalms 51:12)

“The angel said unto them: Fear not, for behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” (Luke 2:10)

“So you have pain now, but I shall see you again and your hearts shall rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” (John 16:22)

“And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy to bring the disciples’ word.” (Matthew 28:8)

In his book, “Surprised by Joy,” C. S. Lewis discovered that joy was a pointer to the supreme Source. His spiritual pilgrimage led the acknowledged atheist to become one of the great Christian apologists.

Pope Francis, in “The Joy of the Gospel,” speaks of “A joy ever new; a joy which is shared.” He says, “With Christ, joy is constantly reborn.”

When inspired music joins inspired words, joy soars. Imagine David playing his lute and singing his psalms. Listen to Handel’s “Messiah” and Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy.” Sing “Joy to the World” and “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee.”

There is an old adage not to rejoice overmuch lest something bad happen in return. But I believe that moments of joy merit a response of wholehearted rejoicing and gratitude.

Let’s spread joy with zeal and gusto.

Let’s make a joyful noise to the Lord!

— Johnnie Lou Terry, RESIDENT

## THE HUMBLE CHRIST

Emmanuel, God among us, rides humbly into Jerusalem on a donkey. This doesn't exactly match how one might picture the triumphant arrival of our Lord, and yet, here he is. It strikes me that in the stories we read and hear of Jesus, he always shows up in the most humble way. There is no fancy chariot or royal procession full of dignitaries, but rather a crowd of people surrounding Jesus, praising him and paying homage by waving branches and placing their garments on the road. They recognized the coming of the kingdom.

I wonder what it is was like for those surrounding Jesus, welcoming him to Jerusalem. Were they tired and also hopeful? They shout "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" The Greek translation of Hosana is, "save us," so I imagine they felt joy and relief in seeing Jesus, their Savior, riding into Jerusalem. But as we know in this story; Palm Sunday, the Passion – Good Friday, always come before Easter. We can't get to the Good News and hope of Easter without first experiencing the darkness and pain of the Passion and crucifixion. We have to sit in the darkness and pain of this story before we get to the Resurrection hope.

As those in the crowd put their garments on the ground, let us also put down those things which keep us from acknowledging the difficulty and pain of this coming week. But, may we also look forward with joy as we approach the eternal hope given to us through the humble Son of God.

— Logan Augustine, PASTORAL CARE

## MY LENTEN JOURNEY

Lent is the season that leads to Easter. It is a time to prepare individuals for Baptism. It is the season of self-examination and faith renewal – taking on additional spiritual practices. It eventually leads to Good Friday where we keep watch at the foot of the cross. We fully embrace our participation in the sin and suffering of the world. Then surprise – the transforming power of God’s love wins out – Easter.

Lent moves me in three directions:

1. Personal faith building. I want to move intentionally from the world of doing toward the world of reflecting. How is God’s loving presence molding me as a child of God? What are my greatest gifts at this stage of my life? How can I live more in a spirit of thanksgiving? How can I best serve God going forward?
2. Community. I want to stay closely connected to others, people I can support and people who can support me. Holy Eucharist offers everyone a place at the table. My salvation depends on the salvation of others. In a world which is so deeply divided, I want to build bridges of appreciation and understanding. I want to help people share their stories with each other. The more I am connected to others, the richer my personal journey becomes.
3. Mission. I want to make a difference for people who are in need. Service: I want to feed the hungry. Advocacy: I want to support public policies which make sure that everyone has enough to eat. Empowerment: I want to help people grow their own food. I want people to have the resources so they can provide for themselves.

Lent is a season of pausing, reflecting and taking stock. We get in touch with what is going on inside ourselves so we can make a better response to what is going on in the outside world. The Lenten Journey is meant to be challenging. Each of us faces hard choices. Eventually, we arrive at Easter when all our striving and disappointment are swallowed up in the loving grace of God.

– Robert G. Hetherington, RESIDENT

## IS IT EASTER YET?

During the early days of Lent 2020, we had no idea that, before Easter morning, COVID-19 would arrive to lend new meaning to the notion of “giving up things.” And now, as I write (late October 2020), it roars on, teaching us more each day about what is necessary and what we can very well do without. I wouldn’t recommend that we quarantine ourselves each time Lent rolls around, but I would suggest that the quarantining we have all gone through during this pandemic can help us to see ways to make our every-day lives more fruitful.

Here are two:

- I. Replace self-indulgence with concern for others. If we can endure the inconvenience of wearing a face mask in order to protect the lives of people around us, we can probably proceed to worry less about our own marginal tax rate and more about the quality of education our cities’ kids are receiving in our under-funded public schools.
2. Replace reliance on hearsay and wishful thinking with attention to reason and authoritative evidence. If we can come to rely on medical professionals instead of social media and bogus websites, enough to wash our hands and avoid crowds, then perhaps we can come to focus our Bible reading more on things like Christ’s Sermon on the Mount and less on things like the vindictive Psalms, thus focusing our attention on loving our neighbors rather than on trampling our enemies under our feet.

By the time you read this, COVID-19 may have a preventive vaccine and even a cure. But maybe muted echoes of the quarantines will linger. If so, remember that God’s voice is clearest when the hubbub of the world is silenced; and listen for His still small voice affirming that, whatever else may happen, Easter will come. Thanks be to God.

— James Hall, RESIDENT

## QUIET IN CHRIST

2020, usually associated with perfect vision but, in our year 2020, vision has been altered, bent, blurry at times.

Isaiah 40:31 teaches us “They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.” Sheltering in place early on, brought us quiet, stillness, different kinds of family connections, projects, gardens, prayers for others and ourselves.

Later, we experienced isolation, loss without closure or connection, fatigue, stress, worry, extremes and division.

During the time that Christ lived among us, he knew great extremes, division, fatigue, loss and isolation; yet he gave us everything. Sometimes I wonder how tired he must have felt, always knowing the end while he gave.

Jesus taught us to wait for the Lord and renew our strength.

“After leaving them, he went up to a mountainside to pray” (Mark 6:46).

“Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him” (Luke 22:39).

“After 6 days, Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone” (Mark 9:2)

Jesus told his disciples, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31).

Through that quiet that Jesus practiced, the Bible often tells us to take in rest. We need it now more than ever. Our quarantine has not always been quiet or restorative.

Jesus knew that it would be hard for us to be in the world but not of it. Jesus understood because he was human for us. We have the Holy Spirit that we can call on to guide us to quiet, to renew our strength, even amid the world and all that is in it. This gift from God will bring us the strength, the calm, the peace, in a world that does not seem quiet or peaceful. Our quiet in Christ is our greatest gift while we are here.

— Karis Townsend, CLINIC

MAUNDY THURSDAY:  
IT'S WHAT SERVING LOOKS LIKE

On the night before Jesus was arrested, he said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Jesus didn't leave the disciples wondering what he meant by “love one another.” Jesus showed them what love looked like: He washed their feet. This was not something that a revered teacher—let alone a messiah—would do! Jesus was showing them that loving other people means honoring them, serving them, doing what is necessary despite custom or expectation—breaking the mold at times—to flat out give of oneself.

This is what love looks like: it notices the other; it empathizes and sympathizes and responds to the need and the situation; it offers help appropriate to the situation – not just enough to get by, but a gracious and sometimes even extravagant outpouring of care. It is not governed by station or race or class or any other worldly framework, but by our desire to embody and show the heart of Jesus. Jesus has set an example: love one another as I love you.

Just to be clear, you won't be rewarded with a gold star or guaranteed answered prayers; loving IS the blessing. You are loving as Christ loves; that is the blessing. And that extends God's blessing to others. That's God's best for you and for others; that's what God desires; that's what Christ commands. Where can you love today?

— Lynn McClintock, PASTORAL CARE



## GOOD FRIDAY

How did the Friday before Easter become Good Friday? We all celebrate Easter – the day that Jesus was resurrected, the day He rose from the grave. But Good Friday? What is Good Friday? Once I knew the story, I wondered how it could be called good. There was a time in history (His story) when good meant Holy. Holy Friday. That makes more sense.

So many of us find joy in the phrase “He is Risen,” but what was He risen from? The more you understand what He was risen from, the more joyful Easter becomes.

I could try to describe the day of Good Friday, but honestly my words could never explain it better than God’s Word, so I encourage everyone to either read or listen to God’s written Word of Good Friday found in Matthew 26:57 to the end of the chapter, Mark 15 to the end of the chapter and Luke 22 to the end of the chapter. It is only a physical description of what happened that day, but it is a good place to start. Then pray, ask God to show you the soul of that day. I promise, if you keep asking, He will show you. KNOCK! (Matthew 7:7)

I just stepped outside. It is a new moon so all I could see were a gazillion stars. It made me think of how insignificant I am. How small I am. But God died on a cross for me so I am not insignificant to Him. I often think of the cross as a place where I stood with bullets being shot at me, and Jesus stood in front of me and took all those bullets so that I may live. What love, if you believe that God is real, and I do, than the enormity of this kind of love is overwhelming!

HE IS RISEN!

– Dawn Taylor, COURTESY SERVICES

## WILL YOU TRUST ME?

For the past several months, I have continued to reflect on a question that Jesus asked His disciples in the gospel of John, verse 6:67. “Will you go, too, or, to paraphrase, will you trust me with your very life?” Like many of us today, it is hard to trust someone who you have never seen, never talked with, or have never touched. The only thing you know is what someone tells you or what you may read in a book or pamphlet. How do you trust when life seems to throw challenges, disappointments, loneliness and hurts? The job you depended on is gone and it is hard to replace. “Will You Trust Me?”

In January 2001, God asked me a question that would literally challenge my faith and test whether I would go from Him or totally trust Him. I had worked my way from a supervisor to the director of the department. I was as green as the finest green grass in this new position. Over time, God showed me that, if I humbled myself and trusted him through Jesus Christ, he would teach me everything.

God did His part as He always does. However, unknowingly and like an untied ship that drifts from a pier, I began to drift from God. Not trusting Him, but myself. It was not until I experienced a major injury, that placed me out of work and on my back for a few months, that I realized that I was functioning on auto-pilot and that I had placed my trust in what God had taught me rather than Him. I wept that I had pushed God aside and asked His forgiveness. I told God that, from that day forth, I “Would Trust Him totally,” and, in return, he told me to, “lean not onto your own understanding, and I will always direct your path.”

— Ernest Gannaway, HOUSEKEEPING

# *Easter Sunday*

ISAIAH 25:6-9  
PSALM 148  
JOHN 20:1-8

## JESUS CHRIST IS RISEN TODAY!

“Jesus Christ is risen today!” The fanfare that rings through the sanctuary to begin that hymn is one of my favorite moments every single year. It fills my eyes with tears of joy as we move from the darkness of the tomb to the joy of a risen Savior. Along with countless others, last year was the first time in my life that I wasn’t in church on Easter morning. It was an Easter like no other, followed by many firsts and days like no other. In many ways it didn’t feel like Easter without experiencing the Easter Vigil, without joyful hymns, communion or Easter lunch with our family. It was actually an Easter much more like that very first Easter. Waking early in the morning, spending time in the quiet, being together with just a few close family members. As much as I love our traditions and the beautiful liturgy, Easter morning is Easter morning with or without them. Easter happens no matter what, because the reminder that Jesus Christ defeated death and rose in glory is so much bigger than the trappings we have attached to it over the centuries. It is more eternal than our human need to celebrate in particular ways. Those traditions and liturgies are important and deeply meaningful, but Easter is still holy without them. No matter how we celebrate today, no matter what is happening in the world around us or in our lives, Easter morning breaks, the sun rises on a new day with the glorious awareness that we are loved by a God who defeated death and bids us to follow him. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

— Jenny te Velde, PASTORAL CARE



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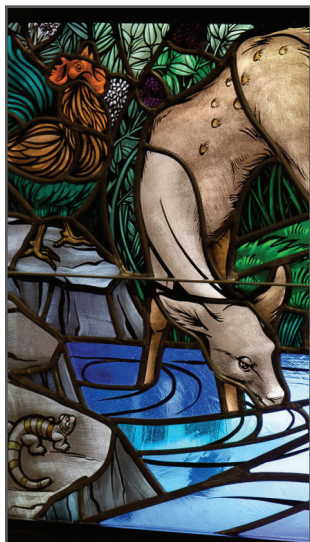
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